PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

March 20, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

In Attendance, Welcome, Approval of Minutes

Present: Shawn Massingale, Karissa Bent, Kristen Watson, CeCe Lynn, Staci Waugh

Staff Present: Athena Wikstrom, Danielle Walker, Charlee Scheer, Gillian Wesenberg, Ronda Osborn, Sarah Wheelock, Vanessa Pingleton, Stephanie Cravalho, Robin VanWinkle, Windy Digby, Colleen May-Weir

Karissa Bent motioned to approve the minutes.
Shawn Massingale seconded. The motion carried with no opposition.

Hub Update

Gillian Wesenberg, South-Central Early Learning Hub—The Oregon Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) will host an Early Learning Conference from April 16 through 18, 2025. This event will feature various workshops focused on best practices in early learning. Information regarding the conference will be shared with interested parties.

Collaboration with the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC), the Early Learning Council, and the national research organization, BUILD Initiative, has resulted in new policy recommendations for DELC, backbone organizations, and Early Learning Hubs. The first set of proposed rules will be released in the spring, with final approval anticipated between May and June 2025. A second rule development phase will take place next year to refine policies. The rule updates address the evolving role of Early Learning Hubs since their inception on July 1, 2014.

Gillian has been appointed to the Early Learning Hub Rulemaking Advisory Committee (RAC). The committee will convene three times in April and May to discuss proposed regulations and ensure effective implementation. Gillian has also been appointed to the State Home Visiting System Committee under the Early Learning Council, replacing Brenda Comini from Central Oregon. The first meeting was held on March 11, 2025. Discussions included:

- The structure and goals of the home visiting system.
- Tribal involvement and recognition of Tribal sovereignty.
- Legislative funding and policy considerations.
- The role of the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program.

Through the Kindergarten Readiness Partnership & Innovation Fund (KPI), additional funding has been allocated to early literacy initiatives.

As of July 1, 2026, child care facilities will not be able to suspend or expel children regardless of the funding source for the child's care. The Department of Early Learning and Care is in the planning stages for providing Mental Health Consultation to child care providers with students at risk of being suspended or expelled from their program. The Suspension / Expulsion Prevention Program is being called Every Child Belongs. Through Every Child Belongs, the South-Central Early Learning Hub region will receive funding for one full-time Mental Health Consultant. Douglas Education Service District (DESD) manages the Every Child Belongs planning grant, with the Early Learning Hub overseeing planning efforts. Coordination with agencies such as the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC), Oregon Infant Mental Health Association (ORIMHA), and consultants from the University of Utah and Susan Fisher-Maki are ongoing to develop implementation measures.

Athena Wikstrom, South-Central Early Learning Hub—Dr. Dawn Bailey's in-person training sessions for Douglas and Lake County have been completed. Dr. Dawn Bailey is affiliated with the Oregon Institute of Technology in Klamath Falls. Her expertise includes behavioral sciences, early childhood development, and autism. She has developed training courses based on her extensive academic and practical experience. The South-Central Early Learning Hub contracted with Dr. Dawn Bailey to provide Preschool Life Skills and Early Childhood De-Escalation training in person in Douglas, Klamath, and Lake Counties.

Gillian attended the Preschool Life Skills training, which focused on social and emotional development, identifying children's needs, and preparing them for kindergarten.

Early Childhood De-Escalation training was also provided. This training emphasized:

- Recognizing potentially problematic behaviors before they escalate into concerns.
- Strategies for responding to escalating behaviors.
- Appropriate actions for severe behavioral incidents.
- Understanding behavioral progression to ensure early intervention.

The training sessions were offered as half-day sessions, with multiple opportunities for attendance. Klamath County's in-person training sessions are scheduled for March 31 and April 1, following Spring Break.

The Hub has also contracted with Dr. Amy King, an expert in trauma-informed and trauma-responsive practices, to lead Cards for Connection training. The training consists of three sessions: one full-day virtual session in April and two half-day virtual sessions in May. The full-day session will focus on trauma, resilience, and trauma-informed / trauma-responsive practices. The two half-day training courses will focus on the therapeutic interventions outlined in the Cards for Connection tools. Additionally, attendees will have ongoing Cards for Connection implementation support opportunities.

Dr. King emphasizes that anyone, not just therapists, can implement therapeutic responses. Cards for Connection serves as a classroom tool, and the training will focus on how to use these tools effectively with children from prenatal to age eighteen. The cards are developmentally appropriate for different age ranges, spanning from prenatal to eighteen, and many strategies also involve working with families, equipping them with practical tools they can use at home. The cards serve as a visual reminder of the tools participants are trained on and how to implement them. Participants will receive certification upon completion of all three sessions, it is asked that you join all three training sessions.

