



# Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) Meeting Agenda and Summary Report

Wednesday, September 14, 2022, 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

## Physical Meeting Information:

- 1000 G Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 WestEd, 5<sup>th</sup> floor

## Agenda

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

- Welcome
- Voices from the field
- Report out from advisory committee chairs
- Public comment

### 2. Child Care Transition Quarterly Report

- Update from the California Department of Social Services on the transition of child care programs
- Council questions and discussion
- Public comment

### 3. Rate and Quality Workgroup Update

- Overview of report recommendations
- Council questions and discussion
- Public comment

### 4. California Department of Education Updates

- Report on early childhood updates
- Council questions and discussion
- Public comment

### 5. Supporting Children's Physical, Behavioral, and Developmental Health

- Panel and council discussion
- Public comment

### 6. Adjourn

**Attendance:**

**ECPC Council Members:** Antoinette Jacobs, Cheryl Polk, Dean Tagawa, Donna Sneeringer, Janet Zamudio, Kay Ruhstaller, Kim Johnson, Lupe Jaime-Mileham, Natali Gaxiola, Paula Merrigan, Robin Layton, Sarah Neville-Morgan, Scott Moore, Sonia Jaramillo, Stephanie Myers

**Parent Advisory Committee Members:** Cherie Schroeder, Mary Ignatius, Patricia Lozano, Zoila Carolina Toma

**Workforce Advisory Committee Members:** Deborah Corley Marzett, Debra Ward, Miren Algorri

**Guests:** Brian Winfeld, January Crane, Katie Maloney-Krips, Kim McMillan, Melissa Stafford Jones, Dr. Pamela Riley, Rachel Skewes, Reyna Ambriz, Shanell Brumfield, Stephen Propheter

**Summary Report****Kim Johnson, ECPC Chair**

Ms. Johnson opened the meeting by announcing the executive order that the governor signed the previous day. The order directs state agencies and departments to take additional actions to ensure their missions, policies, and practices embed equity analysis and considerations in order to address disparities for historically underserved and marginalized communities. The chair also wanted ECPC members to be aware that the order creates a new council: "So be on the lookout for the establishment and the opportunity to participate in a council around creating additional recommendations in this space."

After the announcement, the chair gave a brief overview of the meeting agenda and introduced Cherie Schroeder from the Parent Advisory Committee.

**Cherie Schroeder, Parent Advisory Committee**

Ms. Schroeder introduced herself, talked about her background, and discussed her role representing California resource parents. To start her presentation, she noted that everyone in the field knows her and her colleagues as "foster parents," but the continuum of care reform a few years back renamed this role to Resource Families. As Ms. Schroeder explained, being a Resource Family "is about having those resources of support, the people within our lives and circle to make all of this happen."

Ms. Schroeder discussed stigma around the term "foster" and explained that, from her perspective, the term applies to everyone in the caregiving field: "I do think even this word 'foster' relates to all of us who are in this caregiving field, and our job and our goal and our mission in all of this is to promote the growth and development, the safety. To rear up. To make our children feel like they've been nourished, cherished, and have had an interaction that is robustly positive in their lives."

Referencing a picture of herself from when she was newly working in the caregiving field, Ms. Schroeder reminded the audience of the significant strides made since then: “[W]hen I first started, we used to be around a hundred thousand [foster children], and now we're at around 54,000 here back in April.” But she also noted that 20,000 children currently in foster care in California are under the age of five.

A fifth of all children in the U.S. child welfare system are placed with Resource Families or foster parents, often during their most formative years. Ms. Schroeder also noted that these children are some of the most vulnerable, having suffered trauma, neglect, or abuse. If the system is not providing them with adequate care and support, it is doing them a disservice.

Ms. Schroeder then introduced Katelyn Woods, a caregiver for foster children from Yolo County.

### **Katelyn Woods, California Resource Parent**

Ms. Woods talked about the importance of recognizing the unique needs of children who come through the foster care system: “[W]hether we're care providers during the day or foster or resource parents, [we] recognize that these kids come to us with the unique set of needs. They're all survivors of trauma who have lived through whatever reason they were removed from their families of origin.” Even in a welcoming, supportive foster home children must adapt to a new unknown space and work to overcome trauma. The responsibility to recognize and meet foster children’s needs falls upon the Resource Family, and they must advocate for children in their care to get needed services. Ms. Woods also wanted to recognize the role of caregivers, who model healthy interactions: “Beyond the care that you are showing these children directly, you're also modeling healthy interactions with the other children in your care and modeling healthy relationships with your coworkers. And all of that's incredibly important.”

