



**Policy Council Meeting**  
**April 17, 2024 (English and Spanish)**  
**5:30 p.m.**  
**Minutes**

**I. Call to Order**

Mr. Randy Grice presided over the meeting. The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m.

**II. Roll Call**

The following participated in the meeting:

<b>Members</b>	<b>Representing Centers</b>
Diosmary Valdes	Kids Small World Learning Center
Melissa Spencer	Kinderkids Academy III
Kerenza Scheeper	Lincoln Marti - 905
Ashley De Fran Nunez	My Little Angels
Jennifer Li Moya	New Aladdin
Rubianna Williams (Secretary)	Naranja Prep Academy Annex
Anielka Coke	Springview Academy
Randy Grice (Chair)	Community Representative
Polo Coronado	Community Representative
Iris Strachan	Board Member
<b>EHS Staff</b>	<b>Position</b>
Alexander Sanchez	Controller
Angelo Parrino	Chief Operating Officer
Belkis Torres	Vice President for EHS
Bob De La Fonte	Legal Counsel
Cecilia Nariznis	Mental Health Manager
Elicenia Del Rio	Interim Finance Manager
Jacqueline Dominguez	Human Resources Director
Jessica Dittmar	Administrative Coordinator
Lisney Badillo	Director of Contracts and Procurement
Maggie Casanova	Sr. Accountant
Otilia Gonzalez-Varese	Disability Manager
Roseleen Hurtado-Rodriguez	Health Manager
Salvatore Martorano	EHS Compliance Manager
Sarahi Rivera	Director of Child Development and Education Support Services
Sheyla Perez	Contract Manager
Pamela Hollingsworth	Sr. VP for Strategic Initiatives and Program Development
Kimii Robinson	Director of Family and Community Engagement
Valeria Perez Sarabia	Nutrition Manager
Yissel Morales	Contract Manager

**III. Action Item**

**A. February 21, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Randy Grice asked for a motion to approve the February 21, 2024 meeting minutes.

- Motion made by Kerenza Scheeper
- Motion seconded by Polo Coronado
- No discussion
- Motion passed in 10 favor and 0 opposed

## **B. Resolutions**

### **Resolution 04172024-01: Grant Budget**

Ms. Del Rio shared that every year the Early Head Start program must submit an application stating how the funds will be used for the following year. She shared that the resolution being presented is for the 2024-2025 budget in the amount of \$12,039,388.00. This money is comprised of our regular program operation budget of \$11,807,014.00 and training and technical assistance funding of \$232,374.00., pending the Cost-of-Living Adjustment. Finally, a variance chart was shared with the members comparing the changes to last year's budget. Ms. Del Rio asked the member if there were any questions or comments concerning the grant budget being submitted.

Mr. Randy Grice asked for a motion to approve Resolution **04172024-01: Grant Budget**.

- Motion made by Kerenza Scheeper
- Motion seconded by Rubianna Williams
- No discussion
- Motion passed 10 in favor and 0 opposed.

### **Resolution 04172024-02: Grant Application**

Mrs. Torres shared that the Office of Head Start grants are awarded in 5-year periods. Before the start of the 5-year project, programs must submit a detailed application that states how the will be program implemented during the next five years. As part of the 5-year project application, programs must establish program and school readiness goals.

During years 2-4 of the project period, the program submits an annual application with updates or changes to the original 5-year project application. Mrs. Torres provided a summary of changes that the program plans to submit in the application, reviewed the program goals, and the training and technical assistance training. Mrs. Rivera reviewed the school readiness goals. Ms. Torres asked the member if there were any questions or comments concerning the grant application being submitted.

Mr. Randy Grice asked for a motion to approve Resolution **04172024-02: Grant Application**.

- Motion made by Polo Coronado
- Motion seconded by Kerenza Scheeper
- No discussion
- Motion passed in 10 favor and 0 opposed.

### **Resolution 04172024-03: Quality Improvement**

Ms. Torres shared with the members that the Office of Head Start Region IV sent a communication advising programs of the opportunity to apply for one-time Quality Improvement funds. The Office of Head Start Region IV did not assign a set amount nor provided specifications on what types of projects were acceptable. Programs can submit an application with a project specific to the needs of their program and determine the amount of funding needed to implement the projects. Ms. Torres stated that the program is requesting approval to apply for a total of \$371,528 to contract with a vendor who will be able to provide additional in-depth coaching to teachers and to support centers in hiring a third teacher who can be assigned to any classroom needing support. Centers with an enrollment of 8 to 32 children would be eligible to receive funding for one additional teacher and centers with an enrollment from 39 to 64 would be eligible for two additional teachers.

Mr. Randy Grice asked for a motion to approve Resolution 04172024-03: Quality Improvement.

- Motion made by Kerenza Scheeper
- Motion seconded by Iris Strachan
- No discussion
- Motion passed in 10 favor and 0 opposed.

#### IV. Reports

##### A. **Expenditure Report and Credit Card Reports (January and February 2024)**

###### **January 2024**

The total year-to-date expenses in January 2024 were \$5,590,465.51. Of these, \$3,170,780.24 went to childcare partners for direct services. The program used 46.4% out of the 50% goal.

