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Date: October 9, 2026

To: Child Care Advisory Group, Workforce Solutions East Texas Board

From:  Douglas G. Shryock, Director, Regional Workforce and Economic Development

Subject: October 16, 2026, Meeting

A meeting of the Child Care Advisory Group of the Workforce Solutions East Texas Board has been scheduled for **Friday, October 16, 2026, at 2:00 p.m., at the Tyler Workforce Center, 1421 S. Beckham Avenue, Tyler, Texas 75701 and Via Conference Call.** An agenda and supporting materials are attached.

Items for consideration include:

- Update on issues to be considered during the upcoming session of the Texas Legislature;
- Update on Child Care Services;
- Update on Texas Rising Star activities;
- Discussion of topics/issues to be addressed by the Child Care Advisory Group in the coming months;
- A. More information on the timing/dates of the market rate study survey (to support provider participation and outreach);
- B. Follow-up on the meeting/outreach opportunity with Congressman Nathaniel Moran;
- C. Update on Child Care Credential Associate Training;
- D. Discussion of New Provider Orientation – Provider Attendance;
- E. Update on proposal by Board staff to have the option to temporarily pause enrollment for one, multiple, or all Board-established Priority Group categories when an extenuating circumstance exists; and
- F. Preliminary discussion of other Child Care topics.

If any attendee has special requirements due to disabilities, reasonable arrangements will be made, upon request. Please contact the ETCOG office at (903) 218-6400. Telephone inquiries can be made at (800) 735-2989 (TDD) or (800) 735-2988 (Voice).

DGS/GA/kv

Enclosures

Workforce Solutions East Texas Board

Child Care Advisory Group
Friday, October 16, 2026 – 2:00 p.m.
Workforce Solutions East Texas – Tyler Center
1421 S. Beckham Avenue
Tyler, TX 75701

And Virtually Via Conference Call

To join the meeting by telephone please call the number below and enter the meeting ID.
If you do not have a participant ID, just stay on the line and you will be entered into the meeting without one.

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/167471792>

Phone: +1 (650) 4191505 Meeting ID: 167471792#

AGENDA

1. Call to Order: Chair Camille Brown
2. Consider Public Comments: Chair Camille Brown

Time Limit: 3 Minutes. Interested Parties have an opportunity to address the Board or Committee, which has no obligation to respond in any manner to comments or questions asked of them by the speaker. If multiple speakers wish to address the same topic, a spokesperson will be selected. Any response by a member of the Board is limited by Texas law to a statement of specific factual information, a recitation of existing policy, or a proposal to place the subject on the agenda for a future WSET Board or Committee meeting.

3. Consider items from Child Care Advisory Group Members: Chair Camille Brown
This agenda item shall allow any member of the Child Care Advisory Group the opportunity to discuss minor, non-action items such as recognitions, attendance at relevant events, upcoming relevant events, etc. that are not listed on this agenda, and which require no action by the Group.
4. Consider and take appropriate action regarding approval of the minutes of the Child Care Advisory Group meeting on May 1, 2026: Chair Camille Brown (Enclosure #1)
5. Consider an update on issues to be considered during the upcoming session of the Texas Legislature: Chair Camille Brown (Enclosure #2 and #3)
6. Consider and take appropriate action regarding an update on Child Care Services (CCS): Rhonda McGrath
7. Consider and take appropriate action regarding update on Texas Rising Star (TRS) activities: Kristi Brown
8. Consider and take appropriate action regarding discussion of topics / issues to be addressed by the Child Care Advisory Group in the coming months: Chair Camille Brown, Doug Shryock, Rhonda McGrath and Rita Portz
 - A. More information on the timing/dates of the market rate study survey (to support provider participation and outreach)
 - B. Follow-up on the meeting/outreach opportunity with Congressman Nathaniel Moran
 - C. Consider an update on Child Care Credential Associate Training

- D. Discussion of New Provider Orientation -- Provider Attendance
 - E. Update on proposal by Board staff to have the option to temporarily pause enrollment for one, multiple, or all Board-established Priority Group categories when an extenuating circumstance exists
 - F. Preliminary discussion of other Child Care topics
9. Identification of items to be included on the next Child Care Advisory Group Meeting Agenda: Chair Camille Brown
 10. Set Date for the next Child Care Advisory Group Meeting: Chair Camille Brown
 11. Adjournment

Minutes of Meeting

Workforce Solutions East Texas Board
Child Care Advisory Group
Friday, May 1, 2026 – 1:30 p.m.
Workforce Solutions East Texas – Tyler Center
1421 S. Beckham Avenue
Tyler, TX 75701

And Virtually Via Conference Call

To join the meeting by telephone, please call the number below and enter the meeting ID. If you do not have a participant ID, just stay on the line and you will be entered into the meeting without one.