Ms. Woods talked about the peace of mind Resource Families feel when they find daycares that are a good fit for their foster children: “When we, foster parents, are looking for goodness of fit in a daycare setting, we're hopeful that whichever place we choose might also be somewhere that the children could continue being cared for after they're reunified with their birth family, their families of origin. And so having you caregivers be there for the children even after they're no longer in our homes is comforting beyond measure for us”.

Ms. Schroeder joined Ms. Woods in thanking the child care professionals on behalf of Resource Families of California and expressed her gratitude for individuals who are willing to become Resource Families.

### **Sonia Jaramillo, Senior Director, Monterey County Early Learning Program**

Ms. Jaramillo introduced herself and noted that she represents 30 classrooms across Monterey County. The county has just received a General Child Care and Development Grant to continue meeting the needs of families served by the Early Learning Program. The operating funds for the program come from Head Start and the California State Preschool Program (CSPP). The Early Learning Program is also

overseeing an Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program grant funded by the California Department of Education (CDE) to increase access to inclusive learning and care for preschoolers. As Ms. Jaramillo noted, it is a much-needed resource for the families, students, and staff as well.

Ms. Jaramillo described the challenges their sites faced during the pandemic and how the staff supported the families during this period: “Like everyone else, Covid proved to be a challenge and an opportunity for our programs. Our sites only closed during the shelter-in-place mandate—for a few weeks only. And our wonderful staff supported families with resources, devices, activity bags, weekly calls. Everything that we knew would make a difference for our families, we provided.” The staff came up with creative ideas, including videotaping foster grandparents or other individuals reading books for the Kids Happy Hour.

One of the key challenges Ms. Jaramillo highlighted was recruiting staff for their classroom and custodial teams. This is due to the low pay for the positions associated with these teams. As Ms. Jaramillo noted, the program staff benefits very heavily from resources such as Bright Beginnings, Quality Matters, First 5, and the Child Care Planning Council.

Ms. Jaramillo expressed her full support for Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) as a valuable resource for the families in the Early Learning Program: “As a former kindergarten teacher and an elementary school principal, I fully endorse the UPK initiative. We're now faced with the unique opportunity and the challenges that implementation of the UPK is bringing to our programs.” But similar to other directors statewide, she is waiting for local districts to invite her to partner with UPKs and provide families the resources and benefits of a fully endorsed Extended Learning Opportunity Program: “The families need that extended service, but unless we find a way to come together and put all the resources on the table, they will continue to be limited in terms of what’s available to them.” The biggest challenge for the Early Learning Program right now is that it can’t compete with the salaries offered by UPKs, and Ms. Jaramillo reported that she has lost teachers to UPKs for the coming school year.

After Ms. Jaramillo’s speech, Ms. Johnson introduced Mary Ignatius, the chair of the Parent Advisory Committee, to share information about topics that overlap between the two committees.

### **Mary Ignatius, Chair, Parent Advisory Committee**

Ms. Ignatius summarized the latest Parent Advisory Committee meeting, which focused on children with special needs. Topics of discussion included families’ experiences and challenges navigating early education and elementary school education services for their children. Two committee members who are parents of children with special needs, Yenni Rivera and Naima Facih, shared their personal stories at the meeting. Ms. Ignatius pointed out that their individual stories had one thing in common: “[T]hey really had to figure out how to navigate these systems on their own. They were given resources, but if you don't know what to ask, if you don't know who to ask, if you don't ask the right question, you are often left to figure it out on your own.” Ms. Ignatius noted that this is a common theme heard from

families across the system. She added that it is urgent that families whose children have special needs get support right away. But as Ms. Rivera and Ms. Facih's stories showed, accessing these services can be both traumatizing and overwhelming.

The meeting also included a presentation by representatives of the California Department of Developmental Services, who provided a detailed description of their system of services and changes that have been made to better support the needs of parents like Ms. Rivera and Ms. Facih.

