

**Title of Training:** Welcome the Division

**Board Present:** Rebecca Dunahoo – President Elect, Natasha Kile – Treasurer, Emma Tempest – Secretary, Michelle Weise – Vice President-Communications/Membership, Nicole Bedard – Benton County Member-at-Large, Harmony Benedict – Washington County Member-at-Large, Advisory Board – Debbie Mays, Ex-Officio – Terri Teters

**Participants Present:** 39

The meeting was called to order at 7.00pm by Rebecca Dunahoo. Rebecca welcomed the participants to the NWAECA meeting. She thanked DOCK Preschool and Character Kids After School program for hosting the meeting and allowing the tour of their program.

**Business:**

1. Nicole Bedard reminded everyone of the upcoming Benton County event, the Educator's Night Out at The Amazeum October 17th. You will need to pre-register on the PDR in order to attend.
2. Debbie Mays reminded everyone about the upcoming AECA conference Oct 24-26<sup>th</sup> in Little Rock. She also announced that NWAECA won the affiliate of the year award! We couldn't be an affiliate without you – the people who turn up to meetings and register as members. Thank you!
3. Natasha Kile, NWAECA Treasurer, reported that as of October 2019 we have \$588.91 as our current balance.

**Speaker:** Dawn Jeffrey - Arkansas' Better Beginnings Coordinator and Tonya Williams - The Director of DCCECE

**Host:** DOCK Preschool and Character Kids After School program

Tonya and Dawn thanked everyone for their time and highlighted what a complex and often misunderstood role early childhood educators have. Tonya described the people who work with young children as 'architects of the brain' and the Division as a partner and support for anyone who needs any help. She welcomed any feedback and encouraged everyone to get in touch should they have any further questions. Tonya then answered the questions that were given in to the Division from the membership.

**1. What is the current state of the Behavior Helpline? Is it being used more or less?**

Overall, the behavior helpline appears to be being used more. The 2017/2018 year saw 376 children receiving Behavior Help. To compare, from August 2018-April 2019 that figure was 464. Since August of 2019 there are currently 74 active cases. There has been a particular increase in school-age referrals and the Division is working with the Department of Education to create more trainings. Tonya reminded everyone that the Division is not

itself an expert in mental health, but they are able to access resources to support the work in the field. She also shared a spreadsheet full of trainings around behavior, ACEs and trauma-informed care.

## **2. Can we have clarification regarding the new policy for background checks?**

Tonya explained that the fingerprint check system is transferring over to a digital scanning system - hopefully by February 2020. There will be multiple sites available where providers can go for their scans. It is a federal mandate that fingerprints must be checked prior to employment. This digital system will hopefully shorten the time between new employees having their check and then waiting for results. The Division is currently working with the Federal government to clarify some issues and the Division will send up-to-date information to Rebecca Dunahoo as soon as they have it.

## **3. There seems to be a disparity among level III of Better Beginning sites - why is that and will we see more uniformity?**

Tonya recognized discrepancies among sites – she gave an example of an amazing program who were at a level 3, then the director was out for a year due to illness, then the scores did not come back as good the next time they were checked for a variety of reasons. Tonya confirmed that they are aware of the disparities and are doing what they can to ensure all programs meet the criteria.

## **4. Will there ever be a return of enhancement grants? CDA?**

Tonya announced the annual incentive grant has come back for Levels Two and Three of Better Beginnings. In addition incentive grants are available for all programs who apply and obtain Better Beginnings Levels 1, 2 or 3. The amount is based on the number of children in the program. Better Beginnings is a great incentive as well as being a great way to acknowledge sites across the state. This money could be used to fund a CDA. She also referenced the T.E.A.C.H. partnership with AECA that would help staff to attain certificates and degrees. Debbie Mays shared some statistics around T.E.A.C.H. which you can find out more about on the T.E.A.C.H. page of the AECA website.

## **5. Why is there so much turnover in the licensing specialist world?**

Tonya stated that instability in the Northwest region is lower than anywhere else in the state. She explained some reasons for turnover; people naturally leaving their job for other career options, caseload reassignment can sometimes divide specialists over different areas and some specialists are moved so the relationship between them and the provider doesn't get too comfortable.

## **6. Why can't anything be done about the unlicensed facilities in the state?**

The Division is required by law to investigate if a provider is not licensed. They can investigate and then connect them with technical assistance to help and support, rather than punish. The Division can arrange a cease and desist order with law enforcement if

the provider continues to operate unlicensed. There have been 148 informal care situations since 2018.

#### **7. When do you anticipate the next levels of Better Beginnings to roll out?**

Dawn explained that levels four and five are hoping to be rolled out by January of 2020. She shared that the new levels will exist like a menu of options – a checklist system for providers to work through, or the use of a pre-existing tool with similar standards e.g. ECERS, CLASS, NAEYC accreditation. The new levels will be efficient and simple to ensure that providers aren't have to do double the paperwork. Child Care Aware will also support this process.

#### **8. What will be the benefits, if any, of achieving the higher levels of Better Beginnings?**

There will be reimbursements for level 3 and up, with higher amounts for levels 4 and 5 respectively. There is also discussions around a potential increase for levels 2 and 3. The current licensing regulations are higher than level 1 so there will be no increase. Level 1 programs will be getting support to reach level 2.

#### **9. When will directors be able to access their staff's PDR training transcripts?**

This feature is live now. Directors needs to contact ASU and provide a list of staff and their PDR numbers in order to get access.

#### **10. When will our TAPP and PDR trainings be combined into 1 transcript? Are there any plans to make the PDR training transcripts more "neater" looking and condensed in terms of spacing?**

The current tech vendor is working on combining transcripts now. If members have any more suggestions on what the transcript could look like in order for it to show necessary information yet still be efficient, please contact the PDR to give your feedback.

#### **Meeting was adjourned by Rebecca Dunahoo**

**Next Meeting:** November 5, 2019 6.30pm-8.00pm Course ID: 17608

**Host:** Asbell Elementary Schools, 1500 N Sang Ave, Fayetteville, Arkansas, 72701

**Topic:** Play from Pre-K to Kindergarten

**Presenter:** Kathleen Hale and Tracy Bratton

Minutes shared by Emma Tempest