UTAH DEPARTMENT OF WORKFORCE SERVICES CHILD CARE

Wednesday, November 12, 2025
1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

Office of Child Care Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes

Location: Department of Workforce Services
720 South 200 East
SLC, UT 84111
Conference Room 100

The following link will take you to the PowerPoint presentation shared throughout the meeting, which may be helpful while reading through the minutes: https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1348285.pdf

Link to the agenda:

https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1348283.pdf

Link to the audio recording:

https://www.utah.gov/pmn/files/1357865.m4a

Committee: Joyce Hasting**,** Holly Kingston, Cristina Barrera, Jennifer Floyd, Jody Zabriskie, Johnny Anderson, Katie Ricord, Kelly Noorda, Kristen Schulz, Liliam Llanos, Alex Wade, Rhonda Dossett, Crystal Knippers (for Florencia Schapira de Grout), Bree Murphy, Holly Phillips (for Ben Trentelman)

Excused/Absent: Ben Trentelman, Shauna Tiatia, Anna Robbins-Ek and Florencia Shapira De Grout

Interested Parties and Guests: Heather Thomas, Camie Galt, Kari Haugsoen, Jamie Foster, Ann Stockham Mejia, JoEllen Robbins, Brian Zabriskie, Joe Edman, Broc Huntsman, Leah Schilling, Reed Coombs, Rebecca Banner, Colin Crebs, Nichole Gaffney, Betzy Mulwee, Hillary Christensen, Jeff Sorensen, Sarah Jane Schenk, Jerica Casper, Jamie Galloway, Kathy Brown, Carlene Hanson, Megan Jacobson, Valarie Browning, Carolyn Lawson, Anna Lawrence, Sydney Erickson, Amber Mabey, Kimberly Rice, Lynne Burton, Carrie Stott, Samantha Mafua, Vanessa Lowe, Michele Rice, Jill Chesley-McGinnis, Madeline Higginson and Alison May

Agenda Item	Discussion	Recommendations/ Actions
Welcome	A. Joyce Hasting (Chair) welcomed the Committee and called for attendance. B. Advisory Committee Schedule a. 2026 meeting schedule has been posted. b. In November, the meeting will be held on the first Wednesday due to the Veterans Day holiday. c. In all other odd months, the meetings will be held on the second Wednesday. C. Committee Membership - Vacant Positions a. Small business community representative (2) b. Corporate community representative (1) (Family-friendly workplace with efforts related to child care) c. To apply for all public seats, please go to the Board and Commissions. D. Annual Conflict of Interest Forms a. Notarization is required. b. Members who have not completed the COI form are asked to submit them as soon as possible. c. DWS Legal Counsel can answer questions regarding the form or	Joyce Hasting called for a motion to approve the 9/10/2025 minutes. Johnny Anderson motioned. Bree Murphy seconded. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting minutes were approved.

	future concerns. E. Approval of 9/10/2025, Meeting Minutes ***<u>Discussion</u>*** A. Joyce said there was a question about the *small business community representative* and if the candidate could be a child care owner. Heather Thomas responded yes, this position was held previously by a child care owner. B. Kristen Schulz asked if the *corporate community representative* could be a non-profit corporation. Heather replied that she thought so. The corporation should be a family-friendly workplace with business-related childcare efforts.	

Office of Child Care (OCC) Director's Update	To view these updates go to pages 7-9 in the PowerPoint. **Administrative Rule Revision - Heather Thomas** A. Advisory Committee members should have received an email on 11/10 in the evening that the Administrative Rule Revision is now out for public comment until December 1st. a. Child care subsidies that have a higher payment rate for special needs are updated with more clarification. b. Child Care Quality System certified ratings are determined by the previous twelve month period, and those that earn a High Quality Rating will no longer lose their Enhanced Subsidy Grants if they receive a Civil Money Penalty during their 12-month certification. The monthly payments will continue through the end of the certification period. ***Discussion*** C. No discussion **Federal Update - Heather Thomas** A. The government shutdown did not delay any child care assistance payments or impact OCC's operations. **Utah's CCDF Funding Allocation Change** B. Heather spoke on Utah's federal Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) discretionary allocation, which had a significant decrease for the 2025 Federal Fiscal Year (FFY). Grants are awarded annually and must be spent over a three-year period a. A formula is used to determine the annual discretionary funding amount for each state by using three main factors: per capita income, number of children under five, and participation in the free and reduced lunch program. i. The largest factor in the reduction was the data for participation in the free and reduced lunch program. 1. Data was previously frozen for two years due to Covid-19. Updated data from FFY 2023 was used in the calculation for the 2025 grant. 2. Other states had large increases in participation, while Utah's participation remained stagnant. This resulted in higher percentages of CCDF funding being allocated to other states. ii. The end result is about fifteen percent less funding, which is around $21.75 million, for FFY 2025. iii. The Office of Child Care has informed the governor on the budget reduction and requested more communication and transparency from federal partners so that OCC can better forecast grant awards and funding changes. iv. OCC is gathering data and aiming to make informed, thoughtful and strategic budget adjustments. The plan is to review outcomes of our programs as well as the purpose of the CCDF dollars, which include:	

