



# MINUTES

## Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting

May 17, 2022; 1pm

Meeting ID: 942 4695 6857

Passcode: ELC051722

**Committee Attendees:** Sandi Bisceglia; Aleida Jacobo; Gilda Ferradaz; Sue Ellen Bennett; Lisa Taylor; Marla Russell; Gilda Ferradaz

**Committee Absentees:**

**Attendees:** Christine Patterson, Fiorella A Christie, Dialina Quintanal, Anabel Espinosa, Sandra Gonzalez, Pamela Hollingsworth, Laurie Dunn, Desiree Aguilera, Laura Toman, Michele Morgan, Michelle Meilan, Evelio Torres, Ana Sejeck, Angelo Parrino, Mercy Castiglione, Jeff Hurst, Jennifer Walker, Jennifer Lefelar, Ana Sejeck, J. Matthews, Brandi Jordan, Liz Bradley, Chuck Mohr, Laura Toman, Maria Morales, Pamela Malval, Maria Lamadrid, Maria Vaillant,

**I. Welcome & Introductions**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

- A. S. Bisceglia called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.
- B. Quorum was established with seven (7) voting members.

**II. Approval of Minutes**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

Approval of March 17, 2022 Meeting Minutes

Approval of minutes for January 18, 2022

- o Motion to approve by M. Russell
- o Motion seconded by L. Taylor
- o Motion unanimously passed

**III. Guest Speaker**

**Jennifer Lefelar**

S. Bisceglia introduced guest speaker Jennifer Lefelar, Community Health Planner with the Florida Department of Health.

Presentation was on the HEROS/Go NAPSACC and how this health-based program can support the health needs of children in child care. She discussed the requirements, benchmarks,

Mission: To promote high-quality school readiness, voluntary pre-kindergarten and after school programs, thus increasing all children's chances of achieving future educational success and becoming productive members of society. The Coalition seeks to further the physical, social, emotional and intellectual needs of Miami-Dade and Monroe County children with a priority toward the ages before birth through age 5.



recognition awards and support offered throughout the program. All partners in the Keys will be sent a one-page flyer describing the two-part program.

#### **IV. Chair Updates**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

##### **A. Request volunteers for Monroe Provider Representative**

There is a vacancy on the ELC Board to represent Monroe County. Ads are being run in local newspapers to attract a candidate to volunteer/serve. At this point, there have been no applicants.

SueEllen Bennett has been the Monroe Provider Representative for the Keys. As she will be stepping down this summer, a new representative is needed. Laurie Dunn stated she has two providers who may possibly be stepping up to this role for training/shadowing. Sue Ellen will reach out to both interested parties and go over expectations.

##### **B. Needs Assessment Action Plan/Next Steps/Strategic Plan**

Chair Sandi Bisceglia reminded participants to please become very familiar with the Needs Assessment for Monroe results and recommendations (pages 26-104 of the slide show), and the Strategic Plan (pages 105-121 of the slide show), as these documents will become the basis for much of our future work, discussion, and direction for the next five years. Participants were encouraged to review and be prepared to give feedback on both the Monroe County Needs Assessment and the Strategic Plan.

Some of these initiatives have been assigned to various ELC standing committees for further development of "action plans" and will be shared with the group as details emerge.

##### **C. Chamber Updates**

Board members visited the St. James Center (Board Members Chuck Mohr, Lisa Taylor, Sandi Bisceglia) along with ELC headquarters staff in hosting the new Office of Early Learning Chancellor Matthew Mears when he visited the Keys in early May.

He was escorted to three Keys Centers by Staff, one in each part of the Keys. At the St. James Center in the Upper Keys, Sue Ellen Bennett was presented with a plaque for her lifelong service to in early childhood education. Photos were taken with the Board, staff, students, and Chancellor Mears.

Judy Hull, our Keys Chamber liaison for the Keys was asked by Sandi Bisceglia to attend this gathering as well, which she did, and presented the Chancellor with some Keys gifts from the Keys Chambers.

The Chancellor then went on to Key West, where he spoke the next day at the State Board of Education meeting regarding some rules changes. Evelio Torres and Sandi Bisceglia also addressed the Board during public comment to support ELC work and that of the Chancellor. One of his priorities is raising the income level for families to qualify for services.



#### **D. Nominations for Monroe Advisory Committee Vice Chair**

E. Torres advanced the name at the zoom meeting of Gilda Ferradaz, as someone he approached to take the Vice Chair position for the Monroe Advisory Group of ELC. She said she would take the position. Keys based Board Member Lisa Taylor, when asked, said she would support the candidate (as Lisa had been asked formerly to consider taking this position, but declined "at this time"). It will require about 10-15 hours a year.

Approval of Gilda Ferradaz as Monroe Advisory Committee Vice Chair

- Motion to approve by M. Russell
- Motion seconded by L. Taylor
- Motion unanimously passed

There was no public comment.

#### **V. Partner Updates**

##### **Marla Russell, Early Childhood**

- A. District Head Start/Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Update Marla Russell, Early Childhood Supervisor reported that this time last year there were 207 stand-alone VPK vouchers with a total of 272 blended. Head Start enrollment is down.

