

Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes

April 11, 2025, from 11:00am – 1:00pm

Teleconference via Zoom

Attendance

- Sarah Abrahams (HHSC Family Support Services)
- Shruthi Arismendez (Director of the Maternal and Child Health Unit at the Department of State Health Services)
- Weldon Beard (President of the Texas Head Start Association)
- April Crawford (Co-Director of the Children's Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Becky Huss-Keeler (Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Houston-Clear Lake)
- Kim Kofron (Director of Early Childhood Education for Children at Risk)
- Tori Lee (Director of Early Childhood for Texas Education Agency)
- Beatris Mata (Director of Early Childhood Education for the Ector County Independent School District)
- Reagan Miller (Director of the Child Care and Early Learning Division for the Texas Workforce Commission)
- Marisela Nava (Texas Southmost College Child Care Center)
- Kierstan Schwab (Executive Director of the Texas Public Broadcasting Association)
- Jennifer Stockemer (Owner and Director of Ivy Vine Preschool, LLC)
- Meghan Young (Director of Early Childhood Intervention Program for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission)

1. Call to Order

Reagan Miller called the meeting to order at 11:00am.

2. January 2025 Minutes Approval

Revisions were requested to the January 2025 TELC Meeting Minutes to reflect that Becky Huss-Keeler and Marisela Nava were in attendance.

Kim Kofron moved to approve the January 2025 meeting minutes with revisions, and Jennifer Stockemer seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved. A quorum was met during roll call.

3. Public Comment

No public comment.

4. Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan

The Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan is divided into 4 goals. Updates on actions related to Goal 1: Family Access, Navigation & Engagement and Goal 2: Workforce Recruitment, Retention & Support.

Cathi Arwood, Policy Manager for the Child Care and Early Learning Division of TWC, gave an update on the Eligibility Screener and Early Childhood Texas Website, related to the following actions:

- Action 1.1.1: TEA, THSSCO, and TWC will simplify application practices by launching a common eligibility screener on <https://earlychildhood.texas.gov/>.
- Action 1.3.2: TWC will refine <https://earlychildhood.texas.gov/> for families and providers to retrieve information about early learning programs.

April Crawford, Co-Director of Children's Learning Institute (CLI), and Dr. Tracy Anne Jones (Assistant Director for Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System, TECPDS) gave an update on how her team is supporting Goal 2, particularly the following actions:

- Strategy 2.2: Expand and refine early learning pathways to comprehensively include all professionals who work with young children.
- Strategy 2.4: Retain early learning workforce professionals in the field by providing educational and social support.

CLI is implementing a statewide career pathways and trajectories study to learn more about this landscape. The initial study findings will be released by August and will inform future resource planning. CLI is deploying a new networking feature on TECPDS to more easily connect professionals to one another and career opportunities.

Kierstan Schwab, Chair of the TELC Strategic Plan Workgroup, gave an update on the progress of their work. For Action 2.4.5 (TELC will provide support for workforce preparedness) and Action 2.4.7 (TELC will identify and promote current training and coursework that provide professional development around behavioral problems, mental health, parent engagement, and inclusivity, leveraging existing inventories), the group recommends using TECPDS as a centralized resource for early childhood educators. Their next step is to solicit input from known early childhood training entities. The group

also requested input from the TELC on suggestions for how to address programs that turn students away with disabilities, and how to make centers aware that ECI therapists can provide services in child care facilities.

5. Legislative Updates

Stephanie Rubin and Kim Kofron gave updates about state legislative activity related to early childhood education. Stephanie Rubin also shared a Texans Care for Children Resource about Medicaid coverage in Texas:

<https://covertexasnow.org/posts/2025/3/12/overview-of-medicaid-in-texas-1>.

6. Updates from TELC Members

Cathi Arwood, Program Policy & Quality Improvement Manager of the Child Care & Early Learning Division of TWC shared updates about the Statewide Family Child Care Network and the [Early Educators Credit Pathways Support](#), which provides funding for public Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to create and define clear credit pathways in the Early Childhood field.

Mandy Young from TEA gave an update about Early Childhood Special Education resources:

- [Determining the Least Restrictive Environment \(LRE\) in Preschool](#)
- [Empowering ECSE Educators to Improve Student Outcomes Grant](#); The opening date for the 25-26 school year has not been determined yet.

7. Upcoming Early Childhood Events

- [Texas Developmental Screening and Surveillance \(Tx DSS\) ECHO](#)
 - 2nd Friday of each month from 1-2pm CT
- Kim Kofron updated the group about the Children at Risk Spring Virtual Texas Tour next week: <https://childrenatrisk.org/?s=texas+tour>.

8. Upcoming TELC Meeting Dates:

August 8, 2025

October 24, 2025

9. Adjourn

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 1:00 pm.