

Early Learning Board (ELB)

Special Meeting

Monday, March 30, 2020

1:00 pm – 3:00 pm

The public may attend the meeting in any of the locations specified below:

Meeting Chair will preside via the Zoom link.

Board Members in Attendance: Dana Balansag (for Dir. Bhanot), Kaina Bonacorsi, Justina Acevedo-Cross, Leilani Au, Ben Naki, Kerrie Urosevich, Wai’ale’ale Sarsona (for Jack Wong), Matt Shim (for Dir. Anderson), Stephen Schatz (for President Lassner), Bob Davis (for Superintendent Kishimoto), Cherilyn Shiinoki, Melodie Vega, Edeluisa Baguio-Larena, Bob Peters, Namaka Rawlins, Mari Uehara

Executive Office on Early Learning staff in attendance: Lauren Moriguchi, Keopu Reelitz, Wimmie Wong Lui, Alohilani Maiava, Chris Jackson, Jeff Larson, Dana Ciacci, Ashley Miura

Public in Attendance: Barbara DeBaryshe, Caroline Soga, Charlotte Maddock, Deanne Goya, Deborah Zysman, Hide Wu, Ka’iulani Laeha, Katherine Murphy, Kathleen Algire, Katie Matsushima, Ken Kakesako, Landon ?, Mary Deneen, Carol Wear, Ka’ano’i Walk, Mary Ann Nemoto, Christina Cox, Kim Guieb, Charis Sole, Jordan Smith, Cheri Nakamura, Robyn Chun, Terry Lock, Anne Horiuchi

Agenda Item	Discussion	Action
MINUTES:		
Welcome/Introductions— Bob Peters	Bob welcomed the group at 1:03 pm and read the ELB mission statement. As this was the first time that the ELB meeting was being run as a virtual meeting, Bob provided some logistics guidance and asked that Keopu assist him in knowing when members wanted to speak or share information through the chat box. He also announced that he was reordering agenda items to allow State Departments to share first to help guide ELB discussion.	

