

## **OKLAHOMA PARTNERSHIP FOR SCHOOL READINESS**

### **Board Meeting Minutes**

Thursday, September 26<sup>th</sup>, 20224 – 1:00 PM

Oklahoma Partnership for School Readiness

2915 N Classen Blvd., Ste. 400, Oklahoma City, OK 73106

The agenda was posted at 2915 N Classen Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK 73106 on Wednesday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024, at 11:30 AM.

### **Call to Order**

OPSR Board Member Designee, Marshall Vogts, called the meeting to order at 1:02 PM.

### **Roll Call**

OPSR Secretary, Angie Clayton, called roll and attendance. Quorum was met.

### **Members Present**

Darrell Strong, Deb Smith, Paula Brown, Angie Clayton, Trisha Hutcherson, Dr. Hokehe Effiong, Gina McPherson, Caitlin Merritt, Marshall Vogts, Dr. Sada Knowles, Dr. Amanda McCabe, Jennifer Stepp, Dr. Jennifer Pham, Rachel Proper, Anthony Stafford, Brett Vanderzee, Sharon Morgan, Kody Suanny, Carrie Williams

### **Members Present by Video (Zoom Video)**

Annie Van Hanken, Kelly Kay

### **Members Not Present**

Polly Anderson, Christin Bolinger, Jeffrey Cartmell, Ellen Buettner, Natalie Currie, Nellie Sanders, Jaqueline Evans, Melinda Fruendt, Allison Garrett, Brent Hanken, Annette Wisk Jacobi, Hopper Smith, Melissa Larimore, Dr. Jon Pedersen, Keith Reed, Sarah Roberts, Allie Friesen, Ryan Walters, Vicki Weaver Payne, Cindy Lee

### **Staff Present**

Allison Loeffler, Stephanie Lippert, Daphne Peschl, Jon Trudgeon, Gabrielle Jacobi, Wendi Mayfield, Amber Cuyler, Dustin Goad, Erin Bell, Kelsey Thomas, Lindsay Insomya, Terri Davis, Angela Rodriguez

### **Guests Present**

Dr. Lana Turner-Addison, Madison Wingate, Gabrielle Moon, Mandi Coleman

### **\*Approval of Minutes**

Marshall Vogts presented the board meeting minutes from the meeting held April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2024. Anthony Stafford made a motion to approve the minutes without changes, and Paula Brown seconded the motion. Sixteen members voted in favor and one abstained. The motion passed.

#### **Review of OPSR Financial Report (Daphne Peschl)**

OPSR Director of Finance, Daphne Peschl, presented the FY24 financial documents to board members for review. The OKDHS base contract of \$779,000 has been fully expended. The Clearinghouse budget shows a spend of \$5,299,540 while Child Care Resource & Referral has spent \$5,593,829. Preschool Development Grant funding is on a calendar year and has a total budget of \$12.9 million. Of that budgeted amount, \$1,946,306 has been spent.

(No action is required for the review of the budget or financials.)

#### **OCCY Parent Partnership Board Update (Dr. Lana Turner-Addison, OCCY Parent Partnership Board Member)**

Dr. Lana Turner-Addison presented the update from the OCCY Parent Partnership Board (OCCY PPB). She highlighted a virtual training that OCCY hosted for professionals which focused on establishing effective parent partnership committees. The training attracted over 34 participants.

Dr. Turner-Addison discussed the pressing need for affordable, high quality child care to support economic stability, children's development, and overall wellbeing. She emphasized the role of the OCCY Parent Partnership Board in incorporating parental voice and in advocating for increased subsidies and support for child care providers. She stated the importance of policies promoting affordable child care options, including funding for subsidies and quality rating systems in Oklahoma. Dr. Turner-Addison stressed the need for continued dialogue and advocacy to prioritize child care as a community issue.

#### **Presentation: Proposed Emergency Rules: Oklahoma Administrative Code. Title 340 Department of Human Services. Chapter 40 Child Care Subsidy Program and Chapter 110 Licensing Services (Deb Smith, Deputy Director of the Department of Oklahoma Human Services)**

