

SOLUTIONS FOR INFANT CARE AVAILABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

**June 25, 2018 at 6:00 pm
Florida Department of Health in Pinellas
8751 Ulmerton Road, Largo, FL**

Attendees: Nancy, McGreevy, Child Care Apprenticeship Coordinator & Distance Learning Instructor, PTC; Sonia Meier, Early Childhood Education Services Director, R'Club Child Care; Ray Hensley, Maternal & Child Health, DOH; Amber Brittner, Home Child Care provider; Maria Piatt, Home Child Care provider; Karen Gardner, Director, Skycrest Christian Preschool; Cheryl Miller, Senior Program Consultant, Juvenile Welfare Board (JWB); Maria Villarreal, Licensing Specialist, CCLP; Michelle Leland, Licensing Specialist, CCLP, Lisa Zacharia, Administrative Secretary, CCLP

Committee Members Absent: Twanna Monroe, Center Owner/Director; Cynthia Sumter Home Child Care provider

Call to Order

The first Solutions for Infant Care Availability Committee meeting was called to order at 6:10 pm.

Nancy McGreevy opened the meeting with how Jorie Massarsky, CCLP Supervisor for Centers, had called to ask her to be an Advisory Committee member for Pinellas County License Board and then asked her to Chair the Solutions for Infant Care Availability Committee as well.

Nancy stated there will be no more than four meetings total and thanked everyone who volunteered their time to participate. She said that we have rules because we are open to the public and then she read the professional courtesy rules to the group.

Nancy explained that there are 384 child care centers in Pinellas County and 59 of them offer infant care (zero to twelve months is considered infant care). Within those 59, there are 529 slots open for infants. There are 315 homes that offer infant care. Of those, 249 answered the survey and 233 offer infant care. 108 of 233 are parent-funded. Of the 529 infant slots, available, only 129 are open. Sonia Meier commented that those slots are usually earmarked for other people, for example parents that have a child there already or an employee's child. Karen Gardner said that if they had room, they would open an infant room at Skycrest Christian Preschool but they don't have the space. Sonia said it's not just about square footage, they would also need two exits and have to meet licensing regulations and challenges with exiting the building, plus it costs money to build a door. Maria Villarreal asked the group if the problem is liability and mentioned that ELC doesn't pay as much as private pay. The group talked about how liability is high up on the list. Michelle Leland commented that they would also have to find staff who would want to work in an infant room. Amber Britter said it would be a financial cut to have two teachers in a room. The smaller the preschool, the harder it is to handle the financial burden. Sonia Meier commented that you don't break even financially until kids in preschool are two years old and continued with the fact that you don't want an 18 year old with a high school diploma working with infants; you want a mom with experience and you have to pay for that. Amber stated it's financially difficult to run a child care center. Maria Villarreal said that programs

