



Annual Report 2019-2020

Early Childhood Council of Kern

Planning for quality early care and education.

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Local Planning

The Early Childhood Council of Kern is a 30-member, appointed advisory board working together to increase and enhance the quality of early childhood programs in Kern County. It is comprised of parents, early childhood professionals, employers, educators, public agencies, and advocates—all with a common interest—increasing the availability of high-quality early childhood services for young children birth to 12 years of age.

The Council is a liaison between local government, parents, early education providers and the community. Designated as the Local Child Care and Development Planning Council for the County, the Council is responsible to the California Department of Education, Kern County Board of Supervisors and Kern County Superintendent of Schools.

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MISSION STATEMENT

The Early Childhood Council of Kern is dedicated to promoting and supporting a community-wide effort that results in a high-quality child care system that meets the needs of all Kern County children and families.

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What does the Council do?

The scope of the Council's work includes promoting and supporting efforts to improve quality early care and education services for all children and families in the communities of Kern County. The Council:

- Conducts child care needs assessments which are used to determine local priorities and for the development of strategic plans;
- Informs the community regarding the importance of high-quality, early learning experiences for all young children;
- Distributes educational stipends through the Early Care and Education Retention Project;
- Coordinates trainings for professionals in the early childhood field;
- Works with the County and its 11 incorporated cities to bring high-quality early childhood services to local communities;
- Collaborates with groups such as the business and faith-based communities to address local, early childhood needs;
- Advocates for children and early childhood professionals;
- Strives to expand the availability of, and access to, quality child care services for all families;
- Develops and carries out a strategic plan to be proactive and responsive to changing early childhood trends.

The Council focused its efforts on activities to meet the goals outlined in its 2018-2021 Strategic Plan which can be found under the Data and Resources tab of the Council's website at: <http://earlychildhoodkern.org>.

The Early Childhood Council of Kern is funded by a Planning Council Grant from the California Department of Education, Early Learning and Care Division



In the spring of 2020, Kern County was heavily impacted by the onset of COVID-19, as was the entire nation. Due to “shelter in place” mandates and other restrictions, many of the Council’s typical activities had to be greatly modified or cancelled all together. This report provides a snapshot of the activities that were completed from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020. The Council is hopeful that many of its events and activities will return in the near future.

Quality Enhancement

Kern Early Stars - Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS)

The Kern Early Stars program, serving as the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) for Kern County, was established in the 2014-2015 year, and now reaches all corners of the County and center-based as well as family child care providers. The core principles of the Kern Early Stars are to address:

- Child development and school readiness - through child observation, assessments and developmental and health screenings;
- Teachers and Teaching - through early childhood educator qualifications and effective teacher/child interactions and competencies;
- Program and environment - through the Environmental Rating Scales, ratios, group size and director qualifications.

Council staff served as a member of the Kern Early Stars Consortium in addition to assisting with technical assistance and rating of Spanish-speaking family child care providers. The Council also collaborated with Kern Early Stars to create a video clip on the importance of inclusion in child development programs. Additional details regarding the Kern Early Stars can be found at: www.kernearlystars.org.

Early Care and Education Retention Project

The Council completed the 19th year of the Retention Project by awarding more than \$246,300 in stipends to early childhood professionals working directly with children in State-funded child development centers in Kern County. Stipends are based on several factors including an individual’s continued educational accomplishments or professional development attainment. Beginning with the 2020-2021 year, this program will be modified as guided by the California Department of Education and will be called the Workforce Pathways Grant from that point forward. More information can be found at: <http://earlychildhoodkern.org/workforce-pathways-program/>.



Center Director's Professional Learning Community (PLC)

The Council partnered with the Mentor Director Program to provide three PLC sessions for local directors and supervisors of child development programs. During the 2019-2020 year, the Council was able to provide presentations on the topics of:

- Becoming a Trauma Informed Community
- Community Care Licensing Updates
- Developing the Mindset of a Leader

Inclusive Early Learning and Care Coordination Grant

In January 2019, the California Department of Education provided one-year grants to county offices of education. The purpose was to fund activities aimed at increasing access to inclusive early learning and care programs for children (preschoolers, as well as infants and toddlers) with disabilities and other exceptional needs, including children with severe disabilities. Kern joined with other counties in the Central Valley to submit a regional application, with Council staff being the lead coordinator on Kern's grant.