Early Learning Board

<http://earlylearning.hawaii.gov/early-learning-board/>

Monday, March 30, 2020

<p>Public Comment—Bob Peters</p>	<p>Barbara DeBaryshe made a brief comment on behalf of Early Childhood Action Strategy (ECAS) Team 4: Equitable Access to Programs and Services. Because of concerns the Team has about the status of private child care providers and the children and families they care for, a short survey has been drafted to assess the current state of their operation and to identify providers’ key concerns and needs. The team hopes to very shortly disseminate the survey through PATCH with an invitation for providers to participate in virtual focus groups so that ECAS can get more detailed information on what these providers need and what services would be most helpful to them. This information would then be shared with state departments and funders for assistance.</p> <p>Kathleen Algire from Hawaii Children’s Action Network (HCAN) posted a comment in the chatbox to address agenda items III, IV, and V. “We’ve been closely monitoring the Department of Human Services’ response to child care programs and families’ needs during the pandemic, and we have questions about the implementation of federal waivers and subsidies. What federal waivers has the agency applied for and which have been granted?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The federal ACF allows for CCDF to be used by families not normally eligible. Is DHS allowing this and if not, when will they? • Why is the state not paying for child care for essential workers? • Who is providing emergency care for infants and toddlers? We’d also strongly urge the Department to work with the community groups for better coordination of services and disseminating information to families.” 	
<p>State Agencies Sharing—DOH, DOE, EOEL</p>	<p>Dana Balansag gave an update on behalf of the Department of Human Services (DHS), which has taken aggressive measures to respond to the novel coronavirus COVID-19. These include:</p>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modified interactions, such as making telephone the primary means by which to contact the various offices within the department, including child care licensing offices and child care subsidy offices; and making all SNAP and TANF applications available electronically on the DHS website. • Facilities are continuing to provide child care for essential workers, with DHS approval, and DHS is continuing to look for more ways to provide emergency child care. • Work is being done on a state plan amendment for expanding the definition of “protective services” to include families affected by the pandemic situation in Hawaii, but the request has not been submitted yet. • Requests will be made for CCDF Plan waivers for fingerprinting, background checks, annual inspections of licensed facilities, and allowing DHS to pay 2 payments if a family uses an interim child care provider because their original provider is closed. • Current priority is to support families with children and kupuna (elderly) in a manner that protects both the individuals in these families, as well as DHS employees. • A link to a written version of the document Dana was reporting from was provided in the chatbox: https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/provider-vendor-covid-19-information/ <p>Matt Shim gave an update on behalf of the Department of Health (DOH).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Children and Youth with Special Health Needs program (which provides care coordination, social work, nutrition and other services for children with special health needs ages 	
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	<p>birth through 21 years)) has temporarily suspended in-person meetings. It will continue to provide telephone, email, and videoconferencing support, at the convenience of the family.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early Intervention Services (a federal and state mandated program that provides services to support the development of infants and toddlers from birth to 3) will offer all families participating in the program an alternate method of service delivery in place of a face-to-face session, provided the agency has the means and a platform that ensures confidentiality. • The Women, Infant, and Children (WIC) Supplemental Food program will have their staff continue to run the clinics, but respond to questions via phone. (Matt noted that the Wahiawa WIC clinic had recently burned down, and said that the staff would still be servicing the community remotely.) There are plans to launch an e-WIC program statewide – Oahu and Kauai are currently using e-WIC cards, Maui County will be following in April, and Hawaii Island is targeted for May. • Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) program is providing service delivery through video-conferencing or phone calls to maintain contact with their families. <p>Lauren Moriguchi gave an update on behalf of EOEL.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff are working remotely at this time and are scheduled to return to the office on May 1. Email and phone calls are still being received and responded to by the staff. • With respect to program implementation, EOEL is following the guidelines issued by DOE, and is currently focusing on 	
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	<p>minimizing disruption for children and supporting their well-being.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educational specialists and resource teachers are working to provide much-needed support for schools and families, including developing and curating resources to help teachers stay connected with their children through online resources, and encouraging them to share these resources with families. • Professional learning support is still being provided to teachers and school administration through online communication, including professional learning communities and individual coaching support. • EOEL requested the ELB Chair to convene today’s special ELB meeting to start discussion around supporting action and to provide a much-needed venue for information sharing related to COVID-19 and its impact.. • EOEL has reached out to state partners to see how it can support their efforts. • Resources are being posted on EOEL’s website in order to keep families, providers, and stakeholders informed. 	
