



**Meeting Minutes
September 24, 2025**

31C – 6th Floor (A & B Suites) and MS Teams
10:00 a.m.

Members, Liaisons and Guests in Attendance: Ms. Jackie Franco, Dr. Tuba Fehr, Ms. Jessica Meade, Dr. Joe Bonner, Ms. Illa Flannigan, Dr. Helena Gabor, Dr. Mary Rooney, Dr. Katie Baker, Dr. Kristin Brethel-Haurwitz, Ms. Heather Rogers, Dr. Risa Isonaka, Ms. Colleen McGowan, Dr. Jay Day, Ms. Tammie Edwards, Mr. Gregg Nelson, Ms. Susan Borst, Ms. DeAnna Knox, Mr. Leon Reynolds, Ms. Sheena Malone, Ms. Briana Barnes, Ms. Anne Schmitz, Ms. Barbara Acquaviva, Ms. Wendy Kales, Ms. Jennifer Rooms, Dr. Judith Walters, Ms. Sarah Williams, Ms. Megan Vaughan, Ms. Vivian De Alvarenda Guedas, Ms. Xixi Xu

I. Welcome: Co-Chair Jackie Franco opened the meeting and welcomed members to the start of the 2025–2026 NIH Child Care Board (CCB) year. She expressed gratitude for the opportunity to continue serving as Co-Chair alongside Dr. Tuba Fehr and Ms. Jessica Meade. Ms. Franco reminded members of the NIH CCB mission, established in the 1990s and reaffirmed in the 2021 charter, to promote affordable, high-quality childcare and related services for the NIH community. She emphasized that stable, quality childcare strengthens NIH families and supports the productivity of the workforce. Ms. Franco also noted that special guests, Ms. Colleen McGowan, Dr. Jay Day, and Mr. Gregg Nelson, would address the CCB later in the meeting.

Ms. Franco noted several departures from the CCB since June. These included voting members, Ms. Colleen Labbe, Ms. Molly Cluster, and Dr. Seema Nayak, along with emeritus member Dr. Kristin Dupre and liaison Dr. Jennifer Lee. Ms. Franco acknowledged their significant contributions and lasting impact on the CCB.

To mark the start of the new CCB year and to familiarize members and guests, Ms. Franco invited voting members to introduce themselves. Ms. Franco extended a warm welcome to three special guests and invited them to address the CCB.

Ms. Colleen McGowan, Director of the Office of Research Services, thanked the co-chairs and members for the invitation. She shared her perspective as a parent, reflecting on her own experience with the NIH waitlist and the value of traditions like Take Your Child to Work Day. She praised the CCB for its advocacy during what she described as one of the most challenging years for federal workers, noting that children take cues from their parents and that community support has been vital. Ms. McGowan encouraged members to continue using ORS resources such as the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and acknowledged the important role of Center Directors during staffing shortages. She highlighted NIH Director Dr. Bhattacharya's strong interest in childcare and community engagement, including support for activities such as Take Your Child to Work Day and Community Day. She also announced that the long-awaited Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI) playground renovation is nearly complete, with a ribbon cutting ceremony planned soon.

Dr. Jay Day, Deputy Director for Safety, Security and Campus Services, thanked the CCB for the opportunity to speak and shared his own family background, underscoring the importance of quality childcare. He described his recent visits to all three centers as an enriching experience and commended staff for their dedication. Dr. Day addressed recent security challenges, including issues with VAMI and Short-Term Access Credential (STAC) systems, and assured members that solutions were underway, particularly for non-U.S. family members. He also announced that Community Day had been rescheduled for October 9 due to the weather, with children's activities planned at the FAES Terrace and Building 10 South Lobby.

services (DARS), provided an overview of Child and Family Programs. He explained that all four contracts had been reviewed by HHS earlier this year. Two were flagged for termination: the Bright Horizons Backup Care Program, which was ended, and the LifeWork Strategies contract, which was ultimately retained in a reduced scope after strong advocacy. Due to continuing resolutions, funding lapses have limited services such as resource and referral services, though contingency plans are in place for interim waitlist management with Center Directors. Mr. Nelson reminded the CCB that NIH Child Care Centers will remain open even in the event of a government shutdown, with communications issued as needed. He emphasized that the recent scrutiny of funding and contracts has also provided opportunities to innovate and strengthen support for NIH families.

Ms. Tammy Edwards, Acting Associate Director for Program and Employee Services (PES) thanked the CCB for its commitment and expressed excitement about the coming year. She noted that her recent visits to the NIH Child Care Centers renewed her energy after seeing children thriving in their classrooms. She expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming POPI ribbon cutting and reinforced the importance of early childcare experiences in shaping future success. Ms. Edwards thanked the CCB for its innovative spirit and pledged her continued support.

The guest remarks concluded with appreciation for the updates, encouragement, and strong support from NIH leadership.

II. Approval of Minutes: A motion to approve June 5, 2025, meeting minutes were made, seconded, and approved by a quorum of voting members.

