

## Quality Committee Meeting Minutes November 18, 2008 - 4:00 p.m. 15506 County Line Road, Suite 104 Spring Hill, FL 34610

Committee Members Present: Dr. Steven Kanakis, Chair; Sister Roberta Bailey, Joe Mascaro, Toni Watkins

Committee Members Excused: Lydia Pinkowski, Beth Rawls

Coalition Staff Present: James Farrelly, Nicole Flechas, Nicole Gonzalez, Betsy Kier, Meridith Maynard, Ljubica Sevic

**Others Present: Tom Scheffey** 

### I. Welcome and Call to Order

Dr. Steven Kanakis, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 4:10 p.m. All members and guests introduced themselves. The committee reviewed the draft minutes from the August and September meetings.

Dr. Kanakis asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the August and September meetings. Sister Roberta Bailey moved to approve the minutes and Mr. Mascaro seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

### II. 2008-2009 Quality Initiatives Update: Ms. Nicole Flechas, Quality Manager

### • Spending Update, Quality Initiatives:

To date, 14% of the budget has been spent. A large portion of this budget is under "Quality Enhancement" and the quality enhancement initiatives will be presented for approval later in the meeting. Discussion followed on the budget and Ms. Flechas' recommendation to spend \$107,000 or approximately one-third of the budget for quality enhancement incentives. These funds will not be spent until Quality Enhancement Initiatives and application process is approved by this Committee. The Coalition has procedures in place for reimbursing applicants that have already applied.

## • Outcome, 1<sup>st</sup> Annual Early Educators Conference

Ms. Flechas reported the conference as a success with 133 attendees out of the 150 who had registered. \$5,000 had been allocated for the conference and \$4,980 had been utilized. Registration fees were \$15 per person, generating approximately \$500 for future trainings. The overall feedback was very positive but with suggestions for a better venue (less cramped) for next year. Discussion followed on the possibility of two different venues for next year's conference: PHCC or River Ridge High School. River Ridge's facility would allow the conference to have an opening session with a team of speakers and the ability to do break-out sessions for an attendance of 200+.

# III. Presentation/Approval, SR and VPK Monitoring Tools – Betsy Kier, Program & Contracts Manager

**VPK Monitoring Tools -** Ms. Kier distributed copies of the VPK monitoring tools and informed the Committee the VPK tool had been changed to be more user-friendly and easier for Coalition staff to utilize with the categories being more specific. She reported that about 40 providers are using it and are happy with the clear and concise format. Ms. Kier reported that monitoring is done for each VPK class, but we are limited in what we can look at. There was a brief discussion on the hours per day a child is actually in the VPK program.

Dr. Kanakis inquired if certification of teachers is being addressed. Ms. Kier advised that that is an issue for many of the Coalition's providers which results in non-compliance. If the proper credentials are not in our files, that classroom would not be eligible for reimbursement. The Coalition is running into this frequently even though we are in the fourth year of this program. This is creating a problem in some of the centers because providers must notify VPK specialists if there are any teacher changes, but the Coalition does make allowances for last minute substitutes in cases of illness.

Mr. Farrelly stated on a scale of 0-5, with 0 being where we were, we are now at 2.5. This tool is considerably more stringent and will be enforced allowing the Coalition to hold centers to an ever-increasing standard to ensure quality care.

Dr. Kanakis asked for a motion to approve the VPK Monitoring Tools as written. Sister Roberta Bailey moved to approve and Mr. Mascaro seconded. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

**School Readiness (SR) Tools** – Ms. Kier reported that the previous assessment tool was too generic and did not hold providers to a level of quality the Coalition wanted to see. There was too much room for interpretation by the provider or their staff. This prompted the Coalition to move toward another, very concise instrument. These tools are very specific and detail-oriented in what Coalition staff will look for at the centers. Providers have received the information and Coalition staff is setting up

trainings. West Pasco providers had very few questions at their meeting because the requirements are spelled out. A second meeting with over 60 providers in Hernando County is set up for this evening. Ms. Kier reported that a number of questions had been raised because the Coalition would like to see a CDA or higher in every classroom. These standards will dramatically improve quality at the centers. Ms. Kier also reported the Coalition is investigating CDA courses for the providers.

Dr. Kanakis asked for a motion to approve the SR Tools. Mr. Mascaro moved to approve and Sister Roberta Bailey seconded. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

## IV. Approval, Additional Curriculum - Nicole Flechas, Quality Manager

Ms. Flechas reported that a provider submitted an application to approve an additional curriculum. They are interested in using Wheeler in connection with ABECCA. After reviewing, it was determined that as long as both curricula are being used together, they do cover all the components of the Florida School Readiness Performance standards. Ms. Flechas recommends approving the additional curriculum.

Discussion followed on the monitoring and use of both curriculums in the classrooms. Each provider has signed a contract addendum agreeing to use one (1) of eight (8) approved curriculums and will be held accountable if they are not. If it is discovered a center is not using the appropriate curriculum, they will go under a corrective action plan and have thirty (30) days to correct. If they do not follow the corrective action plan, they will be considered non-compliant and referred to the Committee and Board for further action.

