Early Childhood Policy Council Parent and Workforce Advisory Committees

Meeting Agenda, Attendance, and Summary

Monday, September 21, 2026
10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.

Agenda

Introduction

- Review meeting protocols
- Welcome
- Review of agenda

Provide Input on Draft Council Recommendations

- Share draft recommendations under development
- Seek input from Advisory Committee members

Provide Input on 2028–2030 Child Care and Development Fund State Plan

- Presentation on Draft 2028-2030 State Plan
- Seek input from Advisory Committee members

General Public Comment

Adjourn

Attendance

Parent Advisory Committee Members: Deborah Corley-Marzett, Lissete Frausto, Mary Ignatius

Workforce Advisory Committee: AnnLouise Bonnitto, Latonda Williams, Miren Algorri, Tonia McMillian, Zoila Toma,

ECPC Members – Guest Speakers: Andrea Fernandez Mendoza, Karla Pleitéz Howell, Sonia Jaramillo

Summary Report

Welcome and Introduction

Mary Ignatius, Chair of the Parent Advisory Committee, welcomed committee members and members of the public and acknowledged the observance of Yom Kippur. She announced three vacancies on the Parent Advisory Committee and encouraged interested individuals to apply for appointment, sharing that more information can be found onthe Early Childhood Policy Council webpage. **Ignatius** emphasized the importance of ensuring perspectives from families connected to Tribal child care services, Transitional Kindergarten (TK), and the child welfare system are represented in Council discussions and decision-making.

Tonia McMillian, Chair of the Workforce Advisory Committee, reviewed the meeting agenda and explained that Advisory Committee members would be asked to provide input on Council recommendations. She noted that recommendations being presented by the subcommittees reflected input received from Advisory Committee members, Council members, and the public during previous discussions. Committee members would also provide feedback on the development of California's 2028–2030 Child Care and Development Fund State Plan.

Provide Input to Draft Council Recommendations

The full presentation slides and remarks of the discussion are available:

- Workforce Needs Subcommittee Slides
- CDSS CCDF State Plan slide deck
- WAC/PAC September 21 transcript

Workforce Subcommittee Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Flex Factor to Stabilize the Contract Earning Floor

Background

Andrea Fernandez Mendoza presented the updated recommendation for a 15 percent enrollment-based flex factor for center-based child care contractors. She explained that California successfully transitioned from attendance-based reimbursement to enrollment-based reimbursement following the expiration of Hold Harmless protections on June 30, 2026. While this transition represented a significant policy achievement, many center-based contractors continue to face enrollment challenges caused by factors including the following:

- expansion of Universal TK
- declining birth rates
- staffing shortages
- immigration enforcement concerns
- reduced family participation in public programs

She noted that although enrollment-based reimbursement provides greater predictability than attendance-based funding, many providers remain vulnerable to enrollment fluctuations while adjusting to the new system. The proposed flex factor would allow center-based programs maintaining at least 85 percent certified enrollment to receive reimbursement at the full contract amount during the transition period before long-term rate reforms are implemented.

Themes From Advisory Committee Discussion

- **Enrollment stability supports family stability:** Committee members generally supported the recommendation, emphasizing that provider and family stability are linked. They noted that families' access to care depends on providers' remaining financially viable and that enrollment volatility can disrupt services even when demand remains high. A member working within Tribal child care shared an example of a reimbursement model that already recognizes the need to maintain provider stability regardless of occasional attendance fluctuations.
- **Equity is needed across program types:** Members stressed the importance of ensuring that policy changes apply equitably across California's mixed delivery system. Discussion highlighted concerns that recent funding and reimbursement improvements have primarily benefited California State Preschool Program contractors, while Tribal programs, migrant programs, and other contract types have not consistently received equivalent treatment. Members encouraged explicit language ensuring equitable treatment across all early learning settings.

Recommendation 2: Advancing Rate Reform

Background

Fernandez Mendoza reviewed California's progress toward implementing a cost-based Single Rate Structure. She highlighted achievements including the following:

- development of the cost estimation model
- expansion of Cost of Care Plus payments
- advancement of collective bargaining rights for family child care providers
- movement toward cost-based reimbursement models

Despite these accomplishments, unresolved issues remain, including delays in implementation, disputes regarding geographic cost assumptions, facilities challenges, data transparency concerns, and uncertainty regarding long-term funding commitments.

The recommendation focused on several issues:

- accountability for implementation timelines
- equity across provider types
- inclusion of benefits and workforce supports
- partnership and consultation with Tribes
- data transparency
- interim rate increases pending full implementation
- ongoing updates to cost estimation methodologies

Themes From Advisory Committee Discussion

- **Tribal sovereignty and inclusion:** A member emphasized significant discussion on appropriate recognition of Tribal governments and child care providers, including the need to identify Tribes as “sovereign nations” rather than “communities.” They recommended explicit inclusion of Tribes and Tribal agencies in planning, consultation, rate discussions, and data collection activities. They also cautioned against only identifying the Tribal Child Care Association of California as a partner, as many Tribes are not affiliated with the organization but should still have direct opportunities to participate.
- **Tribal data ownership and partnership:** Members highlighted the importance of recognizing Tribal ownership of data and recommended developing agreements that allow Tribes to determine how information is collected and shared. They noted that improved collaboration that respects Tribal sovereignty could strengthen state understanding of Tribal child care participation.