Marla Russell shared that soon Roy's trailer park in Stock Island will be demolished and many of students from the school district currently reside there. There is little to none available "affordable" housing around and now these families will be displaced with nowhere to go. The housing crisis in Monroe County is a huge challenge to many families.

- B. Sue Ellen Bennett, Provider Representative, stated that when she contacted Directors that many of them were struggling with staffing shortages. One of her teachers is currently out caring for a sick spouse and SueEllen is now standing in as a VPK teacher. She herself is trying to retire but is unable to find anyone to take her place. She said she will stay until a new Director can be found.

She shared that many people are excited that the Monroe conference in September will be in person instead of virtual. Her students recently participated in a Read-A-Thon with parents with the theme based on literacy. The students also had a Mother's Day breakfast and parents were thrilled to be back in the classroom sharing an event with their children. Lastly, SueEllen thanked everyone for the honor of being recognized at the State Board of Education meeting



- A. L. Dunn shared a variety of collaborations with the ELC and other groups such as United Way, Ocean Reef Foundation, Community Health of South Florida, Upper Keys Community Resource Council, Children’s Work Group, Monroe County Alliance and the Monroe County school district. These collaborations are helpful in finding common solutions to benefit the needs of the community. She also described ways in which the Monroe staff are advertising services and finding out how parents hear about us (through a marketing survey). Lastly, she talked about upcoming community family friendly events in which the staff plan to be a part of,
- B. Enrollment data Enrollment Date- S. Gonzalez shared that the SR enrollments have increased to 295 and data that was pulled this morning showed over 300. VPK enrollments are now at 445 but this number will decrease (as it typically does) during the Summer months when Fall VPK has ended. She believes that this increase is in part due to the outreach and promotional efforts of the staff. At risk referrals are holding steady at 31.
- C. Monroe Conference: Be the Star of Your own Life! September 24<sup>th</sup> at Marathon High School. DR. Pamela Phelps of the Creative Preschool in Tallahassee and author of “Beyond Cribs and Rattles” and “Beyond Centers and Circle Time” will be the key note speaker.
- D. P. Hollingsworth gave updates on the Internship program in Monroe. Two early learning partners (Inez Martin and St. James) have signed up for the program and are awaiting the placement of an intern. They have not had much success with recruiting interns in Monroe County thus far. One of the obstacles of recruiting staff is being able to complete the DCF requirements. One literacy tutor has been recruited at Jack Hill Childcare.

L. Dunn said she is working with the school district on a program called MOVE (Monroe Occupation and Vocational Experiences) that may offer some solution to staffing challenges. Laurie will report on this at the next meeting or have a representative from the school district give an overview.

## **VII. Monroe Inclusion and Assessment Update**

**Aileen Suazo**

A. Suazo, Screening and Evaluation Manager gave an update in the place of Dr. Anabel Espinosa. Dr. Espinosa and a staff member recently conducted some on site visits in the Keys to determine the needs of some of partners. Aileen shared that there are currently 3 children in the VPK SIS program using their VPK dollars to receive therapeutic services. There are new providers in the Keys that offer the much-needed services.

The numbers of screenings have declined during the month of April due to some classrooms being closed due to staff shortage.



- A. E. Torres explained that there is a lot of work to be done before the next legislative session to try to change the allocation funding formula. This formula is based on the population of children. Partners need to know who their legislators are and share their concerns. It is important for them to advocate to raise the threshold of families qualifying for services.
  
- B. American Rescue Plan Act Grants: F. Christie reported that the application process started March 7, 2022 and application acceptance will close on June 30, 2022. So far \$151, 981.08 in applications have been approved. Reminders are still being sent to ensure partners have every opportunity to apply for this grant. Currently 6 on the approved list are from Monroe but there are still many applications to review and process.

**IX. DCF Updates**

- A. G. Ferradaz explained that DCF is also facing a staffing shortage and currently has no private investigator in the Keys. They have been unable to hire anyone in over a year. They have to rotate staff from Miami in order to provide coverage. She also shared that on April 28<sup>th</sup> DCF had their first provider meeting in 2 years (via zoom).
- B. J. Hurst stated that DCF recognized all the challenges faced in childcare and are doing their best to assist everyone to ensure compliance measures are met. He recently attended a training out of Hillsborough County called "Quality Early Education System". That helps child care providers to not get any violations. He is willing to train small groups of people on a Saturday afternoon face to face. L. Dunn will set up a meeting with him in the next couple of weeks.

**X. New Business**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

S. Bisceglia asked that we continue to keep the Monroe County Needs Assessment as a standing item on the meeting agenda for ongoing conversation on how the information can be used in the best way.

**XI. Public Comments**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

**XII. Adjourn**

**Sandi Bisceglia, Chair**

- Motion to adjourn by L. Taylor
- Motion seconded by G. Ferradaz

**Next Meeting Date: August 16, 2022 at 1 pm.**