



Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council

General ECAC Public Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 16, 2026, 5:30 p.m.–7:15 p.m.

Meeting ID: 815 9023 7818 Passcode: 308879

Attendance

Members' Present

- B - Edith Farmer, MA Supervisor, Child Care Licensing Department of Supportive Services
- C - Tami Conn, Deputy Bureau Chief Division of Public and Behavioral Health
- D - Brooke Yarborough, Social Services Chief 2, Nevada Department of Health & Human Services
- F- Betsy Newman, Part C Coordinator, Clinical Program Planner II, Department of Human Services, IDEA Part C, Aging and Disability Services Division
- G - Dr. Diane Nicolet, Trustee, Washoe County School District
- H- Dr. Jenna Weglarz-Ward Associate Professor, Early Childhood Multilingual and Special Education, UNLV
- I - Deetra Stewart, Family Home Care Provider and Family Childcare Associate President
- J - Dr. Stephanie Vega, Ph.D., Teacher, Washoe County School District
- K - Tiffany Alston, Director of Programs, Sunrise Children's Foundation
- L - Patrice Gardner, M.Ed., ECAC Vice Chair, Education Programs Supervisor, NV Head Start Collaboration Director Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
- M - Dazrael Lyke, Developmental Specialist 4, Aging and Disability Services Division
- O- Tiffany Olivas, Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Manager, The Children's Cabinet
- Q- Rhonda Laughlin, Program Manager, Head Start, Reno Spark, Indian Colony
- R- Parent Seat (Open/Vacant)
- S – Dr. Amanda Haboush-Deloye, The Nevada Institute for Children's Research and Policy, UNLV
- S- Brianna Cambra Provider Support Director, The Children's Cabinet
- S - Tina Springmeyer, Director, Department of Child and Family Services
- S- Dr. Linda Young, Founder, The Village Foundation, Former CCSD School Board Trustee
- S - Laura Brown, Monitoring and Compliance Coordinator, Acceleron Head Start
- S- Dr. Jerek Hough, Founder, Abbreviated Learning

Members Absent

- E- Jenneses Black Education Programs Professional, Nevada Department of Education
- P - Abbey Bernhardt, National Alliance on Mental Illness, Nevada Chapter
- N - Kathy Yoder Bass, Non-Profit Provider
- A- Duplicate Seat (Vacant)

Public In Attendance

- Mary Childrey, The Children's Cabinet

- Sabrina Jones, ECAC Systems Specialist, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
- Darby Porter, Youth Service Consultant, Clark County Library
- Marty Elquist, Chief Programs Officer, The Children's Cabinet
- Rachel Stepina, PDG B-5 Grant Manager, Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
- Anna Villatoro, Family Leadership Coordinator, The Children's Cabinet
- Julie Houchins, United Way of Southern Nevada
- Kate Pflughoeft, Associate Grant Manager Office of Early Learning and Development, Nevada Department of Education
- Adrian Lemus, Parent First Five Nevada Family Leader
- Octavia McClaurin, Child Care Provide
- Dr. Elizabeth Glover, CEO of Echoes of Excellence
- Zepporah Cousin Lee, Parent Leader, Family Leadership and Engagement Co-Chair
- Ray W. Community Member
- Nikia Anderson Director-LVVWD Care and Education, Bright Horizons
- Matthew Hoffman, Education Program Professional, NDE, Office of Early Learning and Development
- Marisa Lacroix, Education Program Professional, NDE, Office of Early Learning and Development

Minutes

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

- Chair Tiffany Alston called the meeting to order at 5:34pm
- Sabrina Jones conducted roll call.

2. Public Comment #1

- No public comment was provided.

3. Approval of Flexible Agenda (For Possible Action)

- Dr. Stephanie Vega moved to approve the flexible agenda.
- Dr. Linda Young seconded the motion.
- All members present voted in favor.
- There were no votes in opposition.
- The motion carried.

4. Approval of July 15, 2026, General ECAC Meeting Minutes (For Possible Action)

- The July 15, 2026 General ECAC meeting minutes were provided to members in advance of the meeting.
- No edits or additions to the minutes were requested.
- Dr. Diane Nicolet moved to approve the July 15, 2026 General ECAC meeting minutes.
- Tiffany Olivas seconded the motion.
- There were no votes in opposition and no abstentions.
- The motion carried.

