

PROFESSIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

September 25, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.

In Attendance, Welcome, Approval of Minutes

Present: Elise Hansen, Krystal Sanchez, Karissa Bent, Sarah Wheelock, Stephanie Cravalho, Debi Groshong, Kat Cooper, Heather Sewell, Heather Freilinger, Hannah Horvath

Staff Present: Athena Wikstrom, Danielle Walker, Charlee Scheer

Shawn Massingale was unable to attend the meeting. The June minutes were not reviewed and will be presented for review during the October meeting instead.

Introduction and Opening Remarks

Athena Wikstrom-South-Central Early Learning Hub:

The Douglas Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) meeting was held on September 25, 2025, and was called to order at 10:00 a.m. Attendees were welcomed and given the opportunity to introduce themselves and their respective organizations and programs.

Hub Update

Athena Wikstrom - South-Central Early Learning Hub Update:

Athena shared that Gillian is on leave and is scheduled to return on September 30.

Athena provided an update on funding, sharing that the Hub is still awaiting finalized contracts from the Department of Early Learning and Care (DELIC). Funding for the new biennium is pending.

The 2025-2026 school year is off to a great start. Athena shared that Preschool Promise providers are remaining engaged. Enrollment began with one of the strongest starts on record; however, ongoing family mobility and transportation challenges continue to affect placement. Athena shared that six Preschool Promise slots formerly allocated to Roseburg Professional Child Care were successfully reassigned to Victoria's Childcare and Preschool in Sutherlin. Applications remain open year-round, with available slots in North Douglas Elementary and at Victoria's site.

Finally, Athena shared that Community UPLIFT referrals are ongoing and available for families from pregnancy through age five (and up to age 21 for children with special needs). Ronda Osborn remains available for presentations and partnership meetings.

Child Care Resources and Referral Update

Heather Freilinger, Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R):

Heather opened with a focus on the role of Care Connections & Education (CC&E) and Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) in supporting providers and families. The presentation emphasized that *"CCR&R partners with childcare providers to offer free, expert support—from understanding state programs to accessing professional development. When providers receive personalized support, financial resources, and recognition of their experience, they're empowered to grow their careers and build brighter futures for the children and families they serve"*

Heather shared about available online tools. The CCR&R website offers information for employers, legislators, and communities, a regional Child Care Resource & Referral directory, a history of CCR&R's impact, reports on statewide work, regional stories of childcare working for Oregon, the Employer Toolkit, and more at [Child Care Works](#). The Care Connections & Education website offers information for providers and families, CC&E's quarterly newsletter and training bulletin, details on how to become a provider and provider types, access to 211 for families seeking care, connection to college coursework (Klamath Community College (KCC) and Umpqua Community College (UCC)), introductions to the early learning team, business supports and networks, connections to community partners, and much more at [Home - Care Connections and Education](#).

Heather highlighted several initiatives for the upcoming season;

- Every Child Belongs – scheduled to launch in January 2026, with the Hub formally passing the baton to Care Connections & Education.
- Courageous Care Summit – Summer 2025.
- Wellness Alliance – Spring 2025, with “20 programs and 109 participants” currently engaged, receiving quarterly curriculum and wellness materials.
- Family Child Care Network (FCCN) – Fall 2025 outreach efforts to strengthen early learning by “connecting home-based providers with professional development, coaching, and resources.”
- Featuring Dr. Amy King – Sessions scheduled across Douglas and Klamath counties, including November 14–15 and January 19–20 in Douglas, and February 27–28 and April 3–4 in Klamath

Heather shared an update on training and professional development. Updates included the Pyramid Model Networks (November 2025 for preschool and April 2026 for infants and toddlers) and the Strong Start Network, where “Year 1 participants totaled 11, Year 2 participants totaled 6, with nine Year 1 graduates and six Year 2 graduates in 2025. Heather shared that college navigation remains a priority, with Umpqua Community College hosting 48 cohort members and Klamath Community College hosting 43. June graduates included “AA-4 and ECE Certificates-2” at Umpqua Community College (UCC) and “AA-2 and ECE Certificates-2” at Klamath Community College (KCC).

Heather shared that Douglas County supports 10 Preschool Promise programs across 13 classrooms, with 13 teachers, 30 aides, and 10 administrative visits. Klamath and Lake counties manage 5 programs with 13 classrooms, 13 teachers, 26 aides, and 8 administrative visits.

Heather shared the childcare landscape as of September 10, 2024, and presented as follows:

- Douglas County: 145 providers, 2,247 slots, 267 vacancies.
- Klamath County: 101 providers, 1,918 slots, 153 vacancies.
- Lake County: 8 providers, 161 slots, 12 vacancies.

Additional updates noted that the Myrtle Creek YMCA added 45 new slots, with 32 enrolled and 13 vacancies. Once fully staffed, the YMCA can open to full licensed capacity, serving 113 children ages 5–12. This is very exciting news for our community.

Public Health Update

Dr. Bob Dannehofer-Douglas Public Health Network (DPHN):

Dr. Bob shared that background levels of COVID continue, but are not leading to significant hospitalizations or deaths. Vaccinations are available at pharmacies without prescriptions. It is recommended that the return to school or childcare be permitted once fever-free without medication and symptoms are improving. Masking for five days post-infection is recommended for teachers, healthcare workers, and others working closely with vulnerable populations.

School exclusion requirements remain unchanged. Rising non-medical exemptions for kindergarteners pose future concerns, particularly regarding Mumps, Measles, and Rubella (MMR) coverage.

Strategic Planning

Athena Wikstrom-South-Central Early Learning Hub:

Athena shared that the Hub will begin refreshing its regional strategic plan to align with Raise Up Oregon 2.0. Current strategies will be updated to reflect new numbering and goals. Athena encouraged partners to provide input to ensure that priorities reflect both demographic data and the lived realities of the community.

The equity lens developed in 2016 continues to guide decision-making. This tool remains widely used across Oregon and by local partners.

Partner Updates

Family Connects: Elise shared nurse home visiting continues in Douglas County, providing up to three visits for families with newborns. Outreach focuses on normalizing participation across all families, not just those considered "at-risk".

Cobb Street - Karissa shared that they recently celebrated the start of the school year with their annual back-to-school barbecue. She also shared that they received approval for their new gym space and are excited to continue progress.

Before closing, Athena reminded the committee that minutes from this meeting, along with strategic planning materials, would be distributed prior to the October meeting.

Next Meeting Date

October 23, 2025, from 10:00 am-12:00 pm