



Early Childhood Policy Council

Meeting Agenda, Attendance, and Summary Report

Tuesday, November 19, 2024

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Physical Meeting:

1000 G Street, Sacramento, CA 95814 WestEd, 5th floor, Capitol Room

Agenda

1. Welcome and Introductions
 - Welcome
 - Report from chairs of advisory committees
 - Voices from the field
 - Public comment
2. Whole Child Community Equity
 - Presentations
 - Council discussion
 - Public comment
3. Rate and Quality Advisory Panel Update
 - Status Update
 - Council questions
 - Public comment
4. Child Care Transition Quarterly Report
 - Final report from the California Department of Social Services
 - Related updates from the California Department of Education
 - Council questions
 - Public comment
5. Adjourn

Attendance:

Council Members: Jen Troia, Miren Algorri, Mayra Alvarez, Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, Lisette Frausto, Natali Gaxiola, Sonia Jaramillo, Robin Layton, Tonia McMillian, Paula Merrigan, Scott Moore, Carola Oliva-Olson, Kim Patillo Brownson, Laura (Kay) Ruhstaller, Donna Sneeringer, Dean Tagawa, Janet Zamudio

Parent Advisory Committee Members: Deborah Corley-Marzett, Lisette Frausto, Yenni Rivera

Workforce Advisory Committee Members: Tonia McMillian, Miren Algorri

Guest Speakers:

- Yenni Rivera, Member, Parent Workforce Advisory Committee
- Carlise King, Executive Director, Early Childhood Data Collaborative, Child Trends
- Jacqueline Barocio, Branch Chief, Central Operations Branch, Child Care and Development Division (CCDD), California Department of Social Services (CDSS)
- Karen Chang, Branch Chief, Program Quality and Improvement Branch, CCDD, CDSS
- Stephen Propheter, Director, Early Education Division, California Department of Education (CDE)
- Shanna Birkholz-Vasquez, Associate Director, Early Education Division, CDE
- Amira Elmallah, Whole Child Equity Specialist, Policy Office, CDE

Summary Report:

Welcome and Introductions:

Jen Troia, Chair and Director of the CDSS, opened the final Early Childhood Policy Council (ECPC) meeting of 2024. Troia is serving in this role following Kim Johnson's promotion to Secretary of Health and Human Services. Chair Troia introduced new ECPC member Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, Vice President of Education at the California Children's Academy. Full welcoming remarks are recorded on pages 3–7 of the [ECPC November 19 meeting transcript](#).

Report from Chairs of Advisory Committees

Tonia McMillian, Chair of the Workforce Advisory Committee, spoke on behalf of both advisory committees in the absence of Mary Ignatius, Chair of the Parent Advisory Committee.

McMillian summarized the October 17 Joint Advisory Committee meeting, a listening session focused on committee members' reflections as parents and providers in the early

learning and care (ELC) space. She urged the Council to focus on the themes that emerged:

- July 1, 2025, deadline for rate reform and true cost of care implementation
- Parental choice and accessibility
- Challenges integrating family child care home (FCCH) providers into universal pre-kindergarten (UPK)
- Providers' difficulties accessing early intervention services for children with special needs and disabilities
- The need for competitive, equitable wages and adequate training to address workforce retention and development issues
- Licensing and regulatory challenges, such as delays in licensing inspections
- The impact of transitional kindergarten expansion on providers and families
- The importance of engaging in advocacy to improve the ELC system with inclusive and equitable policies and practices
- Emergency funding to help providers recover from the pandemic and achieve financial stability
- Adoption of a whole child, whole family approach
- Parents and educators having greater direct involvement in ELC policy discussions and decisions

Voices From the Field

Yenni Rivera spoke about the importance of supporting children experiencing homelessness or housing instability. There are 55,000 children in Los Angeles County who have experienced housing instability, including children in immigrant families. These children may have separation anxiety, PTSD, or other lingering effects of trauma. Rivera advocated for a wholistic approach to supporting children as they enter ELC settings. She highlighted the value of parent choice, multilingual settings, and trauma-informed care. Rivera lamented that rising costs and closures have negative impacts on the children and families. She advocated for further integration of parent and provider voices and experiences of families in decisions-making that impacts the ELC system.