After the overview of the Parent Advisory Committee meeting, Ms. Ignatius asked the chair if she could make a public comment. Ms. Johnson gave her the floor again, and Ms. Ignatius expressed her disappointment over the recent veto of AB 92, a bill that would have created a permanent equitable family fee schedule. She stressed that child care professionals talk a lot about equity, but acting upon it is a different thing, which takes a lot of financial resources: "Our system is built off 400 years of inequity, and [it costs money] to undo it, to dismantle it... the Family Fee Bill would have made an equitable fee schedule. It would have allowed any family, no matter what door, or program you enter, you do not have to pay fees that you can't afford. That would've brought equity to our system."

ECPC member Robin Layton added that the council, which is the advisory body to the state administration, is not listened to. She noted that this has been an issue since its implementation in March 2020. She suggested that the council target the December ECPC meeting to bring forward recommendations for the next budget proposal, which will be accepted in January.

Donna Sneeringer, ECPC member expressed her concern about the childhood system not having a holistic vision: "I am quite concerned that we aren't looking holistically at our early childhood system. We are investing in a particular age group and a particular program type that is now having detrimental impacts on the remainder of the system. There isn't a coordinated space where we're talking about this continuum for families and young children so that families pick the right place, that they're in the right option, have the hours of care they need, the cultural alignment they're looking for, and the special needs support they need."

After these public comments, the floor was given to Lupe Jaime-Mileham, Deputy Director for the Child Care and Development Division, to provide the child care transition quarterly report.

### **Lupe Jaime-Mileham, Deputy Director, Child Care and Development Division**

Ms. Jaime-Mileham noted that the present quarterly report had a heavy emphasis on child caseload summaries and sub-programmatic updates. It also included the Child and Adult Care Food Program. In her presentation, Ms. Jaime-Mileham provided the total annual caseloads of all child care and development programs administered by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) based on the estimated 12-month average. The total number of children served in 2021/22 was 315,566. This

includes 268,000 children served in programs transferred from CDE. Ms. Jaime-Mileham noted that these figures are relatively new data and are still being validated. She also shared a graph of child care caseloads by setting. Most children enrolled in subsidized child care and development programs receive care through a licensed family child care home provider (122,335 total children). Another 74,366 children receive care through a license-exempt provider, which is family friend and neighbor care. Ms. Jaime-Mileham also provided a breakdown of caseloads based on age, race, and ethnicity.

Ms. Jaime-Mileham then moved to programmatic updates, beginning with the news that the direct deposit payments option is operational, and half of the CDSS contractors under the Child Care and Development Division are now receiving their funds via direct deposit. Ms. Jaime-Mileham emphasized that this process required extensive research and collaboration. It also had the support of CDE partners.

Next she shared an update on the state's \$350 million investment in the Child Care and Development Infrastructure Grant. This past quarter, grants were awarded for child care development programs, infrastructure applications, and minor renovation and repairs. The recipients have been notified, and CDSS is currently providing technical assistance to help them leverage those grants.

Ms. Jaime-Mileham's final update was that CDSS has worked with the California Child Care Resource & Referral Network to develop My Child Care Plan, a consumer education website, which is replacing the existing [mychildcareplan.ca.gov](http://mychildcareplan.ca.gov). Ms. Jaime-Mileham announced that the timeline for the site's formal launch is early October, and it will be accompanied by marketing, communication, and training campaign plans.

## **Public Discussion**

After Ms. Jaime-Mileham's presentation, the floor was re-opened for public comments. Donna Sneeringer reemphasized the need for a holistic approach: "[W]e have to look at the system holistically, and we can't just build one part at a time because what happens is we have unintended ripples through the system. Head Start is struggling. Family child care is struggling. Our infant/toddler care is in trouble. And we've got everything focused on building what's very important, which is the universal preschool system, but it has tentacles that reach across the full continuum. And we've got to find a place to have everybody together to figure out how we can invest and not have these unintended consequences." She also added that planning at the local level is inconsistent, district to district and county to county, and there is no clear engagement of the early childhood community.

Sarah Neville-Morgan, CDE Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Opportunities for All Branch, responded that their team works very diligently to weigh all the pieces and implement what is given to CDE in law. When they look at the state preschool program, they reflect on how CDE is attuned to supporting it and some other things in the budget to help it move towards more and more targeted universalism.

