Texas Early Learning Council Meeting Minutes

August 6, 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)
- Weldon Beard (President of the Texas Head Start Association)
- April Crawford (Children's Learning Institute, UT Health Science Center at Houston)
- Alferma Giles (Director of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office)
- Emily Groomer (Early Childhood Special Education State Coordinator, Texas Education Agency)
- 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)
- 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)

Agenda Item Number 1: Call to Order

Reagan Miller called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

Agenda Item Number 2: April 2026 Minutes Approval

Marisela Nava moved to approve the April 2026 meeting minutes, and Shruthi Arismendez seconded the motion. A roll-call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved. A quorum was met during roll call.

Agenda Item Number 3: Review of Standard Operating Procedures

The committee reviewed proposed updates to the standard operating procedures.

Alferma Giles made a motion to approve the updated procedures. April Crawford seconded the motion. Motion was approved.

Agenda Item Number 4: Public Comment

1 registration was received to provide public comment.

- Jaira Knight, Director of Professional Development at First Three Years, the Texas Association for Infant Mental Health.

  Knight explained how infant mental health endorsement, through the Texas Association for Infant Mental Health offers a workforce development framework that builds competency through specialized training and reflective practice to support Texas professionals across various early childhood sectors and improve retention.

Agenda Item Number 5: Family Voice Highlights

Catherine Carlton, Chair of the Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Advisory Committee and appearing as a parent, shared her family's experience with the ECI program and its long-term impact.

Agenda Item Number 6: Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan

The council received an update on the progress of implementing the Texas Early Learning Strategic Plan. Current progress shows that 16 items are completed, 44 have been initiated or are ongoing, and four remain blocked due to funding or other dependencies. The Early Childhood Interagency Workgroup compiled a comprehensive list of data sources from state agencies regarding early childhood programming. This 11-page document serves as a centralized resource for the public to identify available data sets and will be posted to the TELC website as a living document that can be updated as needed. Additionally, the council was informed that the 2023 statewide needs assessment has been finalized and is now available to the public online.

The Council also discussed the new Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five (PDGB-5) SMART Grant funding opportunity that has been posted, but the application is not yet available. Agencies are reviewing the possibility of applying.

Agenda Item Number 7: Updated Child Care Desert Data Presentation, Children at Risk

Lynn Lucas from Children at Risk provided an update on child care desert data, noting the organization's ongoing advocacy and data gathering efforts in partnership with the Texas Workforce Commission.

Agenda Item Number 8: Updates from TELC Members

Reagan Miller, Director of Child Care and Early Learning, provided an update regarding the sunset report on the Texas Workforce Commission.

The Texas Education Agency provided updates:

- Monica Martinez, TEA, provided updates regarding the Task Force on Governance of Early Childhood Education and Care.
- Emily Groomer from the Texas Education Agency provided an update on the strategic plan to improve learning opportunities for children with disabilities, as mandated by House Bill 2310 and now codified in the Texas Education Code.
- Groomer also provided updates on a significant joint initiative between TEA and HHSC - the development of a statewide training program focused on the transition from ECI to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).

The Texas Workforce Commission provided updates:

- Rachelle Daniel, Director of Quad Agency and Special Projects, provided an update on the recent Quad-Agency meeting, noting that a recording will soon be available on YouTube and the official website.
- Cathi Arwood, Director of CC&EL Policy and Program Assistance, notified members that the final report for the prior PDGB-5 grant, which concluded in December 2025, was submitted in June 2026. Highlights of year-3 accomplishments has been posted on the TWC website.
- Stephanie Bonnett-Kramer, Director of Early Learning Initiatives, provided an update on the Early Learning Inclusion Training and Education Grant, commonly referred to as the ELITE grant.

Meghan Young, Director of Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) Program for the Texas Health and Human Services Commission, provided a broad update for the Health and Human Services Commission, as well as updates related to the ECI program.

Alferma Giles, Director of the Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office, provided updates from the Office of Head Start and the National Head Start Association regarding significant transitions in the Head Start Collaboration Office grants.

Stephanie Rubin, CEO of Texans Care for Children, shared resources developed to assist the governance task force in its decision-making process that address five key questions regarding early childhood governance models used in other states.

Agenda Item Number 9: Upcoming Early Childhood Events

ECI Advisory Committee
August 25, 2026, 1:30 p.m.
https://www.hhs.texas.gov/about/advisory-committees/eci-advisory-committee

Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care
August 26, 2026, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Governor's Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care
September 30, 2026, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Texas Early Learning Interagency Collaborative Symposium (by invitation)
October 7, 2026

Quad Agency Child Care Initiative Meeting
November 19, 2026, 10 a.m. - 12 p.m.

Next TELC Meeting Date: October 16, 2026

Agenda Item Number 10: Adjourn

Reagan Miller adjourned the meeting at 1:06pm.