



## Joint Provider Services Committee and Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting

### Minutes of May 21, 2010 Meeting

Gato Building Conference Room  
1100 Simonton St., Key West, FL 33040  
Via call in number 1-888-813-8477 / pass code 143130

#### Provider Services

##### Committee Attendees:

Gina Cortes-Suarez, Ed.D (ELC Board Member, Committee Chair);  
Silvia La Villa, Ed.D (ELC Board Member); Connie Chapell (ELC  
Monroe Board Member); Participating via conference call: Danny  
Armstrong Ph.D. (ELC Board Member)

#### Monroe County Advisory

##### Committee Attendees:

Alan Eckstein (ELC Monroe Board Member, Committee Chair),  
Doug Blomberg (Child Care Central Agency Rep., WHFS);  
Participating via conference call: Sue Ellen Bennett (Child Care  
Provider Rep., St. James Children's Center) Lisa Barry-Toth  
(Childcare Licensing Rep., DCF), Dan Dombroski (Afterschool  
Provider Rep., Director Boys and Girls Club),

#### Staff Attendees:

Evelio Torres (President and CEO), Blythe Robinson (Sr. Director of  
Programs), Jackye Russell (Director of School Readiness), Mary  
Williams (Managing Director-Monroe Co.), Trina Rodriguez  
(Classroom Mentor-Monroe Co.); Melissa Muñiz (Administrative  
Assistant); Participating via conference call: Danny Armstrong  
(ELC Monroe Board Member), Leana Pena (Board Liaison)

#### General Attendees:

Kathy Snyder (Child Care Services Director, WHFS), Val Taylor (VPK  
Coordinator, WHFS), Janett Hernandez (VPK Contact, Poinciana  
School), Nancy Vater (Director, Sunbeam Christian School), Alison  
Heymann (Director, Key West Preschool Co-op), Leslie Crabbs  
(Sigsbee Charter School), Lt. Kathleen Ream (Key West Police  
Athletic League), Katie Catena (President, Key West Preschool Co-  
op), Olga L. Palacios (Little Angel's Children), Mey Ling Wong  
(Little Angel's Children), Daria Lopez (Easter Seals); Participating  
via conference call: Susanne Imperato (Children's Medical  
Services), Aminah Abdullah (Training & Curriculum, NAS Key West  
CDC), Tina Chaves (Director, NAS Key West CDC), Bridget Dangel  
(Director, Montessori Academy), Jennifer Cisco (Director,  
Lighthouse Christian Academy), Linda Carmona-Sanchez (Exec.  
Director, Alliance for Early Childhood Education), Sylvie Turner  
(Director, Montessori Island School), Barb Rodgers (Director,  
Community Co-op), Jaime Royal (Director, Banana Cabana), Amalia  
Casanova (Director, 1<sup>st</sup> Baptist Jack Hill Child Care Center), John  
Dick (School Board Member, MCSD), Christine Patterson (Director,  
Inez Martin) CDC), Nilda Bernaldez (Director, Burton Memorial)



<b>I. Welcome and Introductions</b>	<b>Gina Cortes-Suarez, Ed.D. Alan Eckstein, Esq.</b>
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- Gina Cortes-Suarez welcomed the committee members and attendees.
- Alan Eckstein asked everyone to introduce themselves.

<b>II. Approval of Mar. 9, 2010 Provider Services Minutes Ed.D.</b>	<b>Gina Cortes-Suarez,</b>
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- Gina Cortes-Suarez called for the approval of the minutes from the March 9, 2010 Provider Services Meeting.
  - Motion to approve agenda by Silvia La Villa, Ed.D; seconded by Connie Chapell

<b>III. Approval of Feb. 19, 2010 Monroe County Advisory Committee Minutes</b>	<b>Alan Eckstein, Esq.</b>
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- Alan Eckstein called for the approval of the minutes from the from the February 19, 2010 Monroe County Advisory Committee Meeting.
  - Motion to approve agenda by Doug Blomberg; seconded by Lisa Barry-Toth

