

## *Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes*

August 8, 2025, from 11:00am – 1:00pm  
Teleconference via Zoom

### **Attendance**

- Shruthi Arismendez (Director of the Maternal and Child Health Unit at the Department of State Health Services)
- April Crawford (Co-Director of the Children's Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Alferma Giles (Director of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office at the Children's Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Kim Kofron (Director of Early Childhood Education for Children at Risk)
- Tori Lee (Director of Early Childhood for Texas Education Agency)
- Reagan Miller (Director of the Child Care and Early Learning Division for the Texas Workforce Commission)
- Marisela Nava (Director of Texas Southmost College Child Care Center)
- Stephanie Rubin (CEO of Texans Care for Children)
- Amber Scanlan (Senior Vice President and Director of Client and Community Relations for PNC)
- Kierstan Schwab (Executive Director of the Texas Public Broadcasting Association)
- 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.

Reagan Miller acknowledged that Council Members Sarah Abrahams, Terrie Breeden, and Melissa Hoisington have cycled off the Council due to changes in their positions. There are current vacancies on the Council.

## **2. April 2025 Minutes Approval**

Kim Kofron moved to approve the April 2025 meeting minutes with revisions, and Shruthi Arismendez 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 four goals. Updates were shared by relevant teams on actions related to Goal 2: Workforce Recruitment, Retention & Support and Goal 4: Integrated Data & System Coordination.

Jenny Baldwin and Holly Gurrslin Beseda from Texas Institute for Excellence in Mental Health at the University of Texas at Austin gave an update on how their team is supporting Goal 2 through infant and early childhood mental health consultation, particularly the following actions:

- Strategy 2.4.5: TELC will provide support for workforce preparedness and skill
- Strategy 2.4.7: TELC will identify and promote current training and coursework that provide professional development around behavioral problems, mental health, parent engagement, and leveraging existing inventories.

Megan Schneider from Texas Education Agency gave an update on the progress of the work supporting Goal 4: Integrated Data & System Coordination and looking at two strategies for this goal:

- Strategy 4.1: Developing an Early Childhood Integrated Data System (ECIDS)
- Strategy 4.2: Support data utilization by communities and stakeholders using data platforms to inform quality improvement actions and local systems planning

Cathi Arwood from the Child Care & Early Learning Division of Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) gave an update on the Eligibility Screener and Early Childhood Texas Site, which supports:

- Strategy 4.3: Increase alignment and coordination across agencies to improve family access, navigation, and engagement

Kierstan Schwab, the Chair of the Texas Early Learning Council Strategic Plan Workgroup, gave an update on progress made by the workgroup on Goals 1 and 2, including:

- Goal 1: Action 1.4.2 and 1.4.5 – Members made recommendations on how to distribute the upcoming statewide needs assessment survey that Dr. Mandell is conducting.
- Goal 2:
  - Action 2.3.5 – Dr. Becky Huss Keeler compiled a spreadsheet of the institutes of higher education in Texas that offer higher education programs for physical, occupational, and speech therapists that educate or train on early childhood service provision, which will be posted on Texas Early Childhood Professional Development System (TECPDS).

- Action 2.3.6 – There are opportunities to expand mentorship programs to involve retired teachers, and the workgroup will continue to investigate this opportunity.
- Action 2.4.9 – TECPDS can potentially post information about early childhood conferences.
- Action 2.4.10 – The workgroup has documented additional peer-to-peer mentoring programs, including CARES (Childcare Advancement Resources and Experience Sharing), TECPDS Connect and First Three Years).

## 5. Legislative Updates

Reagan Miller, TWC, gave updates on:

- Senate Bill 462: Created a new waiting list priority for children of child care workers.
- Quad Agency Initiative (House Bill 4903): Tasks TWC with collaborating with TEA, HHSC and Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) to review existing or proposed policies, rules, and regulations related to the child care industry. TWC will be hiring a project manager to assist with coordination of this initiative.

Megan Schneider, Texas Education Agency, gave an update on House Bill 117: Governor’s Task Force on the Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care. This bill designates TEA as the lead agency for this work. The membership of this task force will include two members from the TELC.

Stephanie Rubin, Texans Care for Children, and Kim Kofron, Children at Risk, gave updates on:

- \$100 million dollars of unused TANF funding was added to TWC’s budget for Child Care Services.
- House Bill 6: Allows districts to suspend young children (prekindergarten through second grade students).
- House Bill 2: Children of teachers in school districts are now eligible for free public prekindergarten.

Shruthi Arismendez, Department of State Health Services (DSHS), gave an update on House Bill 3940, which requires DSHS to make updates to various publications for parents of newborns to include information related to Medicaid eligibility.

## 6. Updates from TELC Members

Meghan Young, Texas Health and Human Services Commission, gave an update on Early Intervention Specialist Credentialing.

- Qualifying degrees now include:
  - Child Life
  - Infant and Toddler Studies
  - Infant and Toddler Development
- Related degrees now include:
  - Child Development
  - Early Childhood Education (Early childhood-grade 6 or PreK through grade 3)
  - Family Sciences or Family Studies
  - Nursing

- Rehabilitation Therapy.
- Full list can be located here: <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/providers/assistive-services-providers/early-childhood-intervention-programs/eci-training-technical-assistance/early-intervention-specialist-ipdp-credentialing>

Allison Wilson, TWC, announced a new statewide initiative that TWC is funding: Early Learning Intervention, Training, and Education (ELITE). It focuses on three areas: providing training and support to local workforce solutions staff who are determining when it is appropriate and how to assess the inclusion rate for children with disabilities who are receiving subsidies; providing support and technical assistance to boards and staff to support implementing inclusive practices for children with disabilities; and delivering training to Texas Rising Star providers around inclusive practices and developmentally appropriate strategies and supports. This will cover not only diagnosed, but also undiagnosed disabilities.

#### **7. Upcoming Early Childhood Events**

- [Texas Developmental Screening and Surveillance \(Tx DSS\) ECHO](#) takes place on the second Friday of each month from 1-2pm CT
- Kim Kofron announced that Children At Risk is hosting an Early Childhood Summit on Thursday, August 14<sup>th</sup>.
- Meghan Young announced that the ECI Advisory Committee will meet on August 20<sup>th</sup>.

#### **8. Adjourn**

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 12:39 pm.