



Minutes
March 3, 2022 Meeting
10:00 AM to 12:00 PM
WebEx

Members, Liaisons and Guests in Attendance: Dr. Joe Bonner, Dr. Kristin Dupre, Dr. Tuba Fehr, Ms. Ila Flannigan, Mr. Dan Fogarty, Ms. Jackie Franco, Ms. Olivia Kent, Dr. Seema Nayak, Ms. Melissa Porter, Ms. Nicole Ray, Dr. Gilman Toombes, Ms. Kate Winseck, Ms. Heather Rogers, Ms. Julie Margel, Ms. Christina Segura, Ms. Jen Rooms, Ms. Anne Schmitz, Ms. Barbara Acquaviva, Ms. Debbie Washington, Dr. Sila Ataca, Dr. Carl Hashimoto, Mr. Ivan Locke, Ms. Mallory McCormick, Dr. Pragya Prakash, Dr. Judith Walters, Ms. Susan Borst, Ms. Tammie Edwards, Mr. Rusty Mason, Ms. Linda Owen

- I. **Welcome:** Chair Kristin Dupre called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone and focused her opening comments on the importance of mental health, self-care, and well-being during these challenging times of COVID and the events in Ukraine.
- II. **Approval of Minutes:** A motion to approve the January 20, 2022 meeting minutes was made, seconded, and approved by voting members.
- III. **Update from Childcare Center Directors:**
 - A. **Executive Child Development Center (ECDC)** – Executive Director Anne Schmitz reported that parents began re-entering the building for drop off and pick-up February 28; going well and staff are happy to have parents back in the building. Unfortunately, a preschool classroom was closed due to positive COVID contact. Continuing to follow MSDE and MDH COVID Guidelines updated on January 25, 2022, with closure policy changes (5-6 days, retest for return). Anne expressed appreciation for the procurement of 440 antigen testing kits for staff from the Office of Research Services (ORS) and thanked Tim Tosten for his help in arranging the onsite delivery. Their NAEYC Accreditation visit is expected to occur sometime between March 15-31. MSDE Office of Childcare Licensing and GSA Childcare Region 11 will also conduct their annual inspections during the same window of time. Finally, their school age summer camp registration is underway and they are encouraged by the early registration numbers.
 - B. **Parents of Preschoolers, Inc. (POPI)** – Executive Director Christina Segura complimented Anne Schmitz for proactively re-opening ECDC to parents; POPI is phasing in their re-opening, adding a classroom a week during the month of March. The centers have received antigen test kits from ORS as well as test kits and masks from the Montgomery County Child Care Resource and Referral Center on several occasions. POPI was visited by a National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC) assessor on February 16-17, 2022. The assessor reviews classroom and program portfolios of documentation supporting the center’s adherence to NAEYC standards and performs onsite observations of various classrooms. POPI is now awaiting results of the validation visit, which are expected within 30-90 days.
 - C. **Rockville Day Care Association, Inc.-Northwest Child Care Center** – Site Director Julie Margel reported that all three of the NIH childcare centers are working together to share health and safety practices and

following recommendations from the NIH, the Office of Child Care Licensing, and the County Health Department. Their NAEYC Accreditation visit is expected to occur sometime between March 15-31. NWCCC reopened its doors to parents for drop-off and pick-up and staff felt very good about parents and caretakers being back in the building. Julie reported that the childcare centers have been experiencing problems with getting staff badges processed for new employees as well as renewals for existing employees. DATS and the Child and Family Programs team is responding.

D. **Questions** - Kristin Dupre asked about the upcoming peak enrollment period for the childcare centers. Christina Segura commented POPI will have approximately 50 spaces to fill due to children matriculating to kindergarten and other attrition. The vast majority of those spaces will be offered to children on the centralized NIH Childcare Waitlist. During this school year (September 2021-August 2022) POPI has only enrolled siblings at the center. Linda Owen added that the Waitlist decline rate reached a high of 70% in 2021 and has come down to about 54% in the last quarter. There is still a need to effectively communicate with the families already on the Waitlist as well as new employees who are seeking information. Linda Owen expressed her appreciation to the center directors and their staff members for their efforts to prepare for the NAEYC validation visits. Documentation can be in submitted in multiple formats, including paper, digital, and video uploads. She thanked each center for doing a stellar job operating successfully during such stressful and challenging times.

IV. Committee Reports:

A. **Childcare Subsidy Program Committee** – Kristin Dupre will assume the vacant co-chair position of the Subsidy Committee for the remainder of the Board year. Co-chair Tuba Fehr reported that the Subsidy Committee met with the account managers from FEEA, the group that administers the contract that was awarded on January 1, 2022, to review 2021 utilization data.

- Participation in Subsidy program has decreased dramatically from pre-pandemic (2019) utilization. The primary reasons that participants leave our program are they leave NIH, leave licensed childcare/ change childcare provider, or “income out of eligibility” when they receive a pay raise.
- Following this year’s April 18 tax filings, those utilizing the Subsidy program will have to re-certify their total family gross income with FEEA. Some employees may “income out of eligibility,” but if earnings place them just over the \$80,000 threshold, FEEA will reach out to the Child and Family Program Manager about a possible waiver in order to continue subsidy assistance.
- Following review of the most recent annual utilization data, the committee members discussed developing a proposal to increase the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) threshold in order to assist more NIH employees; the committee recommendation would be voted upon by the entire Board, then forwarded to DATS (Tammie Edwards) and ORS (Colleen McGowan). Federal agencies are allowed to interpret the OPM guidance as to what constitutes “lower income employees” and to establish their income thresholds. Federal agencies take a variety of approaches to providing childcare subsidies, including tiered reimbursement, capping the annual allowable amount paid in assistance, and setting the income threshold – some agencies’ thresholds are as high as \$170,000, \$144,000, \$100,000 per year. NIH’s current income threshold for eligibility is total family AGI of \$80,000 per year. The NIH pays childcare tuition subsidies on a tiered reimbursement schedule. NIH employees can receive up to \$5,000 per year in subsidy assistance.