Join from PC, Mac, Linux, iOS or Android: <https://v.ringcentral.com/join/858146408>

Phone: +1 (650) 4191505

Meeting ID: 858146408#

1. Call to Order: Chair Camille Brown

Chair Camille Brown called the meeting to order at 1:37 p.m.

The following individuals were present:

Members

Camille Brown
Doug Shryock
Kristti Brown
Claretta Allen
Brandi Clark
Yashica Conley
Jennifer Deupree
Valerie Hatten
Adam Martin
Rita Portz
LJ Raffray
Keri Perot Vance

Staff

Gary Allen
Dylan Savage
Kitty Vickers

Guests

Sandy Anderson, BakerRipley
Kassandra Esparza
Susan Hargis, Whitehouse EDC
Tonia Crawford, BakerRipley

2. Consider Public Comments: Chair Camille Brown

Time Limit: 3 Minutes. Interested Parties have an opportunity to address the Board or Committee, which has no obligation to respond in any manner to comments or questions asked of them by the speaker. If multiple speakers wish to address the same topic, a spokesperson will be selected. Any response by a member of the Board is limited by Texas law to a statement of specific factual information, a recitation of existing policy, or a proposal to place the subject on the agenda for a future WSET Board or Committee meeting.

There were no Public Comments.

3. Consider items from Child Care Advisory Group Members: Chair Camille Brown

This agenda item shall allow any member of the Child Care Advisory Group the opportunity to discuss minor, non-action items such as recognitions, attendance at relevant events, upcoming relevant events, etc. that are not listed on this agenda, and which require no action by the Group.

Chair Camille Brown reviewed compiled concerns/suggestions/updates from childcare directors across the county listed in Enclosure #1.

Key provider concerns and suggestions:

- Providers expressed concern about childcare availability at risk, including impacts from public school/ISD expansion (example: serving younger children at 3 years old in some areas).
- Providers reported difficulty operating while serving CCS families due to reimbursement levels not covering operating costs.
- Concern was raised about families which may not understand CCS payments and may not equal the provider's full posted tuition, and providers often must cover the shortfall.
- The Chair's listed concerns included: statewide inconsistency across childcare boards; reimbursement based on enrollment (not attendance); ensuring payments reflect provider operating policies (including closures/holidays) rather than being dictated by boards; market rate reimbursements not reflecting reality; enrollment termination policies perceived as favoring families over providers; and overall provider impact.
- A provider offered to share a parent-facing information notice (reviewed by an attorney) explaining the CCS/provider/parent partnership and payment realities.

4. Consider Child Care Advisory Group Chair Comments: Chair Camille Brown (Enclosure #1)

Doug Shryock reviewed the comments by Chair Camille Brown enclosed in the agenda packet.

1. Lack of statewide consistency across childcare boards.
2. Reimbursement based on enrollment rather than attendance.
3. Payments reflecting center operating policies (including closures/holiday/time-off) and concern that closure decisions should not be dictated by Boards.
4. Market rate reimbursements that do not reflect operational reality.
5. Enrollment termination policies perceived as favoring families over providers.
6. Overall impact on providers.

5. Consider and take appropriate action regarding approval of the minutes of the Child Care Advisory Group meeting on January 23, 2026: Chair Camille Brown (Enclosure #2)

Kristti Brown moved to approve the minutes of the Child Care Advisory Group meeting on January 23, 2026. The motion was seconded by Yashica Conley and passed with no opposition.

6. Consider and take appropriate action regarding an update on Child Care Services (CCS): Rhonda McGrath

Rita Portz presented a power point regarding an update on Child Care Services (CCS).