5. 2026 Market Rate Report (Informational)

- Marty Elquist presented findings from the 2026 Child Care Market Rate Survey and discussed the relationship between provider prices, state subsidy reimbursement rates, family copayments, and the actual cost of providing care.
- ❖ She explained that many Nevada providers charge weekly rates and described the “hidden copay” or gap that families may pay when a provider’s rate exceeds the state maximum reimbursement rate, in addition to any required family copayment.
- ❖ The presentation highlighted regional differences and gaps between current state reimbursement rates and the 75th percentile of current market rates. Marty Elquist noted that the current reimbursement structure is based on the 95th percentile of 2018 rates, while the price of care has increased.
- Marty Elquist distinguished the market price of care from the true cost of care and described Nevada’s Cost-to-Quality Calculator developed with P5 Fiscal Strategies. The tool can model operating costs and quality variables such as workforce wages and benefits, preparation time, paid training, sick leave, and vacation time.
- Members discussed the importance of considering operating costs, workforce compensation, inflation, and multiple funding sources when evaluating affordability and access. Marty Elquist noted that the Child Care and Development Fund is important but cannot, by itself, address the full financing needs of the child care system.
- Marty Elquist offered to return for a future presentation or training on use of the Cost-to-Quality Calculator once the tool is available.

6. Nevada Department of Education Updates: Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils and PDG SMART Grant

- Marisa Lacroix presented the [Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils \(STIP\)](#) on behalf of Michael Tomas Mitchell. She explained that the STIP is Nevada’s five-year plan for improving public-school student outcomes and is updated annually.
- Marisa Lacroix stated that the draft STIP includes five strategic [priorities](#): Strong Foundations; Empowering Pathways; Equipped Educators and Leaders; Informed and Connected Families; and Aligned Systems.
- ❖ The Nevada Department of Education is seeking public input on the draft STIP. The public comment period is open through October 21, 2026.
- Marisa Lacroix stated that she would provide links to the draft and the [online feedback survey](#).
- Matthew Hoffman introduced the anticipated one-year Preschool Development Grant SMART Grant, focused on Strategic Measurement, Analytics, and Results using Technology. He described the opportunity as a technology, analytics, and data-focused grant and connected it to Nevada’s EC Data Lab and cross-agency data-use work.
- Matthew Hoffman [shared a form](#) to collect project ideas from ECAC members and guests. Suggested projects should be data-focused, measurable, actionable, and feasible within the approximately 10-month implementation period.
- Rachel Stepina clarified that October 9, 2026, is the target date for responses to the idea form, although responses may still be accepted after that date depending on the final [Notice of Funding Opportunity and application timeline](#).

7. Overview of the Head Start Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (Informational and Discussion)

- Chair Tiffany Alston presented an overview of the federal Head Start Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM), emphasizing that the proposal was not yet a final rule and that the public comment period was open through October 6, 2026.

- Tiffany Alston explained the distinction between the Head Start Act, which is federal law, and the Head Start Program Performance Standards, which are federal regulations used to implement statutory requirements. She noted that the proposal would substantially restructure the regulatory framework.
- ❖ The presentation reviewed the Administration for Children and Families stated intent to reduce federal administrative burden, eliminate duplication, rely more heavily on other state and federal requirements, and provide greater local flexibility.
- ❖ Discussion also addressed concerns raised by families, Head Start professionals, and other early childhood stakeholders regarding potential effects on program quality, individualized services, disability services, home visiting, comprehensive services, workforce expectations, and family protections.
- Tiffany Alston reviewed the federal public-comment process and encouraged participants to comment on issues within their knowledge and experience. Members discussed the importance of individual voices in the formal rulemaking record.
- Members also discussed the need for state employees and other participants to follow their employers' policies when engaging in advocacy or submitting comments in a personal capacity.

8. Subcommittee Updates (Information, Discussion, Review, and Public Comment)

- Tiffany Olivas provided a Family Leadership & Engagement Subcommittee update- She described work to establish a formal process for ECAC Subcommittees, partners, and organizations to request family review and feedback on policies, procedures, and other work.
- ❖ The Subcommittee is preparing for the 2027 Legislative Session through brief educational segments, coordination with Policy & Finance, collaboration with the Children's Advocacy Alliance on guidance materials, and preparation for testimony and Children's Week.
- ❖ Family Leadership & Engagement is also considering rotating updates from other ECAC Subcommittees and coordination with the Nevada Department of Education's statewide family-engagement work.
- Vice Chair Patrice Gardner shared Executive Leadership updates, including the redesigned Nevada ECAC website, the new ECAC Facebook page, and preparation for the 2026 ECAC Annual Report. She stated that Denise Tanata will attend Subcommittee meetings to gather input on policy priorities and recommendations for the Governor.