Ms. Neville-Morgan noted that adjusting eligibility for CSPP to 100 percent of state median income was very deliberate on the part of the administration and legislature, working with CDE, to align the program further with UPK. Including young children with disabilities and having dedicated spaces for them is also a big part of the UPK movement. Ms. Neville-Morgan added, “We very intentionally talk about UPK in a much broader sense. I will say that transitional kindergarten (TK) is a very important part of it, and it is the only part that the administration has fully funded to support all four-year-olds.”

Ms. Neville-Morgan further stated that it’s important to look at research that is inclusive and not segregated by income. She argued that this is one issue with looking at Head Start outcomes and where it is not fully meeting needs. She announced CDE’s plans to have focus groups with state preschools to find a way to bring in more unsubsidized families into CSPP to increase diversity. She added that CDE’s goal is increasing capacity and increasing quality.

Robin Layton joined the conversation by emphasizing that the comments from the council members are not a critique directed at CDE and CDSS because both agencies have to operate in the framework that the policymakers develop for them: “The Department of Ed, the Department of Social Services carry out what is passed from the administration in the budget and all the policies and the bills. And I compliment both departments on taking that on and doing the best you can with what you're given. So you're not the policymakers, you carry out what has been passed. And I just want to bring it back to this council.”

Ms. Layton also expressed hopes that people will listen to the council: “For example, when we first started, there was the Master Plan that came out. In the Master Plan, our priority as a council was not to expand TK. So again, the frustration is there that this body is not being listened to, and we don’t need another council or group in California to tell the administration or advise them what we all have been saying for very many years.”

After the public discussion, the floor was given to CDE to present their budget.

**Sarah Neville-Morgan, Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction, Opportunities for All Branch, CDE**

Ms. Neville-Morgan noted that the budget this year focuses on investments for supporting children with disabilities. One thing that State Superintendent Tony Thurman has stressed is that the historic education investments in the 2021/22 and 2022/23 budgets provide a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to address challenges and transform the landscape of California's educational system.

CDE now has investments in UPK and universal meals: “One of the things that we are happy about when you look at TK expansion is that means more and more four-year-olds who haven't always had access to secure food now will have access through TK to universal meals, as well as up through all of those other grades. “

In the budget, CDE has a near-universal expanded learning opportunities program, and as it continues to roll out, there will be after-school, before-school, and summer session supports for TK through sixth grade. Ms. Neville-Morgan also emphasized investments for community schools, in teacher prep, and in special education: “This year we didn't get as much as we wanted for multilingual supports, but the year before, we did get \$10 million to expand some of the bilingual, dual language immersion programs. We are always hoping and pushing for more and more of our schools to move to dual language immersion, as they look at their student population, as well as creating the best California that can be competitive in the future.”

Ms. Neville-Morgan pointed out that CDE is addressing existing inequalities in access to child care services and the fact that the subsidized early childhood education system has not been able to serve all eligible three- and four-year-old children. In 2019, only 23 percent of three- and four-year-olds were enrolled in TK or CSPP. This year, the figure has increased to 34 percent, and eligibility for these services has expanded due to the new income limit of 100 percent of state median income.

CDE data show that only 26 percent of California’s preschoolers with disabilities received their special education services in general education programs compared to 44 percent nationally. Ms. Neville-Morgan noted that one of the areas that CDE has been able to advance is a need to support more inclusive early childhood studies for our students with disabilities.

From this point, the presentation was continued by Stephen Propheter, Director of the Early Education Division.

**Stephen Propheter, Director, Early Education Division, CDE**

Mr. Propheter discussed details in the budget that apply to children with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). IEPs will be categorically eligible for CSPP. CDE plans to get to a requirement of 10 percent of CSPP enrollment capacity set aside for children with disabilities. Mr. Propheter noted this is to be phased-in over the next couple of years, starting at 5 percent this year, rising to 7.5 percent and then 10 percent. Mr. Propheter emphasized the importance of this initiative: “One of the things I'd point out about this is that it's huge because we haven't done this before. It's funded enrollment. This means that this space is set aside. The contractor is funded for that space. That funding comes along with some requirements. There's some recruiting and outreach that contractors will need to do, but it's funded and it's huge.”