Ms. Fleches reported that three (3) centers had asked to use this additional curriculum. Dr. Kanakis suggested a provisional approval for these three (3) centers until the Coalition can actually see the level of compliance before it is added to the eight (8) established curricula. Sister Roberta Bailey suggested revisiting in May to see if this curriculum is working for the three (3) centers who requested the addition.

Dr. Kanakis asked for a motion to provisionally approve the Additional Curriculum until May when it will be revisited. Sister Roberta Bailey moved to approve and Mr. Mascaro seconded. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

### V. Approval, Provider Incentive Programs – Nichole Flechas, Quality Manager

Ms. Flechas distributed copies of the **Provider Incentive Programs** (attached). The first program is the Early Learning Expansion and Recruitment Program which offers financial assistance for individuals interested in starting daycare centers in "disaffected areas." Up to \$1,500 will be allotted. As the applications are received, they will be reviewed by Ms. Flechas and the completed applications will be presented for

review by the Quality Committee each month. This will be done on an on-going basis as with the other incentive programs.

Mr. Farrelly stated this will encourage some of our providers to expand their services into areas where there are very few providers. He believes there are untapped sources of children in these designated areas. Also, the application allows for providers to open a center in yet another area where there is a need, if they can justify the need with numbers. He also stated this information will be posted on the Coalition's website once the incentive programs are approved by the Committee. The providers will also be emailed this information and where to find the necessary forms.

A question was raised about the five (5) year term mentioned in the program and the possibility of it being a deterrent. Mr. Farrelly suggested re-wording the application where it reads: "at least five (5) years of early learning..." He suggested stating "experience in early learning necessary" which would not exclude anyone.

Dr. Kanakis asked for a motion to approve this provider initiative, as amended. Sister Roberta Bailey moved to approve and Ms. Watkins seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

Ms. Flechas explained the **Curriculum Assistance Incentive Program** (attached). A provider would be eligible for reimbursement of up to 50% of one of the approved eight (8) curricula with a total reimbursement of \$700. She explained some of the criteria the Coalition would be looking for before presenting applications to the Quality Committee for final approval. A suggestion was made by Sister Roberta Bailey to make a change to read "current fiscal year."

Dr. Kanakis asked for a motion to approve the Curriculum Assistance Incentive Program as amended by Sister Roberta Bailey. Sister Roberta Bailey moved to approve and Mr. Mascaro seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

Ms. Flechas introduced the **Professional Development Reimbursement Initiative Program** (attached). The Coalition can assist the providers with any state mandated training programs, any in-service training courses, early childhood learning conferences or training, or other courses related to early childhood education. The reimbursement will be 50% of the cost of the registration fee which the providers will pay first and they must also supply proof the training was completed.

Dr. Kanakis asked for a motion to approve the Professional Development Reimbursement Initiative Program. Sister Roberta Bailey moved to approve and Mr. Mascaro seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

The final incentive program is the **Accreditation Incentive Program** (attached). Ms. Flechas explained this will be for providers who are participating in the accreditation

process and can supply some type of proof from a list of accredited agencies. Once the center is accredited, the application will be filled out and submitted and the center will be eligible for up to 50% of the accreditation fees, up to \$1,000 maximum. Mr. Farrelly explained this is an important program for the providers that will help them directly. If they are accredited, they will receive a Gold Seal status to help increase their earnings dramatically. Only about 10% of our centers currently have a Gold Seal. The Coalition will also offer training to the providers on the accreditation process before they decide to spend additional funds to pursue accreditation.

Dr. Kanakas asked for a motion to approve the Accreditation Incentive Program Guidelines. Sister Roberta Bailey moved to approve and Mr. Mascaro seconded the motion. All were in favor with no abstentions and the motion carried.

Mr. Farrelly summarized these four (4) incentives as exciting financial and program opportunities for providers. Coalition staff has been discussing the programs for six (6) months and are very excited to see this come to fruition with \$107,000 in the budget for these incentives. When providers come to the Coalition and ask what is being done for them, this is a wonderful set of incentives for them.

Ms. Flechas has been asked to attend November's Board meeting to brief the entire Board of the approved incentives. Nicole Gonzalez will draft a press release announcing the incentive program. Mr. Farrelly stated that the budget showing these incentives had been approved by the Board in July. The back-up plan would be to review the program every month and to re-allocate funds if necessary.

### VI. Public Input

No comments from the public. Dr. Kanakis asked for additional comments from the Committee and Ms. Watkins added that she thought this was positive, but the providers would have to share the information from the e-mails with their staff. Mr. Farrelly stated these incentives have been mentioned in on-going conversations with many of the providers. Ms. Kier informed the Committee that the information posted on the website has already drawn 3-4 inquiries about start-ups. The programs have generated a "buzz" in the provider community.

#### VII. Adjournment

Without any further discussion, the meeting adjourned at approximately 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Ramute "Jak" Jakubauskas Administrative Assistant