<p>Plans Moving Forward to Support Children/Families/Providers—Bob Peters</p>	<p>Bob explained that this agenda item was to promote discussion among board members, to bring up issues that the board should be aware of, and to ask questions of agency representatives.</p> <p>A Q&A session followed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there another cycle for Preschool Open Doors (POD) applications? (Response: The executive order the governor signed yesterday allows DHS to extend the application period to at least April 30th, which allows families more time to apply and/or to change any application information. DHS is still working on a press release for this extension.) 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the estimated timing and plan for the 11 million dollars expected to come from the CARES Act? (Response: DHS has not received any guidance from the Office of Child Care about the CARES Act funding. In terms of the allocation and appropriation of funds, a grant letter needs to be provided to Hawaii, because without that documentation they will not be able to disperse any funds.) • ECAS asked a question in the chat box: “What state agency is providing information about emergency child care and working with private providers to collect this information? What is the web address for finding this information?” (Response: The DHS child care licensing units have been trying to compile data on which child care providers are closed, but unfortunately it has been difficult to determine who is still operating. DHS is trying to determine how to access information about exempt programs which may still be operating as the state’s child care resource and referral agency (PATCH) can only provide information on licensed and registered providers.) • Would PATCH be the agency to refer people to for information? It has new information on emergency care on its website. (Response: PATCH has always been a provider of information on licensed and registered providers, but they do not provide information on exempt programs. In terms of who is open and who is still operating, PATCH did make some inquiries, but in terms of actually being able to update their database, it’s still a process they would have to go through to determine who is and who is not still operating, and then create a referral list.) • Is PATCH reaching out to all the providers, or is it up to the provider to reach out to PATCH? (Response: PATCH indicated that they were reaching out, but it’s unclear what 	
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	<p>the response rate has been and most of the information received was about the providers that were closing, not the ones still open.) NOTE: Kaina reported that Maui County also sent out a survey to all licensed providers in Maui County through PATCH with one question: “Are you staying open for essential workers?” This will be how the county plans to keep open a hub for Maui County providers that are staying open to provide essential services. They also hope to use the information gathered through the hub to match people in need of child care with child care providers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of guidance is DHS getting from the federal government in terms of what is possible with subsidies like CCDF, and what kind of payments are going into families and/or providers right now? Is there a plan for that? (Response: In terms of the DHS Child Care Program Office (CCPO), they’ve already identified which waivers from requirements in the state plan they will be submitting to the Office of Child Care. Dana also explained that Hawaii is not able to provide direct support to providers like other states can based on our State Constitutional limitations.) • Can’t those constitutional limitations be waived during this time of crisis? Has this been asked of the Attorney General? Why is emergency child care a constitutional issue? (Response: Each state has its own requirements. Hawaii cannot waive what is in the constitution during a time of emergency. That was already discussed with the Attorneys General. As for direct support to child care providers, the federal funds may allow for it, but it’s still up to whatever the State Constitution determines or allows.) • Would there need to be a constitutional amendment to address this problem, or are there any other means by which aid to child care providers could be given? (Response: In 	
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	<p>terms of direct aid to child care providers, whether or not they are private child care or education entities, the constitutional requirements would still have to be adhered to. In terms of the Access to Learning bill (HB2543), those requirements would still apply. Any private child care program that entered into a contract would have to have a secular program available and could not be an educational institution.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is this something that the Governor or even the mayors at this point can declare an exemption to during this emergency period? They seem to have the ability to exempt other things. (Response: It would be the AG’s office that makes the determination. We need to remember that when we ask something of the AG’s office, whatever the answer they provide is what we will have to accept. So we want to be careful about what we ask and how we ask it. Also, if it’s something related to these times of crisis, it would not be long-term. However, if this is something the board wishes to pursue, there’s no reason to not pursue it.) • Do we know or have a way to know how many programs would need an exemption and how much capacity they would have? Do we have the capacity to serve all children of essential workers? (Response: I think the letters to the Governor and letters to the Mayors helps, because it specifies what the need, demand, and requests for change are. The one thing I foresee for certain is the need for child care as the Department of Education (DOE) remains closed. In other states, their DOEs are offering emergency child care on-campus, but HIDOE is not doing that. Therefore, the need is likely just going to increase as this situation progresses.) • Further responses on the issue of inability to provide aid to child care providers included: 	
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The viability of child care during the pandemic, and what this means when the crisis dies down and people start returning to work. ○ The cost of operating child care, which has gone up significantly for providers, and in many cases double what it used to be. ○ Even if funds can be obtained, there will be no one to give the funds to if they don't come quickly enough. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Some people expressed hope that philanthropic organizations may be able to fill in the gap left by lack of government support. Kerrie addressed three different ways private providers can get relief: the Resilience Fund through Hawaii Community Foundation (HCF), Aloha United Way's fund, and an app called Switchboard that matches programs with private philanthropy to do direct check-writing and direct assistance. Bob brought up the Castle Foundation moving up their tuition grants, though this would not be sufficient to cover child care across the board. ● ECAS asked in the chat box, "Would EOEL be open to collecting this information and housing all of this in one place? Private provider info, emergency care, Pauahi Keiki Scholars, subsidy info, etc.?" Bob used this question to direct the conversation to the role of EOEL. <p>Lauren was asked about her thoughts regarding how EOEL can be supportive of efforts for all constituent groups (e.g., families, providers, partners). She explained that EOEL is open to being the organization to house information on emergency child care, and hopes to be the venue by which to communicate information to partners, families, and providers. Bob then opened the floor up for questions and discussion.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Perhaps EOEL should be present at meetings with state 	