<b>IV. Coalition Update</b>	<b>Evelio Torres, CEO</b>
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- Evelio Torres provided the ELC Update
  - The Early Learning Bill, Senate Bill 2014, has passed.
    - The Governor has not signed the bill, but it is highly anticipated that he will.
    - Several provisions were added to the bill, one of which requires the Children’s Services Councils to go through a reauthorization process. This will not affect Monroe County but it will affect Miami-Dade County.
    - If the bill is signed, AWI will go through a rule making process.
      - The ELC will be sending a representative to the capitol.
      - It is important for everyone to get involved from the beginning of the process; it all hinges on teamwork and compromise.
      - Unfortunately, hearings will not take place in the Florida Keys, but all pertinent information will be sent to Mary Williams, and she will forward it to all of the providers.
      - It is emphasized that this process is very important and will have a large impact on the ELC.
  - The VPK Budget was reduced by only 0.5%; this is a major accomplishment.
    - At this beginning of the session, reducing the budget by 15% was discussed.
    - Other non-profits and the school districts had much larger reductions.
    - Nevertheless, the ELC was unhappy because the goal was to increase the budget.
    - Despite the budget reduction, the legislature will cover this year’s \$38 million budget deficit.
  - School Readiness is a major challenge.
    - The 2009-2010 budget was reduced by \$14 million, but the reduction was not felt because it was replaced with Federal stimulus money.
    - \$6.5 million of the stimulus money was set aside for the 2010-2011 budget year. Hence, the budget reduction will not impact the children greatly.



- Unless the legislator restores the School Readiness Budget to somewhere around \$38 million, a large impact will be felt during the 2011-2012 budget year; not only will there be a lot less money for the children, but everyone will be affected.
- Please contact Rep. Ron Saunders and your other local representatives and make a sure they understand the consequences.
- Next year the state anticipates a 6 billion dollar deficit but hopefully the economy will improve.
- In the near future, the board will have to make some difficult decisions regarding the Child Enrichment Providers.
  - We are trying to stretch-out the dollars.
  - It is a sad situation because either way it will have a negative impact on families, many of which are already living below the federal poverty level so afterschool and summer care should not be another difficulty for them; therefore, a rushed decision will not be made.
  - Regardless of the decision, either younger children currently on the waitlist or older children already enrolled in the program will be impacted.
- The ELC would like to offer more support to our programs by improving quality and increasing the available slots.
  - To reach this goal, the ELC is establishing a foundation to fund raise.
  - The foundation will be composed of members from the private sector and will have a separate board of directors.
- To support quality, the ELC provided a Curriculum Conference in Miami-Dade and hopes to plan similar events in Monroe County.
- Our great relationship with the Monroe County private providers and the school district has helped us work together through the difficult times.
- Despite budget issues, in the past 5 years we have seen a significant improvement in our children; they are more prepared when they enter school, hence, we are on the right track.
- We are confident that the economy will improve and are already beginning to see signs of a recovery.
- Linda Carmona-Sanchez inquired how Senate Bill 2014 will impact voting privileges for provider representatives on the ELC Board.
- Evelio Torres responded that after July 1<sup>st</sup> everyone on the board will be a voting member. This allows all of our board members to have an equal voice and hopefully will encourage providers to reach out to their representatives. Our board members make difficult decision by analyzing data, and it would be beneficial to hear from providers first hand.

<b>V. Enrichment Service Providers</b>	<b>Gina Cortes-Suarez, Ed.D. Alan Eckstein, Esq.</b>
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- Evelio Torres further explained new considerations and possible changes regarding Enrichment Service Providers.
  - Originally we were assessing both counties through the same lens, but it has become clear that each county faces different challenges, therefore we are trying to separate the two.
  - In Miami-Dade 14,000 children ages zero to five are on the waitlist for services.
  - Once a child enters our program they continue to participate until they age out at the age of 8, therefore we service many school age children.