Debra Corley-Marzett shared issues and hurdles that providers face in their efforts to maintain continuity of services to children and families: Providers report difficulties receiving reimbursement for children who are in foster care through another county, and communicating with state foster care entities to resolve these issues is challenging as well. Parents are being told by agencies and networks that they may lose their child care if they do not use the maximum hours their provider is certified for. UPK providers say they lack information from the CDE on how all providers will be included in the UPK system. Providers question why the 10:1 ratio regulation in force during the pandemic was not made permanent. FCCH providers worry that temporary absences for their own medical appointments and other needs require closures or puts them at risk of losing their

operating licenses due to violations of the 80/20 Percent Rule. Providers are leaving the ELC sector due to low reimbursement rates.

Discussion

Chair Troia opened the floor to discuss (1) council members to draft a Budget Letter in response to the state’s latest budget proposal and (2) FCCH providers’ role in developing and incentivizing a changing workforce as highly qualified staff and assistants leave for transitional kindergarten and UPK programs. The full text of the discussion is on pages 7–10 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).

Selections from Public Comment and Chat

“It is crucial to revisit [80/20 Percent Rule] regulations to ensure providers can maintain a balance that supports their well-being while continuing to deliver high-quality, dependable care to children and families.”

“We need a revision of the [80/20 Percent Rule]. Providers are going without their physicians’ check-ups and without mental health appointments and without necessary surgeries because we CANNOT AFFORD TO CLOSE while we go to these appointments, and parents CANNOT GO WITHOUT childcare if we close for these things!”

Whole Child Community Equity: Presentation

The full Whole Child Community Equity slides and remarks of the discussion are available:

- [Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup Update \(CDSS-CCDD\)](#)
- [ECPC November 19 transcript](#), pages 11–22

Carlise King of Child Trends provided a progress report from the Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup facilitated by WestEd and Child Trends on behalf of the CDSS and CDE. (Full remarks begin on page 11 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#)).

King explained that the Whole Child Community Equity work came out of legislation passed in 2022 ([Assembly Bill \[AB\] 2832](#)) meant to address racial and economic inequities in the state’s ELC system by prioritizing the full range of children’s developmental needs. The requirements of AB 2832 included the formation of a public workgroup made up of a wide range of interest holders with diverse perspectives and expertise ([CDSS-CCDD: Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup Update, slide 7](#)). [See the Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup member list](#).

The legislation also guides the Workgroup in providing recommendations on the development of two resources: the *Whole Child Community Equity Framework* (Framework) report outlining categories essential to supporting the whole child ([CDSS-CCDD, slide 5](#)) and the *Whole Child Community Equity Screening Tool* (Equity Tool) ([CDSS-CCDD, slide 6](#)), which provides data to support equitable distribution of resources and monitor the state’s progress. The Workgroup’s goal is for the Framework and Equity Tool to be informed by those who know the field and their communities well.

The Framework will conceptualize the state's youngest children via a whole child approach, taking into account their academic, economic, social, emotional and physical needs and development, with the goal of all children benefiting from the state's investments. Several areas of support were identified in AB 2832, including child care access, health and mental health services, education, supports to address childhood adversity, economic well-being, and built environments. The Workgroup has added maternal and child health and environmental conditions as support categories for inclusion in the final Framework ([CDSS-CCDD, slide 5](#)).

Using the Framework as a foundation, the Equity Tool will help state, regional, and local decision makers allocate resources for early childhood initiatives in ways that reduce racial and economic inequities ([CDSS-CCDD, slides 6 and 8](#)). The Equity Tool's data-driven insights should allow leaders to (1) identify specific community factors that support or hinder children's development, (2) begin to identify challenges that may require targeted interventions, and (3) monitor progress over time. This will lead to more targeted investments, more effective policies, and ultimately better outcomes for children and families. The Workgroup has discussed the importance of asset-based discussions of community strengths and needs.

To date, the Workgroup has defined and developed a vision statement for the Framework, reviewed the whole child community categories, and started exploring existing data and measurement tools—such as the Child Opportunity Index and the Social Vulnerability Index—as well as California-specific data tools and administrative data ([CDSS-CCDD, slide 10](#)). Identifying available state data while being cognizant of potential biases in data sources is key to building an efficient and comprehensive Equity Tool. The Workgroup will convene for topic-focused meetings through 2025 ([CDSS-CCDD, slide 11](#)) and will present Framework and Equity Tool recommendations to CDSS late in the year ([CDSS-CCDD, slide 9](#)).

King invited participants to consider the following questions and share their reflections with the group:

- How can the Framework best represent the needs of children from underserved communities in California?
- What specific equity outcomes do you hope the Framework and the Equity Tool will achieve for children ages 0 to 13?
- How can the Framework ensure a comprehensive approach that addresses access and quality in early childhood resources?
- How can we leverage the Equity Tool to inform equitable budgeting and resource allocation at the state and local levels?