Deb Smith, Deputy Director of Oklahoma Department of Human Services, presented to the board the challenges and potential solutions for Oklahoma's child care services. She explained that the state is preparing for new federal laws coming in August 2026. The two main changes will be in the way OKDHS pays for eligibility, enrollment based to attendance based, and paying providers in advance. Ms. Smith explained these changes will have a definite fiscal impact. There are three cost drivers that have changed OKDHS's fiscal situation. The first is the 20% increase of children who are eligible for subsidy. The second driver is the current QRIS system and its challenges. The third is that pandemic funding has ended, and TANF funding is not a sustainable long-term solution to cover the costs of incentives and strategies. Ms. Smith shared their budget alignment strategies. OKDHS plans to set a sustainable annual budget for the subsidy program at \$207 million. She noted that expenditures would have been \$323 million with the current pace and initiatives. A second strategy is reduction in income eligibility rules for families from 85% to 70% of state median income. This reduction could impact over 900 children and reduce annual expenses by \$7.3 million. The third strategy involves the QRIS implementation which will have improved monitoring via tools and structured communication between finance and the child care programs. Marshall Vogts asked if Oklahoma Human Services feels that the steady increase in higher levels of the star system is valid and an accurate representation of quality child care providers that have

those ratings. Ms. Smith replied that she does believe that the programs, centers, and homes are rated at the level of the new quality rating systems. Ms. Smith went on to share that the fourth strategy will focus on unwinding pandemic funds that ended recently. The fifth, and final, strategy will be looking into new provider rates which will require additional analysis requested to consider Oklahoma's standard of living.

Carrie Williams posed a question about the child care for child care providers budget. She stated that OPSR was given an estimated expense for this program of \$18 million, not \$22,200,000. Carrie Williams also asked if the higher number given includes child care providers who would be otherwise eligible because they are already in the lower income bracket. Ms. Smith replied that she would investigate the reason for the increase in the child care for child care providers costs. She said she suspects it is due to an increase in recent applications. She believes that at least 30% of providers would qualify for subsidy because they are already receiving SNAP benefits.

Carrie Williams asked if OKDHS's goal was to reach a \$50 million TANF investment. Ms. Smith answered that was indeed the case. Ms. Smith went on to share the next steps. OKDHS plans to hire a new child care services director and build a strong team who will support upcoming changes, prepare for new federal requirements, shift focus to strengthening families, and continue to be provider friendly. They will also finalize the Market Rate Survey analysis so new rates can be set to support Oklahoma families, support the child care industry, and fit within the allocated budget. OKDHS will also create additional communication strategies for parents, providers, advocates, staff, and Oklahoma Legislators. Ms. Smith stressed that there is a nationwide challenge with child care due to unprecedented pandemic-era funding that supported the industry that was struggling during that time. She stated that many states are working to return to an affordable level of spending while also preparing for the new federal requirements coming fall of 20206 that will increase costs.

Marshall Vogts asked if the market rate study was done annually or every three years. Ms. Smith replied that the studies are conducted every three years. Mr. Vogts also asked if OKDHS had a uniform, pre-existing method for conducting these studies or do they have to recreate it every three years. Ms. Smith said there is a standard method they have used before. Carrie Williams responded to this dialogue that OKDHS may also use the findings of the Cost of Quality study to inform rates. OPSR conducted this study with funds from the Preschool Development Grant with the Rand Corporation.

### **Executive Director Report (Carrie Williams)**

Marshall Vogts asked Carrie Williams to deliver her Executive Director Report. Ms. Williams highlighted some exciting ways OPSR is impacting Oklahoma. Dolly Parton Imagination Library now has expanded access across the state through collaborative efforts with Oklahoma State Department of Education.

OPSR has had several new ribbon cuttings for our outdoor learning environments, projects made possible through the Clearinghouse. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Oklahoma gave OPSR the Blue Impact Grant to build one more outdoor learning environment in Wagoner, Oklahoma.

OPSR has been involved in interim studies at the state capitol. One study on child care and economic growth was presented by Representative Shreiber to the Commerce Committee of the House of Representatives. We will also be involved with interim studies on the increasing cost to provide child care, the closing of several Head Start sites, and one on decreasing poverty in Oklahoma.

Ms. Williams shared that the OPSR Early Childhood Research Symposium was a well-attended and successful event.

Ms. Williams shared the latest statistics for child care in Oklahoma. Currently, 181,059 children need child care across the state and the average cost of care for infants in the rural parts of the state is \$8,580 annually; within Oklahoma City metro families could expect to pay \$12,351 annually for infant care. Currently, 73% of licensed child care programs around the state accept child care subsidy.

Ms. Williams highlighted the crossover opportunity between two of OPSR's programs, the Clearinghouse, and the Preschool Development Grant. The Pyramid Model was originally brought to the Clearinghouse for funding by Paula Brown and her team at Head Start. This began with a broad approach for implementation in child care centers in Oklahoma. The Preschool Development Grant offered a chance for deep implementation in 80 sites across Oklahoma. She stated that Child Care Resource & Referral is our built-in implementation support for Pyramid Model. Ms. Williams said this is just one example of how we can have high-quality curriculum and programs across all segments of work at OPSR.

