



**EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2024**

The Early Childhood Council convened in a regular meeting on Wednesday, June 12, 2024, at City Hall, Board & Commission Room #1101, 301 West Second Street in Austin, Texas.

Chair McHorse called the Early Childhood Council Meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance: Chair McHorse and Members Hedrick, McIllwain, Navarro, and Selig.

Board Members in Attendance Remotely: Vice Chair Hamilton and Members Cormie, Gordon, Green-Otero, McCollum, Schennum, and Vargas

Staff in Attendance: Caitlin Oliver, Cindy Gamez, Rachel Farley, and Alejandra Mireles

PUBLIC COMMUNICATION: GENERAL

The first five speakers to register prior to the meeting being called to order will each be allowed a three-minute allotment to address their concerns regarding items not posted on the agenda.

There was no public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

1. Approve the minutes of the Early Childhood Council Regular Meeting on May 8, 2024
The minutes from the meeting on 5/8/2024 were approved unanimously on Member Navarro's motion and Member Hedrick's second, on an 11-0 vote. Member Schennum was absent at time of the vote.

DISCUSSION AND ACTION ITEMS

2. Discussion and vote to approve Quality-of-Life (QoL) Study Workgroup membership

Member Vargas moved to approve Monica Guzmán, policy director at Go Austin/Vamos Austin (GAVA), as a community member of the ECC QoL Study Workgroup. Member Green-Otero provided a second, and the motion passed unanimously on an 11-0 vote. Member Schennum was absent at time of the vote.

WORKING GROUP UPDATES

3. **Updates from the ECC QoL Study Workgroup regarding the first meeting with the study vendor. The QoL Study Workgroup met with the study vendor, Decision Information Resources, Inc., on June 11, 2024, to discuss the timeline for the Austin Families with Young Children Study and initial tasks. The Workgroup and vendor established meeting norms, communication expectations, and decided some first steps included connection with the Commission on Women and the City of Austin demographer.**

DISCUSSION ITEMS

4. **Presentation regarding the services Any Baby Can and the Ready Families Collaborative plan to provide with the APH Early Childhood RFP funding**

Presenters:

- Rebecca Elizondo—Chief Program Officer
- Maddie Glover—Director of Data, Reporting, and Evaluation

Rebecca Elizondo and Maddie Glover presented the following information:

- **Any Baby Can is a nonprofit that has been partnering with families to build stability, develop skills, and unlock each child’s full potential for nearly 45 years.**
- **Since 2015, the organization has served as the fiscal and contract holder for the Ready Families Collaborative (RFC).**
 - **RFC consists of 8 organizations that provide early childhood and support services to families living within Travis County.**
 - **Any Baby Can**
 - **Austin PBS**
 - **AVANCE of Austin**
 - **Communities in Schools**
 - **Jeremiah Program**
 - **Literacy Coalition of Central Texas**
 - **SAFE Alliance**
 - **YMCA of Austin**
 - **The programs focus on birth to age 5. Services include home visitation (Any Baby Can, AVANCE, CIS), Two-Generation models (AVANCE, CIS, Jeremiah Program, Literacy Coalition of Central Texas), Play to Learn groups and parenting classes (Any Baby Can, Austin PBS, SAFE Alliance), child development services, and case management. Their newest focus is affordable child care (Jeremiah Program and YMCA of Austin).**
- **Data from fiscal year 2019-2023**