Workgroup meeting recordings and PowerPoint slides are available on the [Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup website](#).

Council discussion

Karin Bloomer opened the floor for Council discussion. The full text of the Council discussion is on pages 16–22 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).

King addressed attendee concerns that the roll out of the Whole Child Community Equity initiative may overwhelm providers who are already overtaxed supporting children and their families. The Workgroup aims to prioritize actionable data in the Framework and the Equity Tool, make clear recommendations about their uses, and factor in supports for diverse users.

The vision statement and the Framework's approach acknowledge that coordinated and collaborative systems are at the core of whole child services. The Workgroup advocates for collaboration in discussions of communities' needs and in delivering state's services and investments to achieve whole child community equity.

King offered to present an attendee's question about what additional spaces, beyond early childhood care and education, the tool will be used in to the work group. She pointed out that the health and mental health spaces seem to be valuable sectors to include.

Selections from Public Comment and Chat

"The Whole Child starts with the basics. As a provider who participates in the Food Program, the requirements are to provide healthy nutritional meals. Food is getting more and more expensive. I am proposing a debit card for providers that are government-funded like Fresh Start (food stamps) so that providing these healthy meals doesn't become a financial strain for providers."

"...the Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup conversation seems unauthentic to me because we are not identifying and uplifting the very inequitable implementation and funding of universal transitional kindergarten that has decimated the mixed delivery system of child care providers that have been educating and caring for children for centuries. I think we all know that inequitable, inadequate, and outdated reimbursement rates are the definition of inequity. Without rate reform for subsidized programs and simultaneous work and funding to support private ECE programs, [California's ELC] system will remain entrenched in centuries of racist and sexist policies that have resulted in chronic underfunding for [ELC] programs and an overall failure of government to treat [ELC] services as a public good."

"Will the Whole Child Community Equity Workgroup have the final say in what is in the [Equity Tool] and what is presented to the Legislature? The Rate and Quality Advisory Panel all agreed that the Final Report should include true cost salaries to be based on the living wage and NOT the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) because the BLS salaries are inherently flawed and based on a broken child care market that is based on what parents can afford and not the true cost of care. For reasons that are still not entirely clear and in contradiction to the Panel's recommendations, the Final Report that was sent to the Legislature included BLS salaries will the Workgroup have the final say in what is presented and in the [Equity Tool], or will CDE/CDSS have the final say, thereby diluting and diminishing the true voices of the ECE field?"

"Pertaining to the data points collection for the Whole Child Community Equity AB 2832, will there be a collection of food inequities based on neighborhood research as it pertains to children's nutrition?"

"Please ensure that [providers'] vacation and sick days are honored separately from our holidays. Thank you."

Rate and Quality Advisory Panel Update

Jacqueline Barocio shared a Rate and Quality Advisory Panel (RQAP) update in the absence of Dr. Lupe Jaime-Mileham. Full remarks begin on page 23 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).

Barocio detailed alternative methodology and rate reform progress since submitting California's Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan for fiscal years 2025–2027 to the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) in July 2024.

During Summer 2024, the CDSS and CDE hosted a series of advisory focus groups to gather additional feedback on the cost model and the selection points for certain rate elements. The focus groups included representatives of Title XXII private centers that participate in state voucher programs, Title V centers, and California State Preschool Program (CSPP) sites. The purpose of the sessions was to review the rate element definitions adopted by the Joint Labor Management Committee for FCCH providers and assess the applicability of these definitions for centers.

Focus group feedback was presented at the September 2024 RQAP meeting. RQAP meeting recordings and PowerPoint slides are available on the [Rate Quality and Reform website](#).

The [2025–2027 CCDF State Plan](#) was approved by the ACF in November 2024. Barocio noted the plan "contains an update on the alternative methodology process and timeline, including a plan to set new rates using the alternative methodology by July 1, 2025, per the federal deadline. Because the alternative methodology process is still underway, some information, such as the new rates themselves, are not yet reflected. The CDSS will submit an update to the ACF by July 1, 2025, which will include new payment rates informed by the alternative methodology".

Barocio also reviewed key milestones as the rate-setting and implementation stage approaches ([CDSS: Rate Reform Presentation, slide 3](#)).

She clarified that rate setting is not the same as the implementation: "implementation will occur in fiscal year 2025–26, or as soon as possible after all necessary activities to prepare have taken place. The implementation report will discuss the implementation activities that would be required, such as automation and other state workload impacts." The CDSS anticipates publishing the implementation report on the Rate Reform and Quality website in late 2024.

