

Policy Council Meeting

4-30-24

Submitted by: Karina Garza & Kerry Mehling

Members Present: Sydni Closson, Shayna Hudson, Christina Ruiz, Veronica Gonzales, Juan Gallardo, Maria Oliva, Dehlia Cardon, Karina Garza, Tiah Alvizar, Brittain Reinmuth, Jessica Brenizer, Maria Garcia, Veronica Ramirez, Adriana Gonzales

Guests Present: Dr. Caran Walker, Region 7 Program Specialist

Staff Present: Kerry Mehling, Krystie Hohnstein, Lauren Starke, Joan DeWitt, Susie Dominguez

Board Members Present: Tom Millette and Ray Richards

Policy Council Meeting called to order by Tiah Alvizar, at 6:10pm. New member introductions were made. Members reviewed the minutes from the March meeting. **Adriana moved to approve the March minutes. Veronica G. seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.**

Director's Report:

All members received copy of the Director's report. Krystie Hohnstein discussed the report. EHS percentage for attendance is below the 85% due to ongoing illness and a couple of families who are dealing with transportation concerns. Krystie discussed our continued partnership with PPHD for dental and lead screenings. Members were also updated about the ongoing discussions with Leyton Public Schools for a possible partnership. The district received the preschool development grant and will be opening an early childhood program. This increases the possibility of Head Start enrollment slots in the district.

Finance Report:

All members received a copy of the Finance Report. Lauren Starke, Fiscal Officer, presented the reports. The credit card and USDA reports were also reviewed. March was the end of the grant period with the allowance of 3 additional months to liquidate all grant funding. Spending is higher on the March report, as the program worked to utilize the remainder of the funds to purchase materials and new technology for the program including iPads and staff computers. For the T/TA report, members were reminded that it is allowable to overspend in the T/TA budget and utilize operating funds to support additional training needs. The administrative percentage is at 11.49%, remaining under the 15% threshold. **Adriana moved to approve the finance report. Veronica G. seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.**

Board Report:

Discussion took place around the LB71 –Bill – Nebraska Department of Education. Public school districts are now able to allow children who have turned 5 after the cut-off date of July 31st to remain in an early childhood program. Head Start is not allowed to follow this same rule. Children who turn 5 after the July 31st cut-off date will not be eligible for Head Start another year. School districts will be responsible for writing their own policies around this new regulation.

Ray Richards, BOE Member, expressed his appreciation for the Policy Council members.

Ongoing facility updates are occurring at the Harms center and at the ESU#13 Administration Building. Ongoing discussion about the Head Start program's efforts to correct non-compliance issues continues.

Old Business:

Update from Federal Monitoring Review: Krystie gave updates on program progress for correcting areas of concern and noncompliance areas from the federal monitoring review. Program management has been working on updating policies and procedures in areas identified. The follow-up meeting is expected to occur at the end of May and a date will be announced. The hope and expectations are to have a Policy Council member and a Board member attend that meeting to help to support this process. No further discussion. Updated information was presented throughout the meeting to address findings in the Human Resources component during this meeting.

New Business:

Family & Community Partnerships Written Plan Review/Revision: Kerry Mehling, FCP Manager, presented these topics. Discussion included: Family engagement with a general overview, parent orientation packets, parent involvement in child development and education, health, nutrition and mental health education, parent involvement in community advocacy, transition activities and home visits. Parent handbooks, parent activity funds, community services and resources, parent interest surveys, male involvement, family partnership building, service, and the family partnership process followed. In addition, family rights and responsibilities including permissions to release confidential information, volunteering, parent activities to promote child learning and development, and community partnerships (including how they support transition).

The policies highlighted for approval were FC02 (Parent Orientation Packets) and FC17 (Volunteers). The information and procedure in the policy target how the program will handle parents who have disqualifying records on their report of law enforcement contact forms completed at time of child enrollment or if volunteering. The program has always followed the NE Department of Health and Human Services Regulations Governing Licensure of Child Care Centers, Section 3-006.03 Background Checks, Health Information, and Employment Limitations, but decided it would be important to have this written directly into these 2 policies. **Veronica G. moved to approve the updated policies FC02 Parent Orientation Packets and FC17 Volunteers. Sydni seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.**

Human Resources Written Plan Review/Revision: Krystie Hohnstein presented these topics (with updates per non-compliance findings in federal review). Discussion included: background checks and selection procedures, standards of conduct, staff qualifications and competency requirements, training and professional development, staff health and wellness, notification of expiring CDA, dress code, parent preference in hiring, comparability of wages and limitation. No further discussion or questions. **Veronica Ramirez moved to approve the updated Human Resources policies. Veronica Gonzales seconded the motion. Motion carried by roll call vote.**

Transportation Written Plan Review: Krystie Hohnstein, Director, presented the transportation written plans. Topics included: provision of transportation for children, child restraint systems, required use of school buses or allowable alternate vehicles, maintenance of vehicles, inspection of new vehicles at the time of delivery, operation of vehicles, driver qualifications, driver and bus monitor training, trip routing, and transportation services and children with disabilities. No approval necessary as no new policies/policy changes presented.

Self-Assessment Results (2nd Staff & Parent Surveys): All members received a summary of the results in their packets for review. Questions were geared towards only staff members during this survey and included open-ended questions that would help staff and leadership to think about ideas regarding enhancing outdoor spaces, desired staff training, time management, utilizing off-site locations for parent engagement events, engaging community partners in Adopt a Classroom program, and solutions for responsibilities that staff may feel is

unnecessary or duplicated. The committee will also be gathering long-term data to support assessment of family and staff satisfaction over the course of the next 5 years utilizing the Qualtrics Survey system.

Discuss Community Assessment for upcoming year: Qualtrics Surveys will help to support gathering of long-term data, as mentioned above. The program continues to explore options for enrollment slots with partnership school districts in the service area.

EHS/HS Grant Review/5 Year Goals/Changes for 24-25 school year: Program management team staff recently engaged in a 2-day, strategic planning event to identify the next 5-year grant cycle goals and objectives. Target areas include enhancements in professional development, family and community engagement, with large goals to expand services in mental health for staff, children and families. Conversations continue with Leyton Public School District for enrollment slots for the 24-25 school year and reallocation of slots following the termination of HS partnership in Sidney.

Employment Openings - Agency-wide employment openings are found on the ESU13 website (www.esu13.org) under *Employment Openings*. Prospective Employees can also apply directly on this site. This was shown to members.

New Hires:

Erica Johnson Head Start Assistant Teacher Bridgeport/CDC

Jewelle Craig Head Start Floater/Assistant Teacher ELC/CDC

Veronica G. moved to approve the New Staff Hires. Adriana seconded the motion. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Reminder: No meeting held in May. Next meeting is on Tuesday, June 25th. Dinner will be served at 5:45pm and the meeting will begin promptly at 6:00pm.

Center Reports: ELC PK, Gering Lincoln, Gering Northfield/Geil, ELC EHS, CDC HS, SBBC Stadium, CDC EHS,

Meeting adjourned at 8:00p.m.