- Now, there is very little room for others age zero to five in the program, many may never have the opportunity to participate both in daycare or afterschool programs.
- We are facing several issues:
  - If we focus on children zero to five, what happens to their older siblings? Are we implying that they should be left home alone?
  - If we focus on afterschool care, our services are not reaching children zero to five. It is important to offer care to this population because if they are only in the home they are not receiving third party supervision, which school age children do from teachers.
- An important and difficult decision has to be made, but it is a subject that must be broached and should no longer be ignored. Things cannot remain the same.
- At the moment we are working with the board on three possible solutions and are looking for other possibilities.
- The board has slowed the decision making process down so that the data can be carefully assessed and enrolled children can continue receiving services throughout the summer.
- Before making a decision, we must listen to those affected: parents whose children are currently enrolled, parents whose children are on the waitlist and providers
- Our license allows us to provide services to children up to the age of 12, but we are the Early Learning Coalition, does that mean we should prioritize working with children ages zero to five? The answer is simply not that easy.
- We can't simply say that we'll care for younger children and the Boys and Girls Club and the YMCA can care for older children, because others have tried this and failed. We must, however, determine our focus.
- Personally, I am a family advocate. I like to look at how our decision will affect the whole family. Either way, it is a painful decision
- Lisa Barry-Toth commented that in Monroe County services are limited; afterschool programs consist of The Boys and Girls Club or school run programs supported by the school. These programs are not licensed because they are not required to be, and unlike dance and karate schools, these are not extra-curricular programs. They are learning focused programs that offer homework time, tutoring and other character building activities.
- Alan Eckstein clarified that any decision that the board makes right now will focus on Miami-Dade and will not affect Monroe County because there is significant difference between the two. Each county is being assessed separately because the definition of "Enrichment Program" in Miami-Dade is quite different from the definition in Monroe County.
- Gina Cortes-Suarez stated that after her visit to the Boys and Girls Club in Key West it is clear to her that Monroe County is a best practice area. Miami-Dade has a lot to learn from Monroe and should use it as an example. She thanked Dan Dombroski for the tour.
- Evelio noted that some licensed providers feel that the current rate that unlicensed providers receive is unfair. Licensed providers question whether unlicensed providers should receive the same rate as they do, when they don't encounter the same expenses, such as accreditation fees. Some believe unlicensed providers should not receive funding at all.
- Sylvia La Villa understands that the board wants to separate Miami-Dade from Monroe County but she believes that to encourage consistency the board should focus on the two counties as whole. Dr. La Villa reminded providers that they must be vigilant and help the board make the best decision.
- Lisa Barry-Toth requested the official definition of an Enrichment Provider.



- Jackie Russell informed that Enrichment Providers provide school aged children an enrichment activity such as karate, ballet music, etc. along with homework time or tutoring and referred everyone to the glossary of terms in the agenda packet.
- Gina Cortes-Suarez clarified that the confusion in Monroe County is that Miami-Dade and Monroe are using a single category, Enrichment Provider, when in reality they are two different categories. Monroe County has afterschool programs, while Miami-Dade County offers enrichment activities.
- Lisa Barry-Toth stated that although the Boys and Girls Club is not licensed by the Department of Children and Families, they are a nationally accredited organization.
- Dan Dombroski clarified that the Boys and Girls Clubs defines themselves as a “youth development organization.”
- Evelio Torres explained that although he understands that the term can be confusing, the State of Florida defines all of the organizations in question as “Enrichment Providers,” however, within that category there are different models and service provisions.
- Alan Eckstein hopes that since Monroe County enrichment providers do not consist of karate schools, ballet schools, etc, but international non-profits like the Boys and Girls Club, Police Athletic League and the YMCA, the board can make an exception, like they have in the past.
- Gina Cortes-Suarez affirms that the main difference between Monroe enrichment providers and Miami-Dade enrichment providers is that many Miami-Dade providers are for profit.
- Linda Carmona-Sanchez emphasized that the biggest issue with Miami-Dade unlicensed exclusively enrichment providers is that they are not monitored and there is no quality assurance. Therefore, there is not a safety assurance. We need to think in the safety of our children and protect the ELC.
- Evelio Torres clarified that although Enrichment Providers are not licensed, they are operating legally under the current law. It is very similar to unlicensed, registered family child care home providers in Monroe.
- Lisa Barry-Toth explained that registered providers are regulated, but not as much as licensed providers. All family members are background screened and must complete the same in-service training, except for CPR Training and First Aid, because they are not required, and when complaints are made, they are investigated.
- Dan Dombroski emphasized that this decision will split families up. Older siblings will be forced to care for younger siblings and essentially babies will be caring for babies.
- Gina Cortes-Suarez asserted that the board is not ready to make a decision, they are in the process of requesting statistics and data from both counties and ELC staff with the purpose of making an informed decision; the process will take all summer
- Connie Chapell urged providers to give feedback and voice their concerns as the challenges that providers are facing are also part of the information necessary for an informed decision.