- **Eligible families for the RFC programs - have children under 6 years old, live in Travis County, and have income <200% of the federal poverty level.**
- **Over the last 5 fiscal years, the RFC has served 14,280 people from 10,113 families. They have exceeded their goal of serving 3,564 eligible families by an average of 18% over the 5 years.**
- **There has been an increase in clients that are Hispanic/Latino, from 70% to 74%. Also an increase in clients who are refugees.**
- **Most clients come from the Eastern crescent. However, in the past 5 years, more clients are spreading to other zip codes. The number of clients in Pflugerville has doubled. As a result of moving populations, some of the RFC partners are moving program sites into Manor, and home visitors are traveling further distances.**
- **The RFC has low rates of duplication. 99.5% of RFC clients are not duplicated across any of the programs. The highest overlap is with Any Baby Can and AVANCE, because AVANCE refers children to Any Baby Can for Early Childhood Intervention services.**
- **Over the 5 years, an average of 80% of children/parents saw an improvement in life skills/treatment plan goals.**
- **RFC successes**
 - **Developed a continuum of service model- linkage between the different programs offered by the collaborative partners so that there is no duplication of services and families are getting the right service at the right time**
 - **Referral/outreach coordination process through the work of United Way for Greater Austin's Referral and Resource tool, Connect ATX.**
 - **Shared data management and process improvement to reduce duplication of services using Any Baby Can's Apricot data system.**
 - **Improved the quality of services through shared professional development and networking.**
 - **Shared resources especially during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., diapers, formula, mental health resources, meal distribution, outreach support).**
- **What's new?**
 - **Affordable child care**
 - **Two RFC partners shifted their programming under the grant from parent-child education groups to expanding child care.**
 - **Increase collaborative focus on affordable child care support through advocacy and resource support for low-income families.**
 - **Shared resources**
 - **Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECHMH) with UT Austin and People's Community Clinic**
 - **Outreach and resource coordination**
 - **United impact**
 - **Arizona Self-Sufficiency Matrix will be used across all RFC partners in a pre- and post- assessment, starting July 1.**
 - **Data accuracy**

- **Due to cleaner data collection systems, they are now reporting on 100% eligible RFC clients and their outcomes.**
- **Challenges**
 - **The RFC partners have faced some staffing challenges, and there are waitlists for some programs, on average 2-3 months. Any Baby Can has seen an increase in referrals of children with significant delays. Some caseworkers have 30-50 on their caseload, and because Early Childhood Intervention services cannot have a waitlist, some of their program staff are experiencing burnout.**

ECC members discussed suggestions regarding using the self-sufficiency matrix and discussed how the ECC QoL study may help to inform the Ready Families Collaborative on where families are moving.

5. Presentation from Melody García, Director of Programs at Saint Louise House, regarding the services the Saint Louise House plans to provide with the APH Early Childhood RFP funding
Melody García presented the following information about Saint Louise House:
 - **The mission of the nonprofit is to empower women and their children to overcome homelessness and lead healthy independent lives.**
 - **Some of the mothers they serve are unhoused, but many are in unstable housing conditions, such as renting a mattress for their family or sharing a room with other families. Saint Louise uses the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness.**
 - **Saint Louise House provides 46 families, safe, stable housing in two complexes in South Austin. Rents are subsidized so that families start paying only \$50 per month for the first year, and then \$100 per month the following.**
 - **Families remain in the program for four years, and throughout that time, they have Empowerment Partners, or social worker case managers, that help the families develop personal goals and supports them in achieving those goals.**
 - **Saint Louise House follows a two-generational approach and works to support responsive relationships between parent and child through weekly family nights; reduces sources of stress by offering direct support like a food pantry, bus passes, and flexible funds; and provides life skills workshops.**
 - **40% of children at Saint Louise House are under the age of 5. Flexible funding has helped families afford child care.**
 - **Saint Louise partners with Any Baby Can on early intervention referrals.**
6. Presentation from Donald Jackson, Economic Development Department (EDD), regarding the proposed Place-Based Enhancement Program
Donald Jackson presented the following about the proposed Place-Based Enhancement Program:
 - **The Place-Based Enhancement Program will likely be posted for City Council action this summer.**