A. Inconsistent CCS payments / difficulty reconciling payment amounts

- Rita Portz reviewed how prospective payments are structured in two-week periods (Monday–Sunday), based on a child authorized at the beginning of each pay period.
- Changes in authorization/attendance within a pay period may affect payment in a subsequent cycle, which can appear as a “delay.”
- Providers were reminded to use the CCS payment period calendar and to review it regularly.
- Question raised: how soon must a provider report a child no longer attending? Response: as soon as possible, and within 5 days (contract requirement).
- Enrollment occurring in the second week of a pay period: payment for the initial week is commonly issued in the next available cycle; may take approximately 2–3 weeks due to prospective payment timing.
- If authorization ends/changes after a payment is issued, CCS may recover overpayments by future payment adjustments or recovery requests; these are documented in notices posted in the CCS childcare portal.
- Age/rate changes: child’s rate category is based on the first day of the two-week billing cycle; mid-cycle birthdays may not trigger the rate change until the next cycle.
- Rates are based on provider location (workforce board area), not child residence.

Best practices shared:

- Routinely log into the portal/system (Kinder Connect/Kinder systems referenced) to verify active attendance/authorizations.
- Report children who stop attending within 5 days (contract requirement); updated portal field will capture whether the parent owes the provider a balance (to prevent improper “hold” on transfers).
- Track authorization start/end dates; example shown where an authorization end date indicates when CCS payment should stop and private pay should begin.
- Upload attendance every Monday (contract requirement). CCS staff monitor uploads and follow up with providers/parents when attendance appears inconsistent; accurate attendance data also helps manage waitlist availability.
- Use payment detail views to reconcile reimbursement amount minus parent fee to expected CCS payment; do not rely solely on bank deposit totals.

B. Financial strain from low reimbursement rates

- Rita Portz explained rates are set by Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) using the annual Texas childcare market rate study and childcare cost-of-quality study (conducted by the Texas Institute for Child and Family Wellbeing).
- Concern noted provider participation in the market rate study may be low, potentially limiting accuracy of rate-setting data.
- Discussion focused on increasing awareness and encouraging providers to complete the survey when contacted (a phone-based survey; last cited as 39 questions; data collection timeframe referenced as beginning around September).
- Rita Portz noted rates in the region increased over the last three years (percent cited as 15.5% in the presentation).
- Rita Portz encouraged providers to pursue higher Texas Rising Star (TRS) levels to increase allowable reimbursement rates (for example given higher rate at TRS 4 versus lower tier).

- Additional support discussed: participation in Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) meal reimbursement; business analysis support from Business Services/Industry Specialists workshop (noted low attendance in some locations with consideration of a Saturday option); and TWC's Child Care Business Support initiative (coaching/training on profitability, budgeting, sustainability).

C. Parent eligibility, co-pay, and perceived equity

- Eligibility requirements reviewed: participation in work/school/training at least 25 hours/week for single-parent households and 50 hours/week for two-parent households (training/school participants must still work a minimum of 12 hours/week).
- Other eligibility points: child must be a U.S. citizen or legal immigrant; under 13 (or up to 19 with documented disability); child must live in the same household as the applicant/caregiver.
- Asset limit referenced: not to exceed \$1 million.
- Income limit referenced: up to 85% of state median income (gross income), with an example discussion of a single parent with one child could be eligible at approximately \$60,000/year.
- Parent share of cost is calculated by a TWC sliding fee calculator and maybe up to 7% of gross monthly income.
- Examples of zero parent share of cost discussed: homelessness (up to 3 months), Choices/workforce partner referrals (until program ends), initial job search (up to 3 months), and Protective Services cases.

D. Payment frequency change (weekly to bi-weekly) and federal rules

- Rita Portz stated the 2024 federal rule changes implemented prospective payments and changed payment frequency; local entities cannot revert independently to weekly payments.
- Advocacy was discussed concerning the appropriate channel for policy change at federal/state levels.

E. Advocacy and external resources

- Organizations/resources mentioned: Children at Risk (policy advocacy; meetings and “spring tour” referenced), Workforce/board engagement, Texas Legislature “find your representative” resource, and (added by request) Texas Licensed Child Care Association.
- Doug Shryock noted an upcoming opportunity to engage with Congressman Nathaniel Moran and/or staff regarding childcare/workforce policy impacts, including prospective payment rules.