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	<p>officials concerning COVID-19? The early learning sector needs a voice at the table for those kinds of discussions, and EOEL may be the agency best-equipped to be the representative. (Response: EOEL could reach out to the Governor and his team to see how EOEL can be involved in COVID-19 conversations.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information seems to be updated every five minutes. What is the quickest method available to get information out to families, and does EOEL have the flexibility to do it? If not, what is EOEL capable of doing, and what might the rest of us do to help fill in the gap? (Response: EOEL has put up some basic information on their website, including links to both DOH and DHS. They have also curated some early learning resources with help from EOEL Public Pre-K Program staff, for families who are now staying at home with their young children, specifically those who fall under EOEL’s purview. EOEL is currently trying to build a separate COVID-related webpage specifically for information about emergency programs and services, including meal distribution and emergency care for children birth through kindergarten entry, and has also included HCAN’s resource directory. Keopu is taking the lead on this, with support from Kevin, our data person. EOEL is happy to continue to build out that platform as a resource.) • ECAS commented in the chatbox that it would be helpful for EOEL to keep the website updated in a timely manner and to disseminate information weekly. A concern was raised regarding duplication of efforts by others and whether EOEL would be a hub that the public would be inclined to seek out for information., (Response: It is possible for EOEL to become that strong, central source of information, but it would take the efforts of everyone on this board to spread the 	
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	<p>word, direct families’ attention to EOEL’s website, and to keep referring to EOEL as the “go-to” entity for information.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does AUW 2-1-1 have good mental health referrals for families and young children? (Response: They have a question tree that establishes at what point they should refer to a hotline number or to 911. Kerrie offered to share the link to this.) • I’m wondering if there are ways for EOEL’s current staff to be repurposed to support county needs as community connectors (e.g., work with county mayors, coordinate with PATCH, DOH, and DHS on each island). If so, how can we do that? (Response: EOEL would need some time to explore this possibility, but it is a great suggestion. At the next meeting, people should come with ideas and suggestions on how to do this.) • What are the priorities of ELB going forward, and what do they hope for their role to be? (Response: It is pretty difficult to set our goals when a lot of the information out there is “we don’t know.” It might be easier to take “going forward” within the next 30 days for now, including meeting at the next regularly scheduled time (April 9, 2020). Bob listed summarizing emergency child care needs assessments being conducted by different stakeholders, making sure EOEL is part of the COVID-19 planning conversation, and establishing EOEL as the source of information for child care during the pandemic as the board’s primary objectives.) • The question was raised as to how to organize around those objectives, and a suggestion was made that perhaps Lauren could explain what EOEL is able to do, so the rest of the board can fill in for what EOEL is unable to do. (Response: Lauren will look into the responsibilities of EOEL staff, but 	
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	<p>in terms of becoming the hub for information, she explained that EOEL does not have a lot of access to child care information for both providers and families, so while it is within the capacity of EOEL to accomplish this, it would need the help of partners.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bob then asked if there were any other urgent matters that have not already been addressed at today’s meeting. (Response: Kaina suggested identifying information and/or data that everyone is wondering about as the pandemic drags on. Justina said that people would soon be able to take paid leave to stay at home to watch their children, so there should be a place that people can go to find this information.) 	
<p>Public Comment – Bob Peters</p>	<p>Caroline Soga from Honolulu Community College commented in reference to Kerrie’s earlier question about a list of which children’s centers are open or closed right now: they have been asked to complete forms regularly to notify PATCH of closed or open statuses, and HCAN just asked if they would be willing to provide care for essential workers.</p> <p>Barbara DeBaryshe commented that in regards to ECAS, Team 4 is working to see how they can coordinate future surveys that go out from PATCH to child care providers. They are hoping to conduct virtual focus groups with providers to better assess their immediate needs, and what it would take to maintain/restore operations once the current crisis has passed.</p> <p>Cheri Nakamura from HE’E Coalition commented that she felt that most conversations were focused on center-based providers, but she hopes that all providers are taken into consideration during this time, especially family-child interaction learning (FCIL) program providers. She particularly wants to make sure that people are thinking about ensuring that FCIL providers are receiving enough resources to go back to work when things go back to normal.</p>	

Review Agenda Outcomes —Bob Peters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • EOEL will be the designated entity to provide information and resources related to early learning and child care for children birth through kindergarten entry during the pandemic. • EOEL will also look at improving community outreach and connection through added staff responsibilities. • The board will focus on efforts to ensure EOEL has a place at the table for all state COVID-19 discussions. • Board will also support EOEL in any areas they find they may need help in. 	
Announcements	Bob thanked Deborah Zysman and HCAN for allowing the Early Learning Board to use their Zoom account, and Keopu Reelitz for managing the chatbox and facilitating input from members and the public.	
Executive Session	No items from the AG.	
Closing —Kerrie Urosevich	“I will love the light, for it shows me the way, yet I will endure the darkness, for it shows me the stars.” –Og Mandino (author of <i>The Greatest Salesman in the World</i>)	

Submitted by Ashley Miura and Chris Jackson