

Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes

April 17, 2026, 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 (CLI, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Alferma Giles (Director of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office)
- 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)
- Reagan Miller (Director of the Child Care and Early Learning Division for the Texas Workforce Commission)
- Marisela Nava (Texas Southmost College) Higher Education
- Stephanie Rubin (CEO of Texans Care for Children)
- 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 2026 Minutes Approval

Stephanie Rubin moved to approve the January 2026 meeting minutes, 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

Two registrations were received to provide public comments.

- Laci Beezley-Early Intervention Specialist-Opportunity School. She highlighted significant challenges in providing continuous support for children with disabilities, particularly during transitions between Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Concerns included ECI/ECSE Transition Gap, Child Care Funding Access, ECSE Program Limitations, and Systemic Delays and Parental Burden. To address these issues, Lacey Beasley's organization provides

crucial monthly case management, offering guidance and accountability to help parents navigate these intricate systems.

- Tessa Galloso - Policy Associate for Health, Texans Care for Children. She presented initial themes from interviews with 20 families about Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE). Families consistently praised ECI services as "life-changing," and wished services could continue longer due to the high level of coordination experienced. Transition from ECI to ECSE was described as "extremely challenging." Parents found the ARD process and IEP development complex and overwhelming. ECSE options frequently did not align with their child's developmental needs or their family's logistical realities. Galloso emphasized opportunities to strengthen continuity, improve family support and navigation, and better align services, urging the Texas Early Learning Council to pursue coordinated, cross-agency collaboration for a more seamless continuum of care.

4. Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan

Dr. Dorothy Mandell, Associate Professor at UTHealth Houston, School of Public Health, presented the PDG Birth to Five 2025 Updated Needs Assessment.

Jennifer Lindley with CLI presented on the *higher Ed Profiles Updates & Training Catalog*.

Rachelle Daniel, Quad-Agency and Special Projects director, discussed Actions in Goal areas #1 and #2 currently assigned to TELC - with ECIW suggestions for a path forward.

- **Action Item 1.2.6:** While waiting for implementation of ECIDS, the ECIW proposes that ECIW and TELC members compile a comprehensive list of data sources currently available from each agency or entity regarding early childhood programming. This list will be housed on the TELC website.
- **Action Item 1.4.3:** Notes: ECIW proposes that ECIW and TELC members include family voice highlights as a regular TELC meeting topic, following a rotation that will allow a variety of members to highlight relevant work.
- **Action Item 2.3.5:** Work has been done related to identifying IHE ECE programs and points of contact, but work is needed specific to *speech, occupational, and physical therapy programs*.

5. Updates from TELC Members

Anjolie Bonilla – from Family Support Services at Health and Human Services Commission, She provided an overview of how their program integrates family and youth voice through multi-level strategies. Involvement occurs at the state level as well as locally. The Parent Advisory Council (PAC) has been instrumental in providing feedback on outreach and enrollment materials, actively participating in events, and engaging in discussions regarding program access and benefits. Local Youth Advisory Committees plan activities and contribute to needs assessments, alongside a statewide Youth Ambassador Initiative involving 11 youth. Key lessons

learned emphasize the importance of diverse recruitment and retention strategies for PAC members and acknowledging that PAC formalization should be uniquely tailored to each local context. At the state level, there's a recognized need for collaborative learning spaces for PAC coordinators and members to share best practices and problems, as well as for dedicated training opportunities in parent leadership and PAC development

The Texas Education Agency provided updates:

- Monica Martinez provided some legislative updates on House Bill 117. The Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care was established by House Bill 117 of the 89th Texas Legislature. Comprised of 11 members appointed by the Governor, its primary purpose is to address the governance and operational challenges within Texas's early childhood education and care system. The task force is mandated to develop and submit policy and budget recommendations to the legislature by December 1, 2026, aiming to improve early childhood education and care governance. A dedicated webpage provides access to information about task force members, meeting materials and presentations, future meeting dates, and an avenue for public comment.
- Mandy Young presented information regarding the Strategic Plan to Improve Early Learning Opportunities for Young Children with Disabilities (H.B. 2310). It will outline a multi-faceted approach to enhance support for young children with disabilities and delays. This involves engaging with experts to develop and advance policy recommendations focused on promoting inclusive, mixed-delivery environments, streamlining transitions between services, and improving inter-agency collaboration and partnerships. Additionally, an Inclusive Child Care Group of 7-10 providers from across the state is being assembled to understand their specific resource needs and to vet proposed policy strategies for meaningful impact and to mitigate implementation challenges. Finally, the plan includes collecting stories from 20 families who have transitioned out of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI), aiming to identify both barriers and successes in accessing ECI and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services.

The Texas Workforce Commission provided updates:

- Rachelle Daniel, Quad-Agency and Special Projects director, provided a Quad Agency Update: The Quad Agency Commission commenced its initial review of Pre-K Partnership (PKP) Data Collection on March 24, 2026, as detailed in a briefing paper found online. This review is critical because both the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Texas Education Agency (TEA) collect PKP-related data, and stakeholders have expressed a desire for more local education agencies (LEAs) to form partnerships with private child care providers. The Commission aims to ensure the accuracy of this data to gain a clear understanding of the existing PKP landscape. Public comments on this review are being accepted until April 24, 2026.

- Cathi Arwood, CC&EL Policy & Program Assistance Director, provided an overview of the ELITE Grant. The Early Learning Inclusion Training and Education (ELITE) initiative is a new statewide program funded by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC), with a grant awarded to Child Care Group. Its purpose is to provide technical assistance and training to local Workforce Solutions (WFS) staff, enabling them to better support the inclusive care of children with disabilities and those exhibiting challenging behaviors.

Meghan Young, with Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) from the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, provided an ECI update. The ECI Training Team is currently updating its training modules for child care staff. These refreshed trainings, which include "Planning and Creating Inclusive Early Childhood Classrooms," "Building Stronger Brain Foundations," and "All Together Now: Working Together to Create Positive Learning Environments for All Children," will continue to offer professional education credits to child care professionals.

Kim Kofron, with Children at Risk, provided information that their updated data on child care deserts is now available on their website. Kim will present the findings of this report at the next TELC meeting on July 17, 2026.

6. Upcoming Early Childhood Events

[ECI Advisory Committee:](#)

April 29, 2026

[Child Care Aware of America Symposium 2026](#)

May 3-6 (Arlington VA)

7. Next Meeting Date

July 17, 2026

8. Adjourn

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 1:03pm.