Cards for Connection and Dr. Bailey's professional development training aim to provide valuable tools for professionals working with children and families. These tools are a proactive approach to help providers prepare for Every Child Belongs legislation, which bans suspension and expulsion in all early care and education settings beginning July 1, 2026.

The last training course provided by the Hub is Kids in Transition to School (KITS) at Home. KITS at Home, developed by Katherine Pears at the Oregon Social Learning Center in Eugene, is an 8-week online course for families. Katherine and her team spent several years researching the gaps schools see when children enter kindergarten. The program targets families with limited access to early learning opportunities, particularly those residing in remote and rural areas.

KITS at Home training is available in both English and Spanish, with cultural differences between the two options. Families are encouraged to choose the one that best suits their needs. The program focuses on providing social-emotional and academic experiences that prepare children for kindergarten by turning everyday tasks into learning opportunities, such as sharing, sorting, and counting when preparing meals. Families needing technological support are encouraged to reach out to ensure accessibility.

Danielle will be available during Spring Break to respond to Community UPLiFT referrals within 48 business hours. Please continue to send Community UPLiFT referrals during the break.

Ronda Osborn, South-Central Early Learning Hub - The Preschool Promise program serves children three or four years old on or before September 1, 2025-2026. Returning student forms are currently open for eligible students, and work is underway to finalize the 2025-2026 new student applications.

The Community UPLiFT program connects families with children aged zero to five and those with special needs up to 21 with community resources. Recent participation in the Community Baby Shower led to 25 referrals for Community UPLiFT. The event had a strong turnout, with an unofficial count of approximately 220 attendees, including community partners. Interpreters were present to facilitate communication with Spanish-speaking families.

Community UPLiFT presentations are available to anyone interested in learning about the referral process and how to use the system. If anyone is interested in learning more about Community UPLiFT contact Ronda at Ronda.Osborn@DouglasESD.K12.OR.US.

With the recent bad weather and flooding, please refer any families who were impacted, and meet Community UPLiFT criteria, to Community UPLiFT. As information and resources are received for the flooding and weather-related damage, every effort will be made to ensure they get to families who need support.

Legislative Update

Shawn Massingale, United Community Action Network (UCAN) Early Head Start/Head Start—The Joint Ways and Means Committee is holding budget roadshows. Douglas County will not have an in-person session, but a virtual option will be available, and individuals can sign up to provide testimony in person in Klamath County.

- **House Bill (HB) 3011** focuses on developing the early childhood education workforce. A public hearing was held on February 11; no further updates are available.
- **Senate Bill 953** establishes a task force on kindergarten transitions. A work session and hearing are scheduled for March 17.
- **Senate Bill 5514** relates to the financial administration of the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC). This bill declares an emergency and requests general fund appropriations. Hearings were held on March 6, and updates are awaited.
- **House Bill 2287** requires DELC to study child care needs. It was referred to the Economic Development Committee in January; there are no further updates yet.
- **House Bill 2593** focuses on the impact of the ERDC waitlist on parents who are students and / or working. This bill is critical for ensuring families can access child care, which in turn helps child care providers maintain stable enrollment. A public hearing is scheduled for March 25 and can be viewed virtually on the Oregon Legislature website.
- **House Bill 2682** focuses on services for young children with special needs. The Department of Education has been tasked with establishing an advisory committee to develop recommendations for modernizing service levels in early intervention and early childhood special education across the state.
- **House Bill 2811** supports Oregon's Imagination Library, providing free books to young children to encourage reading, and was referred to Ways and Means in February. No updates yet.
- **House Bill 2814** relates to child care facility licensing. It allows the Department of Early Learning and Care to waive certain requirements when justified, except for those related to safety. A work session and hearing are scheduled for March 27th.
- **House Bill 3008** this bill aims to fund investments in the child care workforce. A public hearing was held in February, but no further updates have occurred.
- **House Bill 3162** seeks financial support for child care and has been referred to the Oregon Department of Education, with a follow-up in Ways and Means. It would allocate general funds to the Oregon Department of Education for before- and after-school child care.
- **House Bill 3195** supports children's advocacy centers for mental and behavioral health. It was referred to the Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee on March 3rd.
- **House Bill 3201** focuses on improving food access in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), ensuring children receive nutritious, culturally relevant meals. A public hearing was held on March 4th, but no further updates have occurred.
- **House Bill 3224** would consolidate background checks across agencies. Different departments don't communicate, requiring repeated fingerprinting for separate checks. A public hearing was held on February 27th.
- **House Bill 3560** focuses on expanding the areas where child care facilities can be located, essentially addressing zoning restrictions that often make it challenging to open new sites. A public hearing was held at the end of February.
- **House Bill 3802** focuses on preschool-aged children with disabilities. It would require state funds for Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) and Early Intervention (EI) services to be paid out monthly, which would significantly support these programs. This bill was referred to the Early Childhood and Human Services Committee in March.
- **House Bill 3818** addresses discipline practices in early childhood care. It calls for a study of current policies and practices in Oregon related to the suspension and expulsion of young children in early care settings. The goal is to gain a deeper understanding of how these issues are being addressed and the impact on both children and the early childhood workforce.
- **Senate Bill (SB) 436** focuses on building child care facilities within affordable housing projects. Although the bill has passed, it didn't include an effective date, so there is an effort to align it with specific implementation requirements. It was referred to the Housing and Development Committee in February.