There is also a \$2 million investment to incorporate early identification of learning disabilities and delays into existing preschool assessment tools, including a process for follow-up by expert evaluators.



The new budget also includes \$250 million to support the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program. As Mr. Propheter reminded attendees, this program was first funded in 2018 and provides the infrastructure necessary to support children with disabilities in general education and inclusive classrooms. He provided a breakdown of this new funding:

- \$200 million grant funding for local educational agencies:
  - Adaptive and universal design facility renovations
  - Adaptive equipment
  - Professional development
- \$50 million to address state-level systems building

After the budget update, CDE representatives received comments and questions from the audience. The panel then moved to Dr. Pamela Riley of the Department of Healthcare Services (DHCS).

**Dr. Pamela Riley, Chief Health Equity Officer, DHCS:**

Dr. Riley gave an overview of the DHCS's Medi-Cal strategy to support health and opportunity for children and families. The strategy was born out of recognition of insufficient primary and preventative care for children, the prevalence of health disparities among Black and Latinx children, increasing behavioral health concerns for children and adolescents, and a lack of clear structure of children's initiatives internal to DHCS.

DHCS launched this strategy in an effort to have a more comprehensive, cohesive approach to the numerous initiatives that support children and families in Medi-Cal. The strategy is built on many guiding principles:

- Addressing health disparities and advancing health equity
- Implementing a whole-child, preventive approach informed by families
- Providing family- and community-based care
- Promoting integrated care
- Improving accountability and oversight

The strategy outlines several action areas:

- New leadership structure and engagement approach
- New health plan accountability for quality outcomes
- Stronger coverage base for California's children
- Family-centered approach
- Stronger pediatric preventive and primary care
- Child and adolescent behavioral health investments
- Streamline access to pediatric vaccinations
- Next steps in the foster care model of care

Each action area has key initiatives—both already underway and newly proposed—with detailed approaches to solidifying coverage for children, promoting whole-child and family-based care, strengthening accountability structures, and implementing data-driven initiatives to support implementation. Dr. Riley encouraged the audience to review these initiatives and reach out with any questions.

After Dr. Riley, Melissa Stafford Jones took the floor for a presentation of the work of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative.

**Melissa Stafford Jones, Director, Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, DHCS**

In August, Governor Newsom announced his Master Plan for Kids' Mental Health. At the core of that plan is the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. Ms. Stafford Jones pointed out the critical need for this work to be transformational, cross-sector, multipart, and take an approach to improve the social-emotional well-being and behavioral health of California's children and youth.

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative was passed in last year's state budget and it is in year one of a five-year, \$4.4 billion investment intended to help re-imagine the systems and supports for social-emotional well-being and behavioral health. That explicitly includes both mental health and substance use for children and youth from birth to age 25.

Ms. Stafford Jones noted that it is intentionally a systems-change initiative: “It is rooted in partnership and collaboration and thinking across systems and sectors. We've heard widely about the silos that we know we have in our system that have built up over decades and that the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative is a critical opportunity to create a more coordinated system for children, youth, families, and communities for behavioral health.”

Another key aspect of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative is building a more child- and youth-centered system, and the DHCS is working very hard to engage children, youth, families, and communities in the work. It also explicitly calls for addressing disparities and advancing equity and is taking a targeted universalism approach.

The Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative has 14 work streams. Ms. Stafford Jones explained them as being tools DHCS has in its toolbox to move toward that re-imagined behavioral health ecosystem. These work streams fall into four major areas:

- Increasing workforce numbers and diversity
- Building infrastructure and capacity in the system
  - This includes brick and mortar investments, but also partnerships, collaborations, adding opportunities for access (e.g., a virtual services platform), and scaling evidence-based

and community-defined practices to make them more available and accessible across the system.

- Building up coverage and financing architecture
  - This includes adding benefits like dyadic care in Medi-Cal, but also involves resourcing this work through an all-payer fee schedule for schooling and behavioral health services.
- Addressing public awareness and stigma amongst youth, families, and communities
  - This work will be done in a way that speaks to the communities served, is culturally relevant, and supports collective efforts to address the needs of families and address equity.

After the presentations from DHCS, the floor was open for discussion about the Medi-Cal strategy and the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative. After the discussion Ms. Johnson made closing remarks and adjourned the meeting.