B. **Innovative Programs Committee** – Co-chair Dan Fogarty reported on the key take-aways of the committee’s meeting with Dr. Sharon Milgram, Director, Office of Intramural Training and Education (OITE) to discuss NIH Trainee/Fellow childcare supports and other resources.

- The committee discussed the issues of effectively communicating with fellows/trainees regarding available child and family programs and services. She suggested that information be sent to her/her office for direct distribution to fellows/trainees.
- It was suggested that Child and Family Programs offer presentations/informational webinars through OITE in order to dispel myths, building better understanding and foster relationships with the fellows/trainees community. Suggested topic areas: the centralized NIH Childcare Waitlist, information on the NIH sponsored childcare center, the Back-up Care Program, the Resource and Referral services.
- The committee reviewed with Dr. Milgram its past initiatives regarding childcare subsidies funding for fellows/trainees. Dr. Milgram indicated that she/her office will re-visit the discussions with the Office of Intramural Research and is willing to engage with the NIH Office of the General Counsel, if necessary.
- The committee plans to engage with Montgomery Moving Forward to fully understand their efforts in relation to childcare in Montgomery County.
- Linda Owen reported that the Montgomery County Council has established a new Early Childhood Entity, which will be a cabinet office within the County Executive's Office. County leaders are interested in childcare (and early childhood) and link it to economic development in the county, which might mean allocating more funds to early care and education.
- This new ECE Office will work with other stakeholders in the county, including the public school system, regarding the implementation of public preschool for 3- and 4-year-olds in the next five to ten years. This change will significantly impact the NIH childcare centers – they will likely lose preschoolers to the public schools and will see the ages of the children on the Waitlist become younger (6 weeks-35 months of age).

C. **Membership Committee** – Co-chair Ila Flannigan reported that the Membership Campaign is underway; seeking to fill two to four expected vacancies on the Board. A global email will be released on March 8; application deadline is April 8; interviews to be held in late April/early May. New this year: “CCB Virtual Office Hours,” offered on two separate times in March for interested NIH employees to engage in Q&A with current Board members. Only federal employees are eligible to be voting members and must receive approval from their supervisors, but others in the NIH workforce (at any NIH location) can attend the Board meetings and volunteer to participate on any of the Board committees.

V. **Presentation by Ms. Tonya Lee, ORS Work-Life Coordinator** - Linda Owen shared some historical insights prior to Tonya Lee's arrival. Ms. Lee was formerly the Child and Family Programs Manager. She now is the ORS Work-Life Coordinator in the Program and Employee Services Cluster, tasked with reinvigorating the ORS work-life presence by being attuned and responsive to needs and wants of the NIH community.

Ms. Lee hopes to promote a new, post-COVID pandemic Life @NIH Survey (last survey was conducted in 2012) to address the new nature of work and to better understand the need for services by the entire NIH workforce. This new survey will be geared toward federal employees, trainees/fellows, and hopefully, contractors will be included to broaden feedback. The end goal is to provide a comparison of both surveys by inviting all stakeholder groups to participate and receive information to understand the needs of our populations for immediate, short-term, and long-term strategic planning (3, 5, 10 years) to expand NIH networks. Results/data gathered will likely have an impact on the programs and services offered by DATS/Child and Family Programs, the Child Care Board, the Aging and Adult-Dependent Care Committee, and the Health and Wellness Council. Examples of gains from the previous Life @NIH Survey results include (1) implementation of the NIH Back-up Care Program and (2) formation of the Aging and Adult Dependent Care Committee. Since

the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have witnessed: (1) an increased number of attendees engaged in informational webinars, (2) formation of peer support groups, including those offered by DATS/Child and Family Programs (parenting and general well-being), the NIH Employee Assistance Program, the Health & Wellness Council, and ORS Work-Life (grief and self-care), and (3) a collaborative effort to share information and increase visibility of services to the NIH community.

Also in the works is a new ORS Work-Life @NIH webpage, complete with a new logo. Ms. Lee also continues to work with the Well-Being Ambassadors in an effort to funnel relevant work-life information to ICs and stakeholder groups.

VI. Announcements and Adjournment:

- A. Wednesday, March 9 @ 10:00 a.m.: First of a series of Self-Care Virtual Support Groups
- B. Thursday, March 17 @ 1:00 p.m.: Lunch and Learn Webinar - “Empowering Young Women & Cultivating Mentors and Positive Role Models”
- C. Thursday, April 21 @ 1:00 p.m.: Lunch and Learn Webinar - Collaborative effort with the Adult and Aging Dependent Care Committee (AADCC) – “Resources for Building Independence in Adult Dependents with Developmental Disabilities”
- D. April 28 – Take Your Child to Work Day

Meeting adjourned at 11:45 AM.

Next meeting of the NIH Child Care Board - Thursday, April 21, 2022, 10:00 AM