<b>V. Child Care Provider Update</b>	<b>Sue Ellen Bennett, Provider Rep.</b>
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- Sue Ellen Bennett provided the Child Care Provider Update.
  - A main concern is finding teachers with required credentialing and helping staff attain required credentials when the salary they receive is minimal.
  - Inability to offer healthcare to staff makes it difficult to hire staff.
  - Low enrollment is still a problem in Monroe County.
  - Providers are concerned about the oil spill the possible fiscal impact it will have on the county.

<b>VI. Wesley House Update</b>	<b>Kathy Snyder</b>
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- Kathy Snyder provided the WHFS Update.
  - Resource & Referral
    - 30 new families; 8 returning families
    - 65 families have requested other information
  - School Readiness
    - 703 children are enrolled in the School Readiness Program
    - 42 children are on the waitlist, but we are in the process of placing children
      - 19 of those are infants/toddlers
      - 15 of those are preschoolers
      - 8 are school age
  - Wesley House's annual conference "Playing is Fun" is tomorrow and all are encouraged to participate

<b>VII. VPK Update</b>	<b>Val</b>
<b>Taylor</b>	

- Val Taylor provided the Wesley House VPK Update.
  - 421 children enrolled in VPK for the 2009-2010 School Year.
  - Following the school district calendar, classes end June 4<sup>th</sup>; although some private providers ended in May.
  - 2010 Summer VPK
    - Poinciana Elementary School will have 3 classrooms.
    - There was not an interest in Summer VPK in Marathon or Key Largo.
    - 29 new certificates were issued for the summer program; the rest were issued during the school year and saved for summer
  - For the 2010-2011 School Year, 299 new certificates have been issued and we are expecting the same providers.
- Doug Blomberg commented that supporting providers in this community with benefits such as healthcare is very difficult because it is very expensive, more so than in Miami-Dade.

<b>VIII. Monroe ELC Update</b>	<b>Mary</b>
<b>Williams</b>	

- Mary Williams provided the Monroe ELC Update.
  - Currently processing 2010/2011 School Readiness Provider Agreements and VPK Applications; providers were thanked for their timeliness.
  - The Monroe Pre-K team consisting of myself, Amber Eby (Classroom Mentor), Gerella Kenniston from Wesley House, Linda Welsh from Child Find, and Angela Whidden and Jeanne Askins from Head Start, attend the Pyramid Model Implementation Academy, April 26 - 29.
    - The "Train the Trainer" session provided a wealth of resources to assist providers in dealing with children with challenging behaviors.
    - It is a system wide approach therefore it can be applied to both public and private sites.
    - Our goal is to setup one private and one public demonstration site so that we can develop a Keys-wide training model.
  - On June 19<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, free Creative Curriculum trainings will be provided for private providers.
    - There will be two Infant and Toddler sessions, one Spanish and one English and one Preschool Session.
    - There will be a 50 person cap per class.



- Our goal is to assure that teachers use developmentally appropriate curriculums in their programs.
- Classroom mentors Trina Rodriguez and Amber Eby will be presenting a breakout session during Wesley House's Annual Conference tomorrow.

**IX. Addition Items  
Ed.D.**

**Gina Cortes-Suarez,**

- Gina Cortes-Suarez congratulated Alan Eckstein for being a great board member; Alan is a respectful colleague who represents Monroe County very well. She continued stating that is always a pleasure to visit Monroe County because it is important to make a personal connection to the providers and staff residing in this area.
- Alan Eckstein thanked everyone for attending and participating.
- Sylvia La Villa urged everyone to carefully evaluate the Policy Review and email all comments to Mary Williams or Jackye Russell.
- Doug Blomberg thanked everyone for coming to Key West; thanked Alan Eckstein for representing Monroe County; and emphasized that Monroe is a community that is constantly looking for ways to build stronger families.
- Sylvia La Villa expressed her gratitude to Monroe County for being such an inclusive population.

**X. Public Comments  
Ed.D.**

**Gina Cortes-Suarez,**

- Linda Carmona-Sanchez suggested that the board have two separate Provider Services Meetings, one for Miami-Dade and one for Monroe, with joint quarterly meetings. This system would avoid delays in accomplishing tasks since each county has separate issues.

**XII. Adjourn  
Ed.D.**

**Gina Cortes-Suarez,**

- Gina Cortes-Suarez adjourned the meeting.