Kern coordinated multiple local workshops and participated with a regional Beginning Together Train-the-Trainer session. Locally, nine workshops were provided in collaboration with the California Preschool Instructional Network (CPIN). The trainings were held for child development center staff as well as family child care providers and school district personnel. Topics included: Inclusion Works!, Language Development, Autism and Behavior Challenges. A total of 236 separate individuals participated with the workshops, some of which were provided in Spanish. Most sessions were at capacity. Comments from post-training surveys indicated that 76% of the participants better understood what inclusion means, 51% reported that they were more likely to accept a child with special needs in their class or family child care home, and 76% reported that the training had significantly changed their mind about inclusion.

Inclusion focused signage was created and displayed on 20 of Bakersfield's GET Buses. Work began on the creation of a Public Service Announcement (PSA) with an inclusion message that was to be featured on 28 movie screens at Maya Cinemas in Bakersfield and Delano. However, the onset of COVID-19 resulted in this project being cancelled.





Training Opportunities

Local and state-wide organizational training opportunities are posted on the Council's website to help early childhood professionals identify trainings relevant to their position and career goals. In addition, a partial listing of Professional Growth Advisors in Kern County is maintained on the Council's website at <http://earlychildhoodkern.org/for-educators/training-opportunities/>.

Capacity Building / Policy Development

California Department of Education Contractors Meetings

The Council convenes meetings for agencies and school districts that hold contracts with the California Department of Education (CDE) Early Learning and Care Division to provide subsidized child development services in Kern County. These meetings are an opportunity for contractors to network and share challenges and solutions, discuss state and local issues related to the provision of early childhood services in Kern County and to mentor newer administrators. Two Contractors meetings were provided to assist with the dissemination of information regarding operating modifications due to COVID-19.

Data Collection

Geographical Priorities

As required by California Education Code (EC 8499.5), the Council provides the California Department of Education (CDE) with annual Geographical Priorities for Kern County, based on current local data and input from local, funded child development agencies. These priorities are then used by CDE in the event that funds are made available for new state-funded child development programs. Based on a data analysis of the current, estimated supply and demand of early childhood services for income-eligible families, the Council determined that the 2019 Priorities remain applicable and no revisions were necessary. The current Priorities can be found on the Council's website under Data and Resources.

Advocacy

Public Policy Platform

The Council maintains a Public Policy Platform addressing specific areas of the early childhood field the Council determines are of great importance including licensing, workforce development, access to child development services and community infrastructure. The platform permits the Council to provide timely responses to proposed legislation or policy changes at the state level when appropriate. The Policy Platform document is reviewed periodically by the Council and modifications are presented to County Counsel and Schools Legal Service, then approved by the Kern County Superintendent of Schools and the Kern County Board of Supervisors. The current Public Policy Platform can be found at: <http://earlychildhoodkern.org/about-the-council/scope-of-work/>.



Community Involvement

2019-2020 Community Service Projects

Council members and staff contributed their time to volunteer with the following local events:

- Provided educationally focused “goodies” for 3,000+ children and informational flyers for parents at the Safe Halloween event held at the Kern County Museum;
- Collected and donated food items to the Community Action Partnership of Kern Food Bank;
- Partnered with the Child Care Task Force to address emergency needs of child care providers at the onset of COVID-19;
- Distributed cleaning and safety supplies to local child care providers.

Local Board / Committee Participation

Council members and staff participate with numerous community organizations addressing issues related to young children and families. This information is then brought to the full Council to assist all members in staying informed of progress throughout the County. This representation included:

- Bakersfield College Child Development Advisory Council;
- California Child Care Coordinators Association;
- First 5 Kern Technical Advisory Committee;
- Help Me Grow Kern County;
- Kern Chapter of California Association for the Education of Young Children;
- Kern Council for Social Emotional Learning;
- Kern County Child Development Conference Steering Committee;
- Kern County Network for Children Governing Board;
- Kern Early Stars Consortium;
- Taft College Child Development Advisory Committee.

Collaborations

During the 2019-2020 year, the Council collaborated with the following agencies and organizations to offer local trainings and/or events:

- California