The CDSS has been working with Child Trends to develop a rate reform evaluation framework. Barocio thanked those who provided input and support in the process. A final evaluation plan draft is expected by the end of 2024 and will be shared in future public meetings.

Opportunities for public engagement in the rate reform process are ongoing, including quarterly Rate Reform and Quality Panel (RQAP) meetings. The next RQAP meeting will be December 11. The ECPC will also continue to hold quarterly public meetings with rate reform as a standing agenda item. Baracio encouraged the public to submit any feedback or comments about the single rate structure via email (singlerratestructure@dss.ca.gov) ([CDSS, slide 4](#)).

Information about rate reform is available on the [CDSS Rate Reform and Quality webpage](#) and those interested can stay engaged by joining the [CCDD listserv](#).

Council Questions

Bloomer opened the floor to questions from the Council. The full text of Council questions is on pages 24–26 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).

Selections from Public Comment and Chat

“The sites that are going into debt while they wait for higher rates to be paid to them need open and honest information right now, disseminated very effectively to all.”

Child Care Transition Quarterly Report

Final report from the CDSS

Karen Chang shared the Child Care Transition updates including automation, CCDF State Plan, rate and quality reform, and staffing and organizational enhancements. Full remarks begin on page 27 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).

CDSS launched the Brilliant Beginnings Initiative in 2021 to support and improve upon the child care data landscape via CalSPARK, Child Care Connect, and MyChildCarePlan.org. Stage two work of the project approval lifecycle process continues for CalSPARK, and vendor proof of concept demos were executed. Stage two focuses on understanding the needs of the new system and completing market research on available solutions. Scheduled to replace MyChildCarePlan.org next year, Child Care Connect will meet federal child care consumer education requirements and state mandates. The MyChildCarePlan.org awareness campaign, which ran from Spring 2024 through October, reached over 1.9 million families. ([CDSS: ECPC Transition Update, slide 3](#)).

The CDSS submitted the CCDF State Plan for fiscal years 2025–2027 to the ACF in June 2024. The State Plan details how CCDF funds will be allocated and expended. This was the first time CDSS acted as the lead agency in preparing and submitting the CCDF State Plan. On November 8, 2024, the ACF approved the State Plan which is effective Fall 2024 to September 30, 2027. Future changes to policy during this period will be submitted as amendments to the State Plan. [Read the 2025-2027 CCDF State Plan](#).

Section 4 of the 2025–2027 CCDF State Plan addresses rate reform efforts, including equal access to care for families receiving child care subsidies, a detailed summary of the alternative methodology process, and a description of the next steps required to set rates by July 1, 2025. (Details of the remaining steps are on page 28 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).)

The addition of 69.5 permanent positions since July 1, 2021 ensures that the CCDD can respond promptly to policy and fiscal inquiries and serve in a more supportive role for children, families, and the ELC system. (Details of budget change proposals that afforded this organizational enhancement are on page 28 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).)

Child Development Fiscal Services was transferred to the CCDD on July 1, 2024, and the Program Quality and Improvement Branch now has a team dedicated to creating trainings.

Resources are available at the [CDSS Child Care and Transition website](#).

Related updates from the CDE

Stephen Propheter provided further updates on CSPP Family Childcare Home Education Networks (FCCHENs). Full remarks begin on page 30 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).

Propheter introduced his colleagues in attendance—including **Shanna Birkholz-Vasquez** and **Amira Elmallah**.

Propheter emphasized the CDE vision to increase families' access to mixed delivery in a school, community-based center, or FCCH setting. The CDE acknowledges “there's still a long way to go in terms of expanding [FCCHENs] across the state as well as supports for [FCCHs] to join a [FCCHEN]. We hear that many of you share this concern as well...it takes time and resources to achieve that vision.”

Propheter highlighted that CDE has been working steadily to implement recommendations issued in March 2024 to support increased access to UPK for FCCH providers ([CDE: FCCHENs in Universal Prekindergarten, slide 2](#)). He pointed out that a CSPP FCCHEN has been added in Los Angeles County. The CDE “looks forward to continuing to increase the number of FCCHENs across the state as more resources become available.” The CDE has been working to implement the following recommendations with existing resources and current opportunities ([FCCHENs in UPK, slides 2-3](#)):

- Assess the existing workforce development funding sources and recommend changes to ensure that funding can be used for preschool educators to earn college credits.
- Support optional opportunities for FCCH providers to earn units towards Child Development Permits.
- Provide pathways for FCCHs to join CSPP FCCHENs

Propheter also noted that the Universal Mixed Delivery Workgroup recommendations regarding requirements and pathways to join CSPP FCCHENs were discussed at the June 2024 Joint Advisory Committee Meeting ([CDE: Pathways to Join CSPP FCCHEN, slides 10-12](#)).