- **This program is authorized through EDD, under the Chapter 380 Texas local code. In 2018, City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 20180830-058](#), authorizing the City Manager to develop a Location Enhancement Program.**
- **EDD developed an affordable real estate program that addresses commercial affordability for tenants; financial challenges faced by owners of commercial spaces by providing access to capital/financing; and specific market needs in underinvested areas.**
- **There is an urgent need for small business spaces, such as those child care businesses may need. Currently, less than 3% of business space vacancies are suitable for small businesses. There has been a large market rent increase that is expected to continue to rise.**
- **Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a local enhancement study was conducted and stakeholder focus groups were held with various stakeholders.**
- **The incentive for the program is based on new investment in real estate in priority areas for the City that provides major community benefits and preservation of existing venues, creative spaces, and legacy businesses threatened by high real estate costs.**
- **The main community benefit for these projects will be providing affordable commercial space or supporting/retaining new or existing creative spaces, legacy businesses, and community-serving initiatives.**
- **There are three categories of incentives:**
 - **Category I – Affordable Space: This category will offer tax reimbursements to developers of mixed-use and commercial building projects to include affordable commercial leases for arts and music venues and establishments, small local businesses, and community development projects.**
 - **Category II – Community Impact: This will offer tax reimbursements that support the development of stand-alone high-impact community development or improvement projects, including child care facilities.**
 - **Category III – Cultural Preservation: This will offer tax reimbursements and potentially other programs to support retention and improvement of existing music venues, creative spaces, and legacy businesses, non-profits, and co-ops.**
- **Categories I & II are most relevant to child care businesses. Under Category I, the developer would receive incentives for renting some of their commercial space to a child care program. Under Category II, the child care business would receive incentives to build the space, in the form of property or sales tax reimbursement. In the future, EDD may be able to explore other types of incentives as well.**

ECC members discussed potentially drafting a resolution regarding the Place-Based Enhancement Program, to be voted on at the August ECC meeting. One topic of discussion was that some local child care providers may not be incentivized under Category II if they

are a provider that is already eligible for property tax exemption for child care facilities; however, the majority of child care programs are not eligible for the child care property tax exemption, and new child care programs would not be eligible for the tax exemption until at least a year after they are open.

7. Discussion regarding the August ECC meeting location and time
The August ECC regular meeting is scheduled for Saturday, August 10, and it will be a hybrid meeting. Vice Chair Hamilton will preside over the meeting. ECC members discussed inviting commissioners from other Joint Inclusion Committee (JIC) commissions to the meeting in order to share with them information about the Affordable Child Care Now coalition and initiative. Staff liaison Caitlin Oliver requested ECC members share location and time ideas with her.

STAFF BRIEFINGS

8. Updates from Caitlin Oliver, Austin Public Health (APH), regarding the Home Grown Building Comprehensive Networks planning grant for family-based child care; updates from related early childhood groups; update on Chapter 26 application to Parks and Recreation Department for northeast portion of Civitan Park; and the City of Austin staff response to Council Resolution 20231109-028 regarding financial relief to eligible home-based child care providers

Caitlin Oliver, staff liaison, gave the following updates:

- **This week APH held the first meeting with the planning team that will be advising City staff this year on the Building Comprehensive Networks initiative funded by Home Grown. The planning team is made up of 10 home-based child care providers and representatives from key early childhood system agencies. The job of the planning team is to plan what a network hub for local home-based child care providers could look like in Austin-Travis County. At the end of the year, the City will have the opportunity to apply for \$75K annually from Home Grown to implement the network in 2025 and 2025, contingent on a 100% match from the City. Staff is working to identify funding in the fiscal year 2025 budget process to fulfill the match requirement.**
- **In response to City Council [Resolution No. 20231109-028](#), City staff proposed a new, approximately \$33,000 financial relief grant program for home-based providers in a [memo to City Council](#). The City of Austin property tax exemption for qualifying child care facility operators does not explicitly exclude home-based providers, but it effectively excludes them because home-based providers who receive a homestead tax exemption cannot not also take this exemption. This new grant program would provide similar financial relief to that which the center-based providers are getting through the tax exemption. Eligible home-based providers could receive the grant regardless of whether they rent or own their home. To be eligible, a home-based provider must:**

- **Be a licensed or registered provider;**
- **Be located within the Austin Full Purpose jurisdiction;**
- **Have an active agreement with Workforce Solutions Capital Area; and**
- **Participate in the Texas Rising Star program with an entry-level designation or higher.**
- **Mariposa Family Learning Center worked on a conceptual design for a new building, and based on that design, they provided APH updated information on the number of square feet of parkland they would need for temporary and permanent use. APH resubmitted the Chapter 26 application to the Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) so that Mariposa can continue to operate in the northeast portion of Civitan Park. APH is awaiting to hear a revised mitigation fee amount for the land based on PARD's review.**

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Members did not name future agenda items.

Chair McHorse adjourned the meeting at 10:49 a.m., without objection.

The minutes were approved unanimously at the August 10, 2024, meeting on Member Menard's motion and Member Navarro's second, on a 9-0 vote.