1. Promoting parental choice to empower working parents to make their own decisions regarding the child care services that best suit their family's needs;
2. Providing consumer education information to help parents make informed choices about child care services and promoting involvement by parents and family members in the development of their children in child care settings;
3. Delivering high-quality, coordinated early childhood care and education services to maximize parents' options and support parents trying to achieve independence from public assistance;
4. Improving the overall quality of child care services and programs by implementing the health, safety, licensing, training and oversight standards in regulations;
5. Improving child care and development of participating children; and
    a. Increasing the number and percentage of low-income children in high-quality child care settings.

v. The agency is planning on making changes by the states next fiscal year starting in July 2026. Potential options will be communicated to partners, stakeholders and the Advisory Committee in future meetings. Examples could include:
    1. Returning to pre-COVID income eligibility levels for child care assistance. During COVID, the income eligibility was raised to 85% of the state median income, which is the maximum allowed by CCDF regulations.
    2. Reducing funding to specific grants, incentives or quality programs.

vi. OCC will ask for suggestions and feedback from the Advisory Committee, stakeholders and partners as we navigate these difficult decisions. The division is open to considering specific items as possibilities for cost savings or budget adjustments.

Discussion

A. Johnny Anderson asks for the total grant amount of the CCDF funding.
    a. Heather Thomas explains that it is around 15% less than our previous annual CCDF grant award, around $21.75 million. Utah received about $145 million in CCDF funds in grant year 2024 plus the $15 million TANF transfer. .

B. Johnny Anderson comments on what he describes as a “massive amount.” He made a comparison to Arizona who lost a similar amount but is a much more populated state.
C. Heather Thomas let the committee know that the data that goes into the formula will change, but it looks as if Utah is trending similarly with other states for this coming year.
    a. When researching more, she spoke with the State Board of Education’s Child Nutrition Program Director, Kim Loveland. She explained other states are offering free lunch to all students, which encourages everyone that is applicable to apply. Some states also require all school districts to participate in the federal program, while Utah does not. With charter schools and home schooling increases in Utah, many of those do not participate either.
D. Kristen Schulz asked if the governor was interested in trying to offset the reduced funding.
    a. Heather Thomas explained that the information has recently been given to the governor's office, and the Department has not heard anything so far.
E. Johnny Anderson asks if a rough outline of the current budget that is broken down could be shared with the committee.
    a. Heather Thomas has previously shared information from May that she can send to the committee in email. She also reminds the Advisory Committee that part of its purpose is to help make budget changes and decisions, so feedback and suggestions are welcome.
F. Kristen Schulz asks for information and timing on utilizing the unobligated TANF funding for those TANF eligible receiving child care subsidy payments.
    a. Camie Galt shared that in December, a better timeline can be given once they have the reports that are being prepared for Finance. Currently data is being pulled in regards to who could meet TANF requirements which includes: meeting the income limits, current employment and legal residency of the parent/guardian. A rough estimate would be five million for the state fiscal year, which could help offset some of the budget reduction.
G. Alex Wade raises concern about families that may no longer qualify with an income limit change and asks for information to be communicated to families prior to the change so that they are aware of the new income limits and when they will take effect..
    a. Heather Thomas agrees that this is necessary, and they plan on communicating with families prior to any policy change. She will bring back information in future meetings that will include some different options on income eligibility, which will include cost savings and the number of families impacted. OCC is gathering data, and it is starting to be reviewed.
H. Alex Wade asks if data could be looked at around increasing copays instead of reducing income limits. Higher copays would affect more families, but the potential of families not losing that benefit could be more beneficial.

a. Heather Thomas agrees that higher copays could be an option. Current federal regulations cap co-pays at seven percent, but a lot of families in Utah currently pay less than that percentage in copays.

I. Kristen Schulz asked about the details shared with the Governor and if they were given the knowledge on how other states had an increased participation in the free and reduced lunch program, while Utah did not
   a. Heather Thomas said the Department has communicated similar information to the Governor's office as was given to this committee.