- **Senate Bill 439** is related to supporting prevailing wage requirements in constructing those child care facilities presented in SB 436.
- **Senate Bill 567** directs the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELC) to establish a child care provider incentive program. A similar program is launching soon through Oregon Registry Online (ORO). This bill had a public hearing in March.
- **Senate Bill 948** supports play-based learning, allowing school districts to provide play-based instruction for all kindergarten through grade five students during regular instructional hours.
- **Senate Bill 1097** authorizes DELC to partner with a non-governmental organization to create and manage a child care subsidy program. Referred to the Early Childhood and Behavioral Health Committee in February.
- **Senate Bill 1099** would require cities and counties to allow preschools on properties zoned for places of worship, potentially expanding preschool access through churches. A work session and hearing were recently held.
- **House Bill 2452** supports financial resources for Child Care Resource and Referral agencies. It directs DELC to award grants to help families access child care. A public hearing was held in February.
- **House Bill 2511** focuses on collecting workforce data. It tasks the Oregon Department of Education (ODE) to gather information about individuals in the field.
- **House Bill 2524** supports veterans' access to child care programs. It declared an emergency and was referred to the Emergency Management Committee in January.
- **House Bill 2902** proposes income tax credits for classroom and child care expenses, especially helpful for educators who pay out of pocket for classroom materials. There are separate versions for school staff and child care providers.
- **House Bill 2992** declares an emergency and supports student vision health by establishing a program that provides eye exams and prescription glasses for low-income students. This bill has already had a public hearing.
- **House Bill 3003** would modify the list of required data in the Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) annual Child Welfare Report.
- **House Bill 3334** relates to tax credits for educator expenses.
- **Senate Bill 138** modifies the centralized child abuse reporting system and has been declared an emergency. This bill was moved to the Human Services Committee.
- **Senate Bill 420** supports Healthy Families Oregon home visiting services. A work session and hearing are scheduled for today at 1 PM. The bill would appropriate general funds to DELC to expand or sustain these services.
- **House Bill 736** proposes creating some exceptions to what qualifies as child abuse when a parent allegedly commits child abuse. The public hearing for this bill was held on March 6th.

Federal changes have occurred regarding Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) funding, but Head Start funding hasn't been cut yet. House Bill 3201 directs the Department of Education to improve access but doesn't specify state funding to offset federal cuts.

"Christmas tree bill" refers to bundling multiple funding priorities together for approval.

Karissa and Shawn will draft a letter to present at next month's Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting; anyone interested in signing can do so. Then, Shawn will send it out to the legislators as the chair on behalf of the group.

Windy Digby, Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) - Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education (EI/ECSE) remains underfunded. The goal is to ensure that House Bill 2682 leads to increased funding for EI/ECSE in future legislative efforts.

The primary goal with additional funding is to restore adequate service levels. EI/ECSE struggles to provide the outreach and support children need with the current level of funding.

Securing additional funding would help right-size service levels. Due to budget constraints, the EI/ECSE program operates with fewer staff members. Some team members left last year and haven't been replaced because of funding cuts. As a result, our children, preschools, and community programs are feeling the strain.

Athena Wikstrom, South-Central Early Learning Hub - Hearings are usually short, so even if you're scheduled to testify, there's no guarantee you'll get the chance. That's why having testimony written and submitted in advance is crucial. A written submission ensures your words stay with legislators. Video testimony will be online indefinitely, and written testimony will be publicly posted. Focusing on your main points and having a condensed version ready if time runs short is essential. If you have any questions about preparing for testimony, Gillian Wesenberg is a great resource.

Umpqua Doula Collective Presentation

CeCe Lynn, Evergreen Family Medicine – A doula is a trained professional who provides continuous physical, emotional, and informational support to the client before, during, and shortly after childbirth. The goal is to help individuals achieve the healthiest and most satisfying birth experience possible.