The Thrive Network is OPSR's staffed family child care network. This was initially a Covid Relief funding project, but it became a program because it was so successful in supporting family child care homes with business supports. Ms. Williams stated that this program provides training and professional development but a significant aspect is that these providers become a support system for each other which helps them to not feel so isolated. She went on to say that OPSR is working on a business incubator initiative to support these programs. With the help of the state's child care capacity grants, we will be able to support these child care programs as they grow. Ms. Williams shared that OPSR has been successful with projects that have overlapped between Clearinghouse, Thrive Network, and Child Care Resource & Referral. This led OPSR to receive the National Association for Family Child Care's Accreditation Facilitation Project of the Year award.

Ms. Williams stated that many of the Clearinghouse projects wrapped up recently and have finished their end of project reports and have fully expended their funding. She said the Clearinghouse team has worked hard to ensure fidelity of implementation and wise stewardship of the funding allotted for these programs. She went on to say that some of these programs were so successful that they have illustrated a need for continuation with a possible funding opportunity from the Preschool Development Grant for ongoing implementation.

Ms. Williams highlighted several projects being funded by the Preschool Development Grant. Reach Out and Read is now implemented in 112 clinics across Oklahoma, which includes rural Oklahoma. Dolly Parton Imagination Library is now in 54 out of the 77 counties in Oklahoma where children birth to age five can enroll to receive a book every month. OPSR is partnering with Oklahoma Department of Education to expand to more counties. We are working with affiliates in the counties we are serving to increase enrollment. OPSR hosted two Transition Summits with Oklahoma Department of Education and the Head Start Collaboration Office. The summits are geared towards helping families transition from child care settings into school settings. Ms. Williams stated that OPSR is working on a workforce study in hopes of addressing the needs of our child care deserts in the state with their lack of teachers. This study will be a deep dive into the early care and education workforce. Marshall Vogts asked when a date for the business incubator could be expected. Carrie Williams replied that OPSR is working and designing

them now and even piloting some of the work through the Cherokee Nation with one of OPSR's regional partners of Child Care Resource & Referral.

#### **Preschool Development Grant Focus Discussion (Allison Loeffler and Jon Trudgeon)**

Ms. Loeffler began by stating that the Preschool Development Grant requires that the State Advisory Board have input into the grant's work. She then asked the board what they want for the Public Awareness and Engagement Campaign. This campaign is now transitioning to OPSR from OKDHS so that we may align it with community level work. Ms. Loeffler continued by asking for feedback on what the board members would like the community to know about their agencies and programs. Ms. Loeffler said that OPSR will speak with families to gather information from them too.

Marshall Vogts added to the discussion by stating that he and the Department of Commerce will collaborate as much as they can with OPSR for our mutual success with the Business Incubator Initiative and the Before the Bell campaign.

Several board members then gave statements about their agencies and what they would like highlighted, including Read to Learn Initiative, Familyhood training, Oklahoma State University Extension offices and their services, public libraries, and their free services, OETA with their homelessness resources, and tribal agency resources.

A board member asked if this campaign would remain focused on Oklahoma resources only or if it would have national resources as well. Ms. Loeffler answered by saying that the focus will be Oklahoma specific.

Ms. Loeffler then asked Jon Trudgeon, OPSR Director of Communications, to speak on the details of the Before the Bell campaign. Jon said the campaign focuses on the importance of the first five years of a child's life and the development that takes place during this critical time. Jon went on to speak about the website and billboards that are geared towards trying to get parents engaged in the concept that they are their child's first teacher and introduce them to resources to help them with their child's development. He said the campaign was promoted through social media, radio, and top cable transmissions across Oklahoma. Mr. Trudgeon then asked the board if they had any programs through the state's agencies that needed promoting at a higher level. He continued the discussion by saying that OPSR's focus is to have a community level approach so that families know of the local resources available to them. He then asked the board to contact OPSR with their thoughts and suggestions for the Before the Bell campaign. Ms. Loeffler continued with this request for input from the members of the board and their colleagues in the departments and agencies for this public engagement campaign.

#### **Public Comments (Public Guests)**

None.

#### **Announcements (Marshall Vogts)**

Sixty Early Head Start grants are awarded in the country and three were received in Oklahoma. They received an additional 3.2 million dollars for Head Start expansion.

#### **Adjournment (Marshall Vogts)**

Marshall Vogts asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Paula Brown made the motion, and Rachel Proper seconded the motion to adjourn. Marshall Vogts adjourned the meeting at 2:23 pm.

Signature:  11/27/24  
Carrie Williams (Nov 27, 2024 10:01 CST)

Carrie Williams, Executive Director, OPSR

Signature:  12/15/24  
Sarah Roberts (Dec 15, 2024 17:09 CST)

Sarah Roberts, OPSR Board Chair

# 2. OPSR Meeting Minutes 9.26.24 Final Approved

Final Audit Report

2024-12-15

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