###### **January 2024 Credit Card Report**

There was \$268.21 in credit card expenses for the month of January 2024. This charge was for lodging expenses for one staff member to attend an out-of-town conference.

###### **February 2024**

The total year-to-date expenses in February 2024 were \$6,648,483.13. Of these, \$3,616,785.21 went to childcare partners for direct services. The goal percentage for February is 58%. The program is right on target at 55.2%. The program is forecasting \$11,818,845.57 in expenses for the year.

###### **February 2024 Credit Card Report**

There were no credit card expenses for the month of February 2024.

##### B. **Meal Reports Month February and March 2024**

Ms. Torres introduced the new Nutrition Manager, Ms. Valeria Perez, to the Policy Council. Ms. Perez shared that each month the program shares the amount of USDA meals claimed by each site. The report captures the number of meals given to each child, each day of the month for each meal. The percent column indicates the percent of meals served based on each day a child was present for the month. Sometimes children arrive late or leave early and miss one or more meals. Those who arrive late may not be counted for USDA purposes but will still be offered a meal.

During February and March reports meals that did not reach 100% are in red. This means one or more children missed the specific meal for one or more days of the month. The meals with a red box are centers in which all meals had one or more children leave early or arrive late for certain days of the month. In February, the program had three centers in this situation and in March there were two centers. The program analyzed the meals. The centers that did not reach 100% for all meals were mainly a result of children arriving late and leaving early due to health issues.

##### C. **February and March 2024 Enrollment Reports**

Policy Council Members were advised that the Early Head Start (EHS) program is currently operating from 27 centers to serve 750 children for School Year 2023-2024 as of April 17.

The Early Head Start (EHS) program ended the month of February with 726 children enrolled and three vacancies with less than 30 days with the selection and enrollment process pending.

In late February, Lincoln Marti 940 joined the Early Learning Coalition- Early Head Start program and in March began providing services to 24 families in the Perrine region.

The Early Head Start (EHS) program ended the month of March with 740 children enrolled and 10 vacancies with less than 30 days with the selection and enrollment process pending.

##### D. **February and March 2024 Attendance Reports**

Policy Council Members were advised that the Early Head Start (EHS) program met attendance for

February with 87.74 %, which aligns with the trend of the past four (4) years. The top two (2) reasons for absences for the month of February were sick/illness & medical appointments.

The Early Head Start (EHS) program met attendance for March with 85.66 %, which aligns with the trend of past four (4) years. The top two (2) reasons for absences for the month of March were sick/illness & vacation (spring break).

#### **V. General Updates**

Mrs. Torres shared three incidents that occurred at the centers. Due to the nature of the incidents, the program was required to report the incidents to the Office of Head Start Region IV.

The first incident involved a child who was reaching for an item across the table and the chair slipped out from under the child. The child cut her head causing her to get 3 stitches. The Department of Children and Families visited the center and cited the center for not having the appropriate size furniture and inadequate supervision. The center addressed the furniture size right away and met with the staff to discuss the supervision of children.

The second incident was a parent who claimed that her child had come home with scars after being enrolled in the center for two days. The mother also mentioned that the child was not her usual active self. The mother felt the child was given something to eat that made her act this way. The Child Protective Investigator from the Child Abuse Hotline conducted an investigation at the center and did a drug test on the teachers. The drug tests came back negative. According to the CEO of the center, the Child Protective Investigator stated there wasn't evidence to support the allegation.

The third incident was a complaint a parent made stating that staff at the center had discriminated against her due to her religion. It seems that the center application asked the families to state their religion. The CEO of the center stated the question would be removed immediately since it had no relevance. The mom requested to transfer her child to another location. The child was enrolled at the requested center the following week.

Mr. Grice inquired about the program's system for addressing these incidents.

The program staff explained that the program has a contract with Family Central which conducts classroom observations. Family Central provides strategies to teachers on how to address children with challenging behavior or general classroom management. If a child is exhibiting challenging behavior, Family Central will also conduct consultations with parents and provide strategies to help the child. Additionally, teachers participate in trainings on active supervision and child abuse on an annual basis. When incidents occur, staff from the compliance team will conduct a visit to the center to ensure health and safety standards are being followed. The compliance staff will increase the number of visits to the center, usually 2-3 times a week, until there is a sense of confidence that the children are safe. Finally, to ensure proper coverage of the classrooms all Early Head Start staff who visit a center are required to report the adult-child ratio in each classroom.

#### **VI. Reminders**

Next Policy Council meeting will be on Wednesday, June 19, 2024 at 5:30 p.m.

#### **VII. Public Comments**

Mr. Polo Coronado emphasized the accomplishment of the program with no findings during the financial audit. Mrs. Iris Strachan and Mr. Randy Grice thanked all Early Head Start staff for their hard work and professionalism.

#### **VIII. Adjournment**

Mr. Randy Grice asked for a motion to adjourn.

- Motion made by Mr. Polo Coronado and seconded by Ms. Iris Strachan
- Meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

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