Rita Portz also noted a proposed federal rulemaking referenced in the Federal Register with a public comment period which ended February 4. Future changes may occur; and the group will monitor developments.

7. Consider and take appropriate action regarding discussion of topics / issues to be addressed by the Child Care Advisory Group in the coming months: Chair Camille Brown, Doug Shryock, Rhonda McGrath and Rita Portz

This item #7. A-F regarding discussion of the topics / issues to be addressed by the Child Care Advisory Group in the coming months was skipped since the information was covered in item #6 simultaneously with the power point presentation.

- A. Inconsistent CCS payments and difficulty reconciling payment amounts.**
 - B. Financial strain caused by low reimbursement rates, resulting in providers losing money while serving CCS children.**
 - C. Confusion regarding parent eligibility and copays, including concerns that some families appear financially stable while others do not.**
 - D. Change from weekly to bi-monthly payments creates cash flow uncertainty. Providers want to continue serving CCS families but face sustainability challenges.**
 - E. Providers express confusion about how regional rates are set compared to other areas and why this area is so much lower than other areas.**
 - F. Preliminary discussion of other Child Care topics**
- 8. Identification of items to be included on the next Child Care Advisory Group Meeting Agenda: Chair Camille Brown**
- More information on the timing/dates of the market rate study survey (to support provider participation and outreach).
 - Follow-up on the meeting/outreach opportunity with Congressman Nathaniel Moran.
- 9. Set Date for the next Child Care Advisory Group Meeting: Chair Camille Brown**

No specific date was stated at this time. It has previously been noted to take place once every three months.

10. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.

What owners and directors see is needed during the 2027 legislative session:

We need legislature to invest in the priority of more funds for scholarships serving children and families. Our state has a large Economic Stabilization fund, therefore the legislature is well positioned to cover its obligation and make strategic investments during the session. Moreover, it is important for the legislature to account for inflation in writing the budget. Families and childcare centers are under the strain of rising costs and are counting on the legislature to make sure our state investments keep pace. One issue is the long wait times for eligible families to receive childcare. Cutting this service is extremely harmful to Texas families and the childcare centers who provide the service so that families can work and have care for their children.

We as childcare center owners request the Texas Workforce Commission to ensure that more working families have access to affordable, quality childcare by maintaining necessary funding for childcare scholarships and by providing additional funding. Owners are very pleased to see that TWC LAR includes a \$100 million transfer from TANF to support childcare scholarships. The LAR continues the investment that lawmakers made last session which preserved safe, quality care for thousands of children and helped parents go to work with Texans Care for Children.

We operate in a highly regulated environment on extremely thin margins. Rising costs for wages, food and all supplies continues to push tuition higher. Available scholarship funds for families has not kept pace with demand. Our state has nearly 100,000 on a waitlist for childcare assistance. This is despite a recent \$100 million state investment.

On January 20, 2026 Governor Greg Abbott launched the Task Force on Early Childhood Education and Care to improve the quality, access, and affordability of childcare for Texas families, House Bill 117. The goal is to evaluate childcare and early learning programs across all state agencies. The Governor stated "We must put an end to the endless bureaucracy, the unclear standards of care, and the inflated costs that make it difficult for parents to get early childhood care and education that they need for their children."

As the Task Force develops their recommendations for early learning governance please keep in mind that adequate funding is extremely important but consolidating programs can be costly. By strengthening quality affordable childcare we are supporting families today and building tomorrow's workforce.

What is right and what is worth fighting for in child care

As Childcare owners and directors we are proud that our children in care are thriving and learning. We are thankful that the families we serve can go to work because we provide quality, dependable care. We represent educators who have continued to build our careers serving children. We have served our communities for years and generations. We feel that there is tremendous value and family appreciation in what we do. However, the business side of this success is threatened. When we offer quality affordable care that depends on being financially sustainable. Safe facilities, age appropriate classroom materials, competitive wages, licensing requirements, professional development and maintaining child staff ratios all require dependable revenue. Quality is made possible by financial sustainability. As owners, directors, and employees we are proud of what we do, extremely honest about what needs to change and united around solutions that will strengthen child care for children, their families , educators, providers, and our community businesses.