J. Holly Kingston confirms that OCC is okay with this 15% less this last year because OCC had emergency funds that could be used, but we are looking to change our budget for next year because we are anticipating to stay at that lower award amount.
   a. Heather Thomas confirms that the purpose is to continue operations anticipating a lower annual CCDF award starting in July when our new state fiscal year starts.

K. Holly Kingston asks if July is when the changes will be put in place to operate on the new budget.
   a. Heather Thomas explains that changes could occur sooner, but proposed budget costs would be discussed at future Advisory meetings.

L. Holy Kingston asks if there is a chance of a slightly higher budget than what is being planned for and if so, when OCC might know that information.
   a. Heather Thomas says that there is that possibility. When discussing these budget reductions with states affected, our federal partners acknowledged that they would like to provide more transparency around the data input into the formula so that states can know earlier or better predict what their annual award will be. Heather looked at public data available and the trends, and she thinks Utah will keep a similar lower budget moving into this year, but she's not positive. She has asked for more information earlier from our federal partners.

<u>Electronic Attendance Tracking - Camie Galt</u>

A. ARISE is a software OCC contracted through CITI that was introduced in 2022 as an attendance tracking system providers could use that the state paid for. With the contract being up for review for renewal, OCC is proposing to end the use of this system in March 2026 for several reasons.
   a. There was low usage of the system from licensed eligible providers. Only 320 providers were utilizing the software, which is around 26% for the state.
   b. ARISE was found to be time-consuming for family members to sign in and out with UtahID, so providers were mostly signing children in and out. Only 3.5% of DWS cases in the ARISE system had parents/guardians signing children in and out.
   c. The cost to continue utilizing this system annually is about $182,000 with a potential of an additional $50,000 a year for

enhancements and improvements, which would need to be made if we kept the system.

B. If OCC goes this route and discontinues ARISE, notice to providers would go out in December 2025, three months before termination of the contract. This would allow time for providers using the ARISE system to purchase their own program, which will need to meet DWS requirements for attendance tracking, by March 1st, 2026. For programs that do not meet requirements, DWS may withhold payments or disqualify the program from accepting subsidies.

Discussion

A. Kristen Schulz inquired about the $180,000 extra funds if ARISE ended, if the 26% of providers that were existing users could receive some of that money towards offsetting the cost of paying for a new software.
    a. Heather Thomas explains that could be an option, but with the large amount of CCDF reductions, OCC is looking to find ways to make budget cuts.
B. Jody Zabriskie asks for the percentage of home facilities versus licensed childcare centers using ARISE. She also brought her knowledge on her research findings on attendance tracking systems that a price point would be around $125 a month. She recommends against additional funding because it's part of the cost of running a childcare business.
    a. Johnny Anderson asks if the $125 mentioned by Jody, if that would be the cost for a home provider.
    b. Jody Zabriskie follows up that it can be between $60 and $125.
C. Jody Zabriskie asks that providers be included in the discussions and decisions for what is required for monthly attendance. She would like to avoid any additional cost or time-consuming practices for providers and staff.
D. Johnny Anderson asks for detail on what electronic data are needed to meet requirements for attendance tracking.
E. Ann Stockham Mejia begins by answering Jody's previous question that home providers hold the majority in ARISE usage with an addition of a few centers, and some home providers have found software as low as $20 a month.
F. Ann Stockham Mejia explains that knowing when and who is signing in the child, a fingerprint, PIN or unique identifier would meet the electronic requirements for attendance tracking for, if changes were made, some type of electronic time stamp would also be required.
G. Jody Zabriskie asks if the requirements are state or federal.
    a. Heather Thomas speaks of an audit for subsidy cases that occurred where the paper documents became an issue. Federal regulations do not have specific requirements around attendance tracking, but the state does have to demonstrate that it has quality control measures and explain how we ensure the funding is being spent appropriately.
H. Jody asks when providers started using ARISE whether they receive technology or electronic equipment for implementation.