with infants all have waiting lists. Sonia stated that when you charge people enough to break even, people can't afford it. Maria Villarreal commented that most people do home day care so they can stay home with their children. Sonia commented that licensing regulations sometimes cripple providers because they are dealing with documents and "pencil pushing." Michelle said that providers are responsible and know what they can handle and recognize their liability. Ray Hensley then asked if the survey results mirror what was expected. Nancy McGreevy replied that reasons were not given, only numbers. Sonia asked if we can send another survey and ask for reasons and the group agreed they should. Karen stated that providers should look for solutions on how we can overcome challenges. Sonia said people need an incentive, it has to be sustainable, and that she doesn't know of any day care that offers vacation time to parents. They can't take time off from paying for child care even while they are on vacation. Sonia then said they offer scholarships to all employees of \$63.00 a week but that for infants they have to pay full price unless they have a school readiness funder. Amber said that marketing is important in child care and you have to market your own business. Nancy asked how Amber advertises and Amber replied that she has been full for a while but has used Facebook, a website that advertises in-home child care, and a networking site. Cheryl asked Amber if she takes infants and Amber said yes but she is full and she does not accept ELC anymore now that the infant spaces are full. Sonia asked Amber why she is not continuing with ELC to which Amber replied that she had started the process but her insurance company did not want to put ELC on the policy so she didn't go through the process. Someone asked if all homes are automatically licensed for infants and Maria V. and Michelle both said yes, that infants and toddlers can be mixed but you have to consider ratio and you can't mix babies with any other age group. Amber commented that kids in a home help each other within different age groups and that it might be something to consider blending age groups in a classroom. Sonia said she can see having three children under 18 months and 3 over 18 months and that some centers have different rates for 2,3 and 4 year olds. They mix 1 year olds and infants in the morning for drop-off purposes. Amber then asked if there was any way to have ELC raise the amount they pay for infants. Sonia replied that we should ask ELC to join this committee. Ray asked about the extra door and if that is only in Pinellas County regulations. Maria V. replied that you have to have a door leading outside and that when they watch fire drills, they ensure that it does. Amber asked if there is a funding source to help with the door and maybe they can hook up with contractors. Maria V. stated that they also have to have a playground for infants. Sonia commented that there are so many initiative programs out there. Amber said she wasn't aware of that and we should let providers know what is available. Karen said that infants have to have a playground and that two infants can use the same playpen. Nancy McGreevy commented that lack of knowledge keeps people from taking babies and there should be more infant/toddler training. Ray commented that he feels like a fish out of water and described his role with Department of Health. He said that it sounds like the problem is a money issue. Karen said that people need to have the calling to take care of kids and besides that there are teachers that are young and single and need enough money to live on to support themselves. She added that 0-5 is the most important time in a child's life and Ray also said they are investing in the lives of children. Sonia commented that once people get their 'wings' they go to Pinellas County Schools. Karen said she wishes child care could be subsidized by the school system. Amber stated that she can run her school exactly the way she wants to, makes the curriculum, and it's her own business. She has 3 infants and 3 children up to age 3. She has a couple of volunteers for events and parties and that she earns a lot more money than when she worked as a child care center director. Maria V said that we used to have an older population taking care of kids but that most of the time they could not handle email or the computer which they need to know nowadays to conduct business. Michelle said there is a cost to turn your home into a business and some people

don't like it. Ray then asked if there is an issue with unlicensed care. Maria replied yes, that we get at least two per week. We can issue fines but people don't pay unless they want to become licensed. Michelle reported that she closed a home down with 11 children in it and that the provider had posted the home on Facebook and added, Child Care Licensing is small and we can only do so much. She has asked for police assistance and sometimes even they are too busy to come.

Nancy McGreevy asked the group if we all agree we want to do a survey to providers asking them if they currently care for infants and what their obstacles are. Cheryl commented that it's our job to find out where care is needed and Maria V. stated that we know where it's needed. Nancy said it's in the survey and it's almost evenly distributed. Cheryl asked, then why is there still a need? Michelle replied that it's in the affordability.

Nancy McGreevy went over the Pinellas County License Board survey results briefly and then discussion ensued about how to go about preparing a new survey for providers, so Survey Monkey was suggested. One person said that nobody mentioned increasing ratio and that there is a reason the ratio is 3:1 in Pinellas but ratio is 4:1 in Florida. There was a discussion about incentives, cost, buildings, regulations, staffing, and asking the reason providers don't take infants if they are licensed to take them. It was also mentioned that in the survey, we should leave the questions open-ended and not ask about liability so that the providers answer questions from their own perspective. It was mentioned that keeping the survey anonymous would also help in getting answers. One question that was suggested was, what would it take and what would you need in order to take infants? One person talked about how culture often times comes into play with liability. What's acceptable in one culture could be a liability in another culture.

Nancy McGreevy asked the group when they wanted to meet next and it was decided August 15th worked best so that was chosen as the date for the next meeting.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:45 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Zacharia