- **More frequent progress updates:** Members questioned whether annual implementation updates would provide sufficient accountability given the urgency of rate reform. Several members advocated for quarterly or semi-annual reporting to ensure providers receive timely information about progress toward rate reform implementation milestones.
- **Rate enhancement and additional supports:** Members recommended expanding rate enhancement discussions to explicitly address support for dual language learners. Additionally, while transportation was confirmed as having been incorporated into the cost model, members encouraged continued examination of whether all critical services are adequately reflected.
- **Meaningful participation for family child care (FCC) in mixed delivery system:** Members argued that although FCC is regularly referenced within the mixed delivery system, practical ways to participate remain limited. Specifically, concerns were raised that opportunities are concentrated in only a small number of counties and therefore unavailable to many providers and families. Members noted that this makes FCC inclusion "words on a paper" versus an actual practice. They requested clearer pathways for participation and stronger infrastructure supporting FCC engagement.
- **Need for clear fiscal and operational guidance:** Members requested more explicit guidance regarding how FCC providers fit into emerging rate reform and access initiatives. Several members expressed concern that providers often receive references to future reforms without clear information about implementation expectations, timelines, or operational impacts.
- **Data accuracy and accountability:** Members emphasized the need for a transparent process for correcting errors in cost model data and regional assumptions. They referenced concerns regarding county classifications and requested mechanisms that ensure identified errors are corrected promptly and consistently.

Family Access and Federal Public Policy Subcommittee Recommendations

Universal Child Care and Paid Family Leave

Background

Karla Pleitéz Howell and **Sonia Jaramillo** presented updated recommendations focused the long-term vision for establishing universal access to child care and paid family leave by 2034. The proposal is structured around five core elements:

- universal access goal
- targeted universalism
- phased implementation milestones
- foundation-building actions beginning in 2027
- ongoing accountability measures

Pleitéz Howell and **Jaramillo** emphasized that California has already made significant investments in early learning and family supports and that the recommendations are intended to build on existing work rather than start over.

Themes from Advisory Committee Discussion

- **Culturally responsive services:** Committee members recommended strengthening language regarding culturally affirming care by also emphasizing culturally responsive implementation. They stressed that affirming cultural identity must be accompanied by systems and practices that actively respond to family needs and experiences.
- **Inclusion of FCC providers:** Members repeatedly emphasized that FCC providers must be viewed as essential partners in achieving universal access goals. They expressed concerns that many providers feel excluded from state planning despite regularly being referenced in policy documents. Members pressed for future communications and recommendations to explicitly describe how FCC will participate in system expansion.
- **FCC-specific goals:** Members recommended adding explicit goals to support FCC providers and address issues such as provider retention, provider closures, license capacity, and the effects of Universal TK expansion. Members stressed that universal access cannot be achieved without protecting the existing provider base.
- **Regulatory reform:** Members suggested the need for comprehensive review of existing regulations to ensure requirements align with the realities of today's families, workforce, and providers. They noted that outdated regulations often create barriers that impede rather than support access and quality.
- **Simplifying access and compensation:** Members advocated for future investments to prioritize rapid implementation and minimize administrative burdens imposed on providers and families. They stressed that providers should be able to access funding and supports without excessive procedural barriers, trainings, or additional requirements.
- **Paid family leave considerations:** Questions were raised regarding the structure of a universal paid family leave system, particularly for workers who are not currently eligible under existing programs. Members encouraged analysis of how expanded paid family leave could affect child care enrollment patterns and provider sustainability.
- **Technology and artificial intelligence:** Members encouraged the Council to continue examining how emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, could improve access, reduce administrative burdens, and strengthen service delivery. At the same time, they emphasized the need for thoughtful oversight to ensure technology is used to support rather than undermine families and providers.

Safety Net and Immigrant Family Protection Recommendations

Background

Pleitéz Howell and **Jaramillo** also presented updated public policy recommendations focused on protecting and strengthening the safety net supports that help children and families thrive. They emphasized the importance of maintaining access to essential programs such as Medi-Cal, CalFresh, Head Start, and the Child Care and Development Fund, particularly during periods of federal policy uncertainty. The recommendations also highlighted the need for ongoing support for immigrant families through legal services, rapid response networks, and coordinated state and local efforts designed to reduce barriers to services and promote family well-being.