	a. Heather Thomas said no, but the electronic attendance tracking requirement was added to policy when providers were receiving monthly Stabilization Grants during the Covid-19 pandemic, and the grant allowed purchase of technology for the program. I. Heather Thomas asks if the Advisory Committee agrees with OCC on ending the contract and use or ARISE. a. Jody Zabriskie agrees with ending ARISE and giving providers three months to prepare and implement those changes. b. Johnny Anderson asks OCC to give the ARISE users options to help them make the transition. c. Holly Kingston follows up with Johnny Anderson's statement that a cost option for providers would be to work with the business contractors and ask for a lower rate. She is also in agreement to ending ARISE and comments on how she has advised providers against using it and has recommended other programs. Holly asks about the committee and associations offering recommendations. d. Joyce Hasting agrees about offering recommendations and allowing the PFCCA to have more of a voice in offering suggestions. e. Heather Thomas speaks on how the OCC can not make recommendations because the state cannot show favoritism or preference, but it would be great if providers and provider associations who are more aware of business needs to communicate what they have found that works to other providers.	
Partner Highlight	To view this presentation go to pages 11-14 in the PowerPoint. **Bear River Child Care Resource Agency - Leah Schilling** ***Discussion*** A. Kristen Schulz asks Leah about the reduction in licensed family child care programs and whether they are choosing not to be relicensed or whether they have stopped providing care. B. Leah Schilling explains that the cause is both. Some providers have chosen not to be relicensed and continued to provide care, while others have stopped providing care for personal reasons.	
Child Care Quality System (CCQS)	To view these updates go to pages 17-22 & 29 in the PowerPoint. **JoEllen Robbins** A. JoEllen reviewed current CCQS data. B. The Child Care Quality System (CCQS) revision is in the final stages. JoEllen speaks about the licensing compliance minimum requirements for high quality programs and what has been reviewed since the previous meeting: a. OCC revisited the original survey, and there were some providers who wanted licensing compliance to be more strict for high quality programs, while others expressed relaxing the requirements. The comments shared were a mixture of both.	

b. OCC reviewed other states' requirements for receiving a high quality rating, and Utah remains more straightforward in their policy. JoEllen shared that some states would take away eligibility to receive subsidy payments and not allow providers to participate in the quality rating program if they received any licensing non-compliance.
c. Parental feedback was received through the Early Childhood Utah Advisory Committee's Parent Engagement subcommittee. Heather Thomas presented and listened to parents' suggestions and comments. They were presented the two options for minimum licensing requirements for high quality (no Civil Money Penalties or no high/extreme licensing findings). More preferred the Civil Money Penalty option, and they also requested parental notification when a finding occurred or the rating changed for the program their child was attending.
d. Crystal Knippers from the Office of Licensing shared that the posting of a non-compliance/finding will now wait the 15 calendar day period that providers have to file an appeal. If the provider appeals, the finding(s) will remain unposted until the Division of Licensing and Background Checks completes their internal review process. Slide 29 was reviewed during this time. With the licensing change, the loss of a high quality rating will not occur during the appeals process.
e. After this additional review of data and research and talking with all groups to receive feedback, OCC has decided to move to high/extreme findings as a minimum requirement for earning and maintaining a high quality rating rather than the Civil Money Penalty.
f. It is anticipated that the Child Care Quality System framework revision information will be communicated to providers in January, and programs who submit CCQS applications in March will apply in the new framework with new ratings going into effect in July.

Discussion

A. JoEllen speaks about providers not losing their ESG if a loss of high-quality status occurs during the certification period. Joyce Hasting asks for the definition of an ESG.
B. JoEllen explains the Enhanced Subsidy Grant (ESG) is given monthly in the twelve month certification period to the providers that reached a high quality rating. It's part of the federal regulation that OCC pays a higher rate to high quality providers. The amount is determined by the number of subsidized children that attended.
C. Holly Kingston asks for clarification on how the timing of the new High Quality rating system will rollout.
D. Heather Thomas confirms that the new ratings are anticipated to be public on July 1st.
E. JoEllen Robbins follows up with a further explanation on the process of scoring applications and the time needed, March applications would be ready for July.

Grants Update	To view this update, go to page 24 in the PowerPoint. **- Heather Thomas (in place of Emma Moench)** ***Discussion*** A. No discussion	
Subsidy	To view this update, go to page 26 in the PowerPoint. **-Ann Stockham Mejia** **Discussion** A. Joyce Hasting comments on how she loved Ann's example of a single-parent household needing childcare assistance for only part of the year and how they no longer have to reapply for state assistance.	
Agency Updates	To view these updates, go to pages 29-35 in the PowerPoint. **Office of Licensing - Crystal Knippers** ***Discussion*** A. No discussion **USBE - Cristina Barrera** ***Discussion*** A. No discussion	
Other Business	**No other business or public comment.**	
Adjournment	**Upcoming Meeting:** Wednesday, January 14 ~ 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm	Joyce Hasting called for a motion to adjourn. Rhonda Dossett motioned. Kristen Schulz seconded. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned.