

Minutes

Early Learning Coalition of Miami-Dade/Monroe Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of August 25, 2020 1 pm Meeting

Zoom Meeting

<https://zoom.us/j/98627834352?pwd=Q3pKYmQyZ0s3alBrlL21oQnVtRVB4dz09>

Meeting ID: 986 2783 4352

Passcode: 835222

Monroe County Advisory Committee Attendees:

Chairperson, Heather Carruthers (Monroe County Mayor/Commissioner Dist.3) Marla Russell (Early Childhood Coordinator/Supervisor, Monroe County), Christine Patterson, (Director, Inez Martin Child Care Center), Sue Ellen Bennet, (Director, St. James Children's Center), Laura Toman, (Child Find Specialist/Psychologist, Monroe County), Aleida Jacobo (CEO Wesley House Family Services).

Staff Attendees:

Evelio Torres (President and CEO, Early Learning Coalition), Angelo Parrino (Chief Operating Officer, Early Learning Coalition), Sandra Gonzalez (Senior VP of School Readiness and Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten (VPK), Laurie Dunn (Monroe County Supervisor, Early Learning Coalition-Monroe), Wilhelmina Lopez-Martin (Family Support Specialist, Early Learning Coalition-Monroe). Pamela Hollingsworth (Senior VP for Strategy Innovation, Early Learning Coalition), Fiorella Altare Christie (Sr. Director of Quality Initiatives, Early Learning Coalition), Michele Morgan (Provider Services Specialist/CCR&R, Early Learning Coalition-Monroe), Amber Keller (Provider Services Specialist, Early Learning Coalition-Monroe), Dessiree Aguilera (Quality and Inclusion Specialist), Adelina Gross (Deputy Director-Professional Development Institute, Early Learning Coalition), Ana Sejeck (Training Manager-Professional Development Institute, Early Learning Coalition), Jackye Russell (Senior VP Administration, Early Learning Coalition), Dr. Anabel Espinosa (Director of Research and Evaluation, Early Learning Coalition), Lisa Sanabria (Board Liaison, Early Learning Coalition)

General Attendees:

Sandy Bisceglia (ELC Board Member), Chuck Mohr, (ELC Board Member), Deena Hoagland (ELC Board Member) Nilda Bernaldez, (Director, Burton Memorial CDC), Leana Woods (Director, First Baptist Church, Jack Hill Child Care Center), Jeff Hurst, (Department of Children and Families), Amy O'Connor (Director, Montessori Children's School of Key West), Maria Vaillant, (Director, Kreative Kids Christian Academy), Jerlyn Matthews, (Director, Sunbeam Christian School), Linsey Helm Alba,

(Director, Islamorada Childcare), Arianna Nesbitt (CEO Keys Healthy Start), Brandi Jordan (Director, Community Co-Op), Jennifer Sisco, (Director, Lighthouse Christian Academy), Kelly Ullrich, (Director, Grace Jones Community Center),

I. Welcome & Introductions

Commissioner Heather Carruthers, Chair

- Committee Chair Heather Carruthers welcomed the committee members and attendees to the meeting.
- Chair Carruthers asked everyone to introduce themselves.

II. Approval of Agenda

Commissioner Heather Carruthers, Chair

- Chair Carruthers called for the approval of the agenda.
 - Motion to approve the agenda made by Marla Russell; seconded by Christine Patterson, motion approved.

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Heather Carruthers, Chair

- Chair Carruthers called for the approval of the minutes from the February 11, 2020 Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting.
 - Motion to approve the minutes made by Marla Russell; seconded by Christine Patterson, motion approved.

IV. ELC Update CEO

Evelio Torres, President &

PowerPoint Slide Presentation: Guiding Principles: Victory Looks Like. Always Selecting the Moral High Ground.

Student Centered and Family Focused. All Students Can Learn. Recognize, Elevate & Celebrate Teachers.

Accountability is Key, legislative want to know the way the dollars are spent. Closing Achievement Gaps, areas where there are a lot of poverty and social issues. In Monroe County we have done some work and we want to hone in on these areas that have the biggest need. Act with Urgency. Competition Inspires Growth.

Break-Out Groups from the Strategic Planning Retreat. Program, Policy, & Strategy Committee (Leading for Equity, Capacity Building), Provider Services Committee (Provider sustaining and Strengthening), Monroe Advisory Committee (Monroe County Initiatives).

We had a Strategic Planning Committee Meeting yesterday with Board Members. They agreed to form these four break-out groups into existing board committees. Virtual Programming, we are trying to do so much now especially with Virtual VPK which is called VPK Flex. We are trying to offer the teachers as much virtual education as possible focusing on the students. It is authorized until the end of this fiscal year. In class VPK is authorized to start on August 24th. Some programs have decided to wait until the 31st, that is when the public schools will open.

30% of our emails to providers are open and 70% remain unopen, we try to get information out to the providers about grants we are offering. We are having to make phone calls to follow up and

multiple phone calls. Many providers would have missed out on grants that we offered had we not followed up with a number of phone calls.

We have decided to hold weekly provider calls instead of monthly. It was recommended to hold 30-minute calls instead of the long calls and focus on three different topics. We will also have a Provider Facebook Group for Directors and Owners and a Provider Corner on our website.

There was an increase to the base student allocation has been increased. The increase was authorized by the Florida Legislative. Investments to Support Early Care and Education Partners. Our Board of Directors approved a rate increase for the School Readiness Program. It is a \$10 million-dollar annual investment. After approved by the board it was submitted to the Office of Early Learning and they approved it as well.

More online training made available through the Professional Development Institute.

Covid-19 Mini Grants, Monroe, \$38,000 and Health/safety and Mini-grant, \$36,000. To summarize we had a very successful program across the state to serve children of health care providers and first responders, they received free childcare regardless of income. We served more children in Miami/Dade and Monroe than any other county in the state. We continue to have no waiting list in Miami/Dade and Monroe. The good news is that we do not have any children on the wait list, the bad news is that the State Legislative allocate \$60 million dollars to the Wait List and we will receive very little of those dollars, because we do not have a wait list.

- **Monroe County Updates – Laurie Dunn, Monroe County Supervisor**

VPK and School Readiness. As of August 18, we had 324 approved VPK certificates and as of today, we have 343. School based sites started the Flex VPK on August 19. Privates sites begin face to face VPK at various dates starting on August 17. We have no SR applications in the queue right now. They are still being pulled daily.

We have served 56 First Responder families in Monroe and that includes 81 children. Currently we have no childcare sites that are closed due to COVID. Grants/Meetings/Misc., we stay in touch by daily calls with the Inclusion team, Monroe team and SR/VPK team. Quorum E Learning was purchased for 96 teachers in Monroe.

We are still assisting clients remotely. Ongoing collaboration with community partners.

We just started a monthly newsletter called the Conch Corner, you will be receiving it in the next couple of weeks. It will include updates for Monroe staff and teachers, spotlight a childcare center or teacher monthly and offer any additional support.

- **Opportunities for Learners with Special Needs in Monroe County - Dr. Anabel Espinosa,**

Florida VPK Specialized Instructional Services (VPK SIS), offered through the VPK Program. For children who have an identifiable disability or and IEP. This allows them to use their VPK dollars towards therapy services instead of being in a traditional classroom. The application process is involved, you can contact the Monroe warmline for assistance.

Preapproved services are specialized services identified in an IEP. Tele-Therapy providers are based in Miami.

Dade has built a telehealth service. The time frame for VPK SIS, is that it must start no earlier than 14 days before Labor Day and end no later than June 30th for the school year option. The Summer option is no earlier than May 1st and has to end 15 days before Labor Day. If you have a family who is receiving the Gardiner's scholarship, they will not be eligible for VPK SIS. Teletherapy treatment is provided through a live, audio-visual connection over the internet.

- **Professional Development, Pamela Hollingsworth, SR VP for Strategic Initiatives and Program Development:** We are always encouraging everyone to train with PDI and as Dr. Espinosa pointed out in her presentation, the rise of virtual services has a huge impact on training opportunities for Monroe County. Our Virtual Children's First Conference is coming up, September 12th, we have lots of great speakers lined up, four learning tracks, a half-day session. We are working in partnership with Miami Dade College this year and we expect to

be pulling students and participants, not only from Monroe County, but all over the state. This is a free conference for providers, complete with raffles and we will be distributing continuing education units and in-service hours as well. Two weeks ago, Friday we held a virtual summit called Charting the Course for Childcare. We had several providers dialing in from Monroe and one referred to it as a survival guide. This summit focused on Business Practices, Health and Safety, Emergency Preparedness and Emergency Communication as well as safe care. It was unique that it focuses only on childcare owners and directors. It was very successful and a lot of request for a repeat performance in another language. Last Fall, Marla Russell and Superintendent Terri Axford really encouraged the PDI to aggressively pursue virtual learning and online learning in Monroe County. We were cautious in the beginning, but began the work immediately and started testing webinars and learning about the process and the procedures and what we can do with it. In March of 2020 the PDI went from being 80% in-person and 20% online classes to being 100% online. In Monroe from December 2019 to March 2020 we served 40 teachers and from March - June 2020 we served 135. Monroe PDI is serving 96 Providers. We have many of classes available to support COVID-19 response and education. We are launching the National CDA for infants and toddlers in October and this class is all online. We are encouraging our teachers in Monroe to enroll. The National CDA for family childcare providers is being launched in English in the next 30 days. We currently have two Monroe providers registered and have little space left. This will be roughly a 60-month program with childcare provider biweekly meetings. They will finish just after the first of the year. From there the graduate can apply for a National CDA credential. Last week we launched Zoom for teachers and administrators training in English and Spanish. These are one-hour trainings. We have on going subscriptions for My Teaching Strategies. Weekly or bi-weekly constant communication with be shared with Laurie Dunn to get the information out.