Themes from Advisory Committee Discussion

- **Protecting access to essential family supports:** Committee members generally supported recommendations focused on preserving access to critical programs and services for children and families. They emphasized the importance of ensuring that families continue to receive timely access to health care, nutrition assistance, early learning opportunities, and child care supports regardless of changes in the federal landscape.
- **Support for immigrant families:** Members highlighted the importance of maintaining legal assistance, rapid response systems, and other support structures for families impacted by federal immigration policies. They noted that providers often serve as trusted contacts for families and should have clear guidance and resources to assist families during periods of uncertainty.
- **Clear communication and resource navigation:** Members recommended establishing clearer points of contact and more accessible resource guides to help providers connect families with services and information. They emphasized that coordinated communication across systems can help reduce confusion and improve access to available supports.
- **Fairness and transparency in administrative processes:** Members encouraged greater fairness and consistency within licensing and administrative appeal processes. They emphasized the importance of ensuring that providers understand their rights and have access to transparent procedures when concerns arise.
- **Clarification of fraud and administrative error policies:** Members recommended clearer distinctions between fraud and administrative errors. They noted that providers can face significant consequences due to unclear policy definitions, and they encouraged the development of guidance that promotes consistency and fairness.
- **Cross agency coordination:** Members supported stronger collaboration among agencies serving children and families, particularly during immigration-related disruptions. They emphasized that coordinated responses can help reduce

service interruptions, support family stability, and improve access to resources during challenging circumstances.

2028–2030 Child Care and Development Fund State Plan Discussion

Background

Representatives from the California Department of Social Services and Community Care Licensing provided an overview of the federal State Plan development process and recent legislation affecting child care programs. Presenters described statewide interest-holder engagement efforts occurring throughout California and explained upcoming opportunities for public input.

Themes From Advisory Committee Feedback

- **Tribal participation:** Committee members emphasized the importance of meaningful Tribal representation within State Plan development and implementation efforts. They noted that Tribal agencies serve large numbers of children and families and should be directly involved in discussions regarding policy development, training, emergency preparedness, and implementation supports.
- **Emergency preparedness and 72-hour planning:** Members noted that new emergency preparedness requirements represent a substantial operational responsibility for providers. Members requested clear guidance, templates, technical assistance, and training materials to support compliance with the new requirements. Concerns were also raised regarding consistency in licensing interpretations across regions.
- **Training burdens and supports:** Members expressed concern about the growing number of required trainings. They requested additional financial support, compensation, and implementation assistance for providers to ensure requirements can be met without imposing significant financial hardship.
- **Technology solutions:** Members recommended exploring statewide technology solutions that could simplify health forms, documentation, reporting requirements, and communication between providers, families, and regulatory agencies. They noted that standardized technology tools could reduce administrative burden while improving consistency and accessibility.

General Public Comment

The themes that emerged from public comment and chat include the following:

Meaningfully Inclusion for FCCs

Select Comment:

> “We continue to hear that family child care is an essential part of mixed delivery. I appreciated seeing family child care included in the vision and in the language. But my question is, what does inclusion actually look like in participating? One of the primary pathways for family child care providers to participate is through a family child care home educational network [FCCHEN], and that opportunity is still extremely limited across California... I would like to see how family child care providers outside of the existing FCCHENs will be included, funded, and supported in this system.”

Compensation and Reimbursement Delays

Select Comment:

> “When a parent misses a spot on a time sheet, you turn it in. Sometimes it takes 3 weeks for them to send it back to you. And then when you do get it back, you turn it in, you got to wait another 21 days. So it's sometimes at the end of 2 months to get reimbursed. That needs to be worked on... we're trying to keep our doors open, pay our employees.”

Recognition of Provider Expertise

Select Comment:

> “I want to address other comments in regards to family child care providers and education... We have education, we have experience, and it's still not respected.”

Authentic Parent Choice

Select Comment:

> “Some school districts are capping their parents. Meaning, ‘If you don't attend our TK system, then your child will not be able to go to kindergarten.’... That's unfair because you're not giving really the option to the family. You're already saying, ‘You have to do TK with us. If not, you will be placed on a waiting list for kindergarten.’”

Sustainability of Family Child Care

Select Comment:

> “We are now being told we have to flip our programs to infant–toddler care, which is not possible, and that means that we are not sustainable. All of the recommendations mean that family child care will not be sustainable and able to continue when you actually need us embedded in the communities because we provide an important function for communities.”

Equity and Participation in the Mixed Delivery System

Select Comment:

> “It doesn't matter how many times FCC says that the state says FCC is included in UPK [universal prekindergarten], it's not. And saying it even more doesn't make it so. If there's enough funding for all 4-year-olds in TK for UPK, then there's funding to put them wherever a parent should choose for their authentic choice.”

Support for Providers Facing New Requirements

Select Comment:

> “How will CDSS support family child care providers, especially the small ones or multilingual, rural, and overnight programs like mine with funding, templates, trainings, and technical assistance to meet the new emergency and 72-hour preparedness requirements?... What funding will be provided to compensate the family child care providers for the training time, fees, substitute coverage, and lost income?”

Adjourn

Chair **McMillian** thanked Advisory Committee members, state representatives, presenters, providers, and members of the public for their participation and feedback. She emphasized that the input received would inform future revisions of the Council's recommendations and ongoing policy discussions. Meeting adjourned.