Some of the most common types of Doulas are listed below; not all may be available in every region.

- Antepartum Doulas: Assist individuals during pregnancy, especially those experiencing high-risk pregnancies or medical complications.
- Birth Doulas: Provide continuous support during labor and delivery.
- Postpartum Doulas: Assist families in navigating the transition after birth, providing emotional support and guidance on newborn care.
- Sibling Doulas: Focus on child care, ensuring the birthing person can concentrate on labor.
- Full-Spectrum Doulas: Support clients from pregnancy through postpartum and sometimes beyond.
- End-of-Life Doulas (Death or Bereavement Doulas): Support individuals and families during the dying process.

Doulas provide various forms of support, including Physical Support, Emotional Support, Partner Support, evidence-based information, and advocacy. Some doulas can travel to other counties for births with expected complications if needed. Doulas are not medical providers. They do not deliver babies, administer pain medication, give medical advice, or make medical decisions. Research has shown the following benefits of having a doula:

- 39% decrease in the likelihood of cesarean birth
- 25% reduction in overall medical interventions
- 10% decrease in pain medication use
- 40-minute average reduction in labor duration
- 31% decrease in reports of negative birth experiences

Doula support is covered by the Oregon Health Plan (OHP) and some private insurance plans, but there are still gaps in accessibility.

Public Health Update

Kristen Watson, Douglas County Public Health Officer: Douglas County Public Health is focusing on measles right now. The number of measles cases is on everyone's radar and remains a top public health concern.

CCR & R Update

Stephanie Cravalho, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R), Care Connections & Education – The Rural Early Learning Facility Improvement Grant has a new round of applications now open. Funding ranges from $5,000 to $25,000 and can be used for capital improvements.

The Business Oregon Child Care Infrastructure Fund grant is now accepting applications for its second round, open from March 26 to April 30. This grant has $15 million available for property acquisition or renovation, with awards ranging from $20,000 to $2 million. Planning projects can receive up to $75,000. Additionally, strong support is available for applicants through First Children's Finance and the Northwest Native Chamber.

Partner Updates

Shawn Massingale, UCAN Early Head Start/Head Start - Immunization reports are complete. Head Start will be closed for spring break next week. Glide Preschool Promise currently has only one open spot available.

Enrollment is underway for all Head Start, Early Head Start, and Preschool Promise programs across the county. Head Start is still hiring for teacher assistant positions.

Karissa Bent, Cobb Children's Learning Center — From the director's perspective, the most significant challenge is the inability to enroll new families. Although there is a waitlist, the next family is paying with Employment Related Day Care (ERDC) and is eager to accept a spot, but they cannot do so due to a lack of funding. The following family on the list is a full-pay household but has recently experienced job loss and can no longer commit.

This highlights the urgent need for continued advocacy to ensure access and funding for early childhood care and education.

Colleen May-Weir, UCAN Healthy Families— Family Connects Oregon, is officially running in Douglas County! Family Connects Oregon a free nurse home visit for every family with a baby born on or after February 1st. Visits typically happen around three weeks postpartum, and this doesn't replace the usual 24-hour or two-week check-ups—it's an additional support. Family Connects Oregon is covered by both Medicaid and commercial insurance, and families will never see a bill. During the visit, a nurse comes to the home, helps with lactation support and infant care tips, and connects families to local resources. There are no income requirements.

A few more things to note:

- The Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program supports families with children under five, if financially eligible.
- The COVID-era food purchasing assistance program has ended, creating about $66,000 in funding deficits. The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) is currently on hold at the federal level. TEFAP makes up 12% of Oregon's food bank supply chain. All is stable for now in Douglas County, but it could get rough by late April. The delivery trucks are already getting lighter; what used to be 30,000 pounds per week is now barely 20,000 pounds per week.
- The Diaper Depot is still running. Other funding has been used to keep it going, though the number of diapers families receive will likely decrease from up to 200 a month to just a sleeve.
- The Baby Bounty Program can assist families who need car seats, baby gates, drawer locks, or other safety items; they can get those through WIC. Families must pick them up in person, sign a release, and get a quick demo on properly using items like car seats. Families must sign an agreement not to sell the items.

Charlee Scheer, South-Central Early Learning Hub – The Community UPLiFT Program has a new text number. Individuals can text

"UPLIFT1" for Douglas County

- to (541) 351-3100.

A newly updated flyer with more details on submitting referrals in other formats is available. Community UPLiFT always welcomes referrals and is thankful for all the amazing partners who help keep this vital work moving forward!

Next Meeting Date

April 24, 2025, from 10:00 am-12:00 pm