III. 2023-2024 Annual Report and Executive Report Summary: Ms. Jackie Franco reported that the CCB will shift from a 30–40 page report to a 1–2-page executive summary, with a revised draft to be routed by the next meeting. Key highlights include a 27% increase in backup care usage, successful new waitlist procedures at three centers, and the need for a NIH childcare survey or use of existing OHR data. She noted that NIH Director Dr. Bhattacharya has expressed interest in meeting with the CCB co-chairs and reminded members that the CCB charter expires in February 2026, requiring timely edits and submission for renewal.

IV. Child & Family Programs Updates & Center Director Reporting

Child & Family Programs: Ms. Susan Borst shared updates on behalf of Child and Family Programs. She announced that the POPI playground renovation is nearly complete after four years of planning, with a final walkthrough scheduled and state licensing set for next week. A ribbon-cutting ceremony will follow once approvals are finalized. She also reported that the POPI Board hired a new Center Director, Ms. Kenisha Dudley, beginning October 6, following a thorough search led with the help of Dr. Saritha Story. Ms. Borst thanked Ms. Sheena Malone and Ms. Briana BARNED for their leadership as acting co-chairs during the transition.

She noted that Child and Family Programs recently participated in the NIH Research Festival, sharing center information, resources, safety tips, and seasonal activities. She also highlighted ongoing promotion of stakeholder groups such as the Adult and Aging Dependent Care Committee (AADCC) and the CCB during membership drives. Ms. Borst reminded members that FSAFEDS open enrollment begins November 10 and emphasized the importance of the NIH childcare subsidy program, co-chaired by Dr. Tuba Fehr, as childcare costs rise and state and county subsidies decline.

Ms. Borst addressed the suspension of LifeWork Strategies, clarifying that while services are currently unavailable, the intention is to restore a modified offering in FY26 if funding allows. In the meantime, backup care alternatives are being promoted, and waitlist processing is being managed in-house. She concluded by noting that she and Ms. DeAnna Knox continue weekly visits to centers, observing strong communities, quality programming, and commitment to NIH families.

with families actively assisting in assembling newly purchased outdoor equipment. The center recently held Back-to-School Night, which gave families the opportunity to connect with one another and welcome new members of the community. POPI also launched its fall soccer enrichment program, which has been very well received by the children. Ms. Malone expressed enthusiasm for the positive start to the school year and looks forward to upcoming activities. She added that POPI children will participate in Community Day by counting down the start of the race, and their soccer enrichment specialist will provide a demonstration once the event is rescheduled for October.

Executive Child Development Center (ECDC): Ms. Anne Schmitz reported that ECDC and Northwest Child Care Center (NWCCC) enrolled 120 full-time children in the past three to four months and welcomed 105 new participants in the summer program, bringing 225 new children overall. Since the end of backup care, the centers also provided short-term care for about 15 families not otherwise enrolled.

She noted that 15% of parents at ECDC are fellows, down from 30% five years ago, and that 15% of children at ECDC have special health or educational needs. She emphasized the centers' affordability, with NIH infant care averaging \$2,000 per month compared to \$3,000–\$3,500 at private providers, a critical factor for recruitment and retention given high local housing costs.

Ms. Anne thanked Dr. Jay Day, Ms. Tammy Edwards, and Mr. Gregg Nelson for recent visits and discussions on security at off-campus centers and expressed appreciation for ongoing NIH and CCB support in keeping programs affordable and accessible.

NWCCC: Ms. Jennifer Rooms shared several updates from NWCCC. The center held its first St. Jude Trike-A-Thon in observance of National Children's Cancer Month, which was well-received by families and nearly met its fundraising goal. To increase family engagement, NWCCC is launching "Classroom Comeback" events (similar to back-to-school nights) scheduled for October 7-9, along with school pictures, Scholastic book events, and other activities throughout the year.

Ms. Rooms also raised concerns about campus access for non-U.S. families. Currently, non-U.S. parents require an NIH employee escort to enter campus, which creates significant challenges for families. She reported that nine families are directly affected, with several already considering leaving the center and three who have already withdrawn. She emphasized the importance of resolving this issue to ensure equitable access, support breastfeeding parents, and avoid further attrition. She noted that most of these cases involve badge renewals rather than new applications, highlighting the urgency of addressing the policy barrier.

She concluded by thanking the CCB and leadership for their continued support and attention to these critical issues.

IV. Announcements and Adjournments: Ms. Jessica Meade, Co-Chair, closed the meeting with announcements. She reminded members of upcoming committee focuses: **Communications and Outreach in November, Innovative Programs and Subsidies in January, Membership and Waitlist in March, and a return to Communications and Outreach with Membership updates in May.**

She also shared the schedule for upcoming full CCB meetings: **November 12, 2025; January 21, 2026; March 26, 2026; April 22, 2026; and June 3, 2026.** Members were encouraged to mark these dates on their calendars.

Ms. Meade noted that webinars previously offered through LifeWork Strategies are no longer available, but NIH continues to provide opportunities such as mobile health services and the annual flu vaccine. She encouraged members to stay healthy through the fall and winter.

In closing, she thanked everyone for their time and commitment, acknowledging the competing demands on members' schedules and expressing appreciation for their continued dedication to the CCB's mission.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:57 a.m.

V. Voting members of the CCB convened a closed session.

The next CCB meeting will be held on November 12, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in person and MS Teams.