9. Parent and Family Leadership Updates (Information, Discussion, and Public Comment)

- Tiffany Olivas announced and welcomed Zepporah Cousin-Lee as the new Co-Chair of the Family Leadership & Engagement Subcommittee.
- The new Co-Chair Zepporah Lee introduced herself and shared her experience with family leadership and Early Head Start Policy Council participation. She expressed interest in helping families become more involved, connect with resources, and strengthen family voice.
- Tiffany Olivas noted that having a parent serving as a Subcommittee Co-Chair reflects progress in elevating family leadership within ECAC.

10. Partner Report Updates (Information, Discussion, Review, and Public Comment)

- The September and October Partner Summary Report was provided for review, and partners were invited to share brief highlights rather than read each written submission.
- Rachel Stepina provided an update on closeout of the Preschool Development Grant Birth through Five. Programmatic funding ended June 30, 2026, and the team is preparing final reports and a dissemination strategy for needs assessments, continued-look studies, Nevada's Pathway to Universal Pre-K materials, executive summaries, program results, and the final evaluation report.

- Rachel Stepina stated that, once the dissemination plan is further developed, she may request a future agenda item to share key findings and explain how ECAC members and partners can use the materials.

11. Upcoming ECAC Meeting Schedule (Review and Discussion)

- Members were directed to the posted agenda for upcoming ECAC and Subcommittee meeting dates and times.

12. Public Comment #2

- Deetra Stewart, President of the Family Child Care Association of Nevada, invited support and participation for the 2026 Family Child Care Western Regional Conference scheduled for October 17, 2026, at the College of Southern Nevada Cheyenne Campus. She noted that vendors, sponsors, and community partners were being sought.
- Tiffany Olivas shared The Children’s Cabinet’s request for programs conducting behavioral health, social-emotional, or developmental screenings with children birth through age five to complete a brief statewide screening survey by the end of September.
- Julie Houchins shared information about a United Way of Southern Nevada summit on October 1 focused on advancing early learning through advocacy among educators, nonprofits, stakeholders, and funders.
- Dr. Linda Young shared information about the virtual Early Learning Institute, including upcoming participation opportunities and the importance of ongoing early learning professional development.
- Jenna Weglarz-Ward shared that Nevada’s IDEA Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council has vacancies for family members and invited interested families to learn more or apply.

Action Step Summary

- ❖ Marisa Lacroix will provide the Nevada Department of Education STIP resources and survey information; the STIP public comment period is open through October 21, 2026.
- ❖ ECAC members and partners are encouraged to submit PDG SMART Grant project ideas through the shared form. October 9, 2026, was identified as the target date, with later responses still accepted as the grant timeline allows.
- ❖ Members and community partners were encouraged to review the Head Start Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and submit individual public comments by October 6, 2026, consistent with applicable employer policies.
- ❖ Family Leadership & Engagement will continue developing a formal family feedback request process, legislative-session preparation activities, rotating Subcommittee updates, and alignment with statewide family-engagement work.
- ❖ Denise Tanata will connect with ECAC Subcommittees regarding priorities and recommendations for the 2026 ECAC Annual Report to the Governor.
- ❖ Rachel Stepina and the PDG B-5 team will continue developing a dissemination strategy for final PDG B-5 reports, needs assessments, evaluation materials, Nevada’s Pathway to Universal Pre-K materials, and other grant deliverables.
- ❖ Partners were encouraged to complete The Children’s Cabinet early childhood screening survey by the end of September 2026.

13. Adjournment

- Chair Tiffany Alston thanked members and attendees for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Meeting Summary

- The Nevada Early Childhood Advisory Council reviewed the 2026 Child Care Market Rate Survey and Nevada's child care cost and reimbursement landscape; received Nevada Department of Education updates on the Statewide Plan for the Improvement of Pupils and the anticipated PDG SMART Grant; discussed the federal Head Start Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and public-comment process; heard Subcommittee, parent and family leadership, and partner updates; and received public comments and announcements. The Council also approved the flexible agenda and the July 15, 2026, General ECAC meeting minutes.