VI. Monroe County Updates

• Child Care Provider Update – SueEllen Bennett, Provider Representative

- Centers are having a hard time trying to hire teachers. We have a classroom that is closed and several of the other centers said they are having the same problem. Part of the problem is the pay that we have in early childhood. Right now, a low of people are concerned with coming into centers and being around the children as well as the parents. Another reason why enrollment is low is because of virtual schooling, alot of parents are home with their children trying to teach them. Another problem that we have is that some people are afraid to come back. Most of the centers that we have are following the guidelines. The adults are wearing masks at all times. Everybody is following social distancing and are trying to stay outside as much as possible. Parents are being supportive and helpful and are very appreciative of the childcare centers being open. The kids who have come back are happy to be back. To see some normalcy in their lives and see their friends. Thank You to ELC for the online training. It has been very helpful and very easy to do. The teachers really appreciate the stipend for the courses they were taking, which was a nice bonus for them. Not only did they get credit for the classes and the knowledge, it was nice to get a little extra money. Thank you for everybody pulling together and us working together as well as we do. We are very fortunate here in the Keys to have the camaraderie that we have with each other. Thank you very much.

• District Head Start/VPK Update – Marla Russell, Early Childhood Coordinator/Supervisor, Monroe County

We are down 50% for vouchers in the district. We did start virtual VPK on the 19th. We are preparing as a school district to come back with a plan to make sure that we physically distance. Our goal is to come back and to be able to stay back. Those are the challenges that we are facing right now. The reopening plan for VPK was approved by the state. We are only allowed 220 hours of virtual. Thank you to ELC and Laurie for distributing the PPE Supplies for the VPK classrooms.

- **DCF Licensing Update – Jeff Hurst, Family Services Counselor**

DCF is trying to make sure that the providers get the best information and that they understand, especially in Miami Dade where there is much confusion with the Governor's Executive Orders and order coming out from the Mayor's office. We understand what is going on. We are trying to assist the providers who are staying open the best we can. We have had providers who have close after 30 years of service. I will be more than willing to work with Monroe to give them updates of what is going on so that you have one person that you are dealing with and you get the best information. There is a brand-new training in 2020 on Mandated Reporting and I will be willing to provide that to the providers or anyone.

DCF still is not doing routine inspections on site. They will have the provider use a camera, because they trying to reduce people coming into the centers. The only time that they are coming out to do an inspection is doing the renewal process and that is if the center is open. DCF do not normally call ahead of time before coming out, but what we are doing because of the circumstances is calling a couple of days ahead of time to make sure providers have all of their information prepared so that when DCF goes in they are wearing their PPE and not exposing children, themselves or families. They are not staying there for hours like they used to. One of the new things is the programs that have after hours in schools, we have about four in Monroe. Allowing those providers, a temporary license to go to a new space. If you have been closed anytime, specifically 90 days, they need to have their level 2 updated. They technically been out of the center or away from you. The reason for this is that while they were out, they may have committed an infraction and should not serve children. The 30-hour training that providers need, never stopped.

Make sure that all staff have their 40 hours screening and their level 2 screening. DCF is going to put something with really short bullets together so people will know who to contact. If they send them to ELC, they will send out a blast to the providers. If any provider wants to do anything different, so that everybody is on the same page they need to put it in writing and DCF will send it up to Tallahassee, so that everybody is doing the same thing. There is no requirement for a center to be closed for 14 days. They must contact the Health Department who will make different recommendations based on the case. If any providers have any questions, they may email Jeff at jeffreyhurst@myyflfamilies.com or (561) 302-1501.

VII. Public Comments

- **Heather Carruthers, Evelio you may want to try Facebook Live Sessions which has been very effective, we have hundreds of participants. People ask questions and I answer them in real time. Alert systems is another way to get the information out. Evelio, this is the last call for the PPE's if anyone in Monroe County, please let Laurie know we can provide them to you. We have drafted bylaws, maybe we can get a small committee to go over them. Maybe Heather can appoint a small group and possibly have board member Sandi Bisceglia spear head the group. Sue Ellen Bennett and Marla Russell, both said they would help. Per Evelio, the ELC will have their staff doing the leg work on it. The ELC can coordinate a meeting. Sue Ellen thanked Evelio for making sure Monroe County did not lose their identity due to the merging with Miami/Dade. Evelio thanked Mayor Carruthers for staying with the board after her term was up.**

VIII. Adjourn
Heather Carruthers., Chair

Commissioner