Meeting Objectives:

- Approve the March 26, 2020 Minutes
- Hear updates from the Governor’s Office
- Learn about updates from State Agencies
- Hear comments for the early childhood community

Attendance: Susan Steele, Letty Bass, Elsa Holguín, Gerri Gomez Howard, Tom Massey, Mary Anne Snyder, Charlotte Brantley, Anna Jo Haynes, Melissa Colsman, Heather Craiglow, Pamela Harris, Amanda Pelletier, Kristina Heyl

Guest: Scott Groginsky

Welcome

Tom Massey called the meeting to order at 1:02pm. The group reviewed the minutes from March 26, 2020, which Gerri Gomez Howard moved to approve. The motion was seconded by Letty Bass and the minutes were approved unanimously.

Governor’s Office Updates

Scott Groginsky shared updates from the Governor’s Office including early childhood action in response to COVID-19, funding updates and the Governor’s priorities.

Scott stated that in response to the COVID-19 crisis the Governor established the Emergency Child Care Collaborative in an executive order which allowed state funds to help fund the collaborative. The Governor has put out guidance for child care settings including guidance for closures for positive cases of the coronavirus, social distancing and small group size limits. Scott stated as a result of the limited group size and social distancing measures space needs for child care have been significant. The Governor’s office is reaching out to alternatives facilities for child care needs such as churches and school districts. The Governor’s Office also just issued guidance on summer day camps; they have not made a decision on overnight residential care.

Scott then discussed the state budget; he overviewed the cuts to the budget that directly impact early childhood. He shared that many bills with fiscal impacts have been pared down. Scott then discussed the Federal CARES Act funding and the Governor’s funding disbursement proposal. He noted that the Emergency Child Care Collative used some of the CARES Act funding to pay for care for families utilizing the child care.

Scott then shared that one of Governor Polis’s top priorities continues to be the expansion of universal preschool. He stated that universal preschool is currently a proposed ballot initiative for this fall. The Governor’s Office had been engaging multiagency to look at goals and strategies that can lay a foundational ground for universal preschool. The Governor’s Office plans on developing stakeholder advisory and workgroups on the implementation of universal preschool, they are delaying the creations of these groups to address the current COVID-19 needs.

Lastly, Scott thanked the Commission for their support and engagement through the crisis and stated that the Governor’s Office will continue to look to the Commission for leadership.
ECLC Role in Understanding Lessons Learned and Long-term Planning

The Subcommittee members discussed the ECLC’s role in understanding the lesson learned from the COVID-19 response. The group also brainstormed ideas for long-term planning for the Commission’s role.

Department Updates

**Colorado Department of Health Care Policy and Finance**

Tom Massey shared the Department of Health Care Policy and Finance is working on a difficult budget formula. They are very committed to not cut eligibility and level of benefit for Coloradans. They have had to cut the health care provider reimbursement rate by a 1% reduction. Hospital provider’s fee kicked in funds to help supplement the budget. In addition, the federal government has provided 6.2% Medicaid reimbursement. The Department is also working with federal partners to obtain funding for local and county health care providers. Tom shared that the Department is still working from home and has currently paused on hiring new full time employees.

**Colorado Department of Education**

Melissa Colsman discussed the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) updates. She stated that the Colorado Preschool Program (CPP) funding is continuing for this year, because the program is funded through the School Finance Act. She stated that CDE has started to look at the flexibility of student count for CPP and other contingencies that may effect the program administration. The Department has started to plan for different scenarios for the return of school in the fall and have initial guidance out for public comment on their website. Melissa stated that the Department will propose a change to the CPP rules to the State Board of Education in June that will allow the ratio to change from 1:8 to 1:10 under public health guidance. This would give more flexibility to providers and allow for more children to be cared for during the crisis. The State Board will vote in July on this change. The CDE is also proposing another change to align the CPP statue for the max group size number.

**Colorado Department of Human Services o Office of Early Childhood**

Mary Anne Snyder shared that the Office created a new portal for providers to register their open / closed status during emergencies (including COVID-19, but also for other future disasters). The Emergency Child Care Program, which provided a full tuition credit for child care to the families of essential workers, concluded on May 24.

As of May 20:

- 5,086 children in care
- 498 participating providers across the state
- The Collaborative has paid $4,091,620 to date. Payment totals reflect care that occurred from March 23, 2020, through April 26, 2020 (five weeks). Providers will be paid for care that occurred from April 27, 2020, through May 24, 2020, on June 4th.

The Office joined a group of partners to support the “Keep the Lights On” fund to distributed much needed cleaning supplies and masks to over 1,200 child care providers across the state and helped to prevent providers from closing because they couldn’t access/afford necessary supplies. Regarding the Colorado Child Care Assistance Program (CCCAP) the Office continues to support counties to pay providers for increased absences and waived parent fees for families participating in the CCCAP. Mary Anne shared that home visiting services have moved to virtual meetings. Early Intervention has also moved to virtual evaluations and services. Since March 1, 2020, 852 providers have become newly certified in delivering telehealth services, and a total of 1,379 are trained statewide. Early Childhood Mental Health Specialists were
activating to respond to COVID-19; they are providing support to child care providers through self-care videos, online training, and resources for reentry preparation.

Commissioner Updates & Public Comment
No Public Comment

Next Steps and Adjourn
The meeting was adjourned at 2:24 pm.

Note: Any presentation requested by the ECLC does not constitute or imply an endorsement of the product, process, service, or organization by the ECLC.