If the Legislature funds AB 51, signed by the Governor in September 2024, it would provide the CDE with resources to address a number of the UPK Mixed Delivery Workgroup recommendations to support the expansion of CSPP FCCHENs ([FCCHENs in](#)

[UPK, slide 4](#)), including technical assistance for FCCHEN contractors, early learning resources on best practices, capacity-building and training plan, and centralized web resources for outreach and communications.

The CDE's ability to expand this work depends on additional funding and resources from the state.

Propheter provided an update on the UPK Mixed Delivery Planning Grant Round 3 and the Workgroup recommendation to build out pathways for FCCHs to join FCCHENs with existing resources. In addition to planning for UPK, the funds are also to support county expansion of UPK and relationship building between agencies. This funding is available for local entities, such as FCCHs, local planning councils, local education agencies, resource and referral agencies, and other community-based organizations in a county.

Propheter encouraged participants to join the [UPK/P-3 statewide initiative group](#) through California Educators Together and access resources to communicate about UPK programs, partners, families, and communities on the [California Universal Prekindergarten website](#).

More information on FCCHENs is available from [California Educators Together](#) and the [California Universal Prekindergarten website](#).

Council Questions

Chair Troia opened the floor for Council questions. The full text of the Council questions is on pages 29 (CDSS) and 35-41 (CDE) of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).

Selected Public Comment and Chat

“...the FCCHEN recommendation was unfair and inequitable to begin with. Equity without access is inequity no matter what. When I don't have the ability to provide [transitional kindergarten] or UPK to my community after I have the education and the background to do so, and the way that you have said that we'll be able to participate in the system is that I have to be with a FCCHEN that is not in the area, you have created another barrier that there was already barriers in place for [FCCH] to be a part of the program. Not only that, it prevents parents from actually using continuity of care, which is research and data backed. Every time a child has to switch an educator or a program, we are making it hard for them to actually form healthy attachments...the way the program is being run is doing just that.”

“... what concerns me [about the DRDP assessment tool] is if we have folks that are conducting observations that are not adequately trained on the tool or are not implementing the tool to fidelity because they're not the individuals with the children on a regular basis, that is...an issue of this equity conversation in terms of training and access to training....”

“I've been a provider throughout LA County for a while, [FCCH], as a substitute and everything. For the FCCHEN program...it needs to be transparent [and] the staffing needs to be more knowledgeable, not only just in what is required by the state, but also through

licensing regulations for FCCHs.... the children and families that we get in our program does not qualify for the [resource and referral] program because they're undocumented or don't have papers or are stay at home moms and [they] are trying to get established. So the process is totally different, and it takes a team to get these families here.” (For additional commentary on provider and family supports needing to be more effective efficient, realistic, and transparent, see page 44 of the [ECPC November 19 transcript](#).)

“...I think at least 10 years, if maybe even longer, the field has been asking whoever the responsible parties are to do something about the foundational issues of FCCHENs. Legislation has been introduced—it has never gone anywhere.... And here we go again [with the CDE wanting] to make changes to the program and all of that without dealing with the foundational issues. If you don't deal with the foundational issues, all you're doing is creating more discrepancies, more differentiation, as you've heard between the two departments in how they view this program. And providers are not going to be willing to participate. They can't participate in something they don't understand. They can't participate in something that doesn't reimburse them appropriately. Most importantly, they can't participate in something that they don't see themselves as being treated fairly.”

“Why is there nothing in the Transition report about the Infrastructure Grant Program?! Local planners and providers need that data!”

"What or who are they thinking about when making these new laws for two-year-old children, sending them to preschools, and taking away the opportunity to grow until the age of five in an environment similar to a family setting?"

“Could [FCCHENs] be required to train providers on the DRDP, then provide release time for the providers to be able to conduct observations, and then provide joint guidance on how to use the DRDP to [guide] planning developmental and learning activities for the children in [the FCCH provider's] care? There needs to be more specificity on the requirements of the networks that equitably support their participating FCCs.”

“One of the concerns of providers with businesses like ours is that there are no children. Please take us into consideration because most of us have child development units. Please help us turn our facilities into TK at home; it is a quality environment for all children.”

"Providers are everything in one person, while schools pay for everything separately. For example, teachers, nurses, secretaries, cooks, and playground aides. We are everything, but we get the lowest pay."

Adjourn

Chair Troia thanked the public, Council and Advisory Committee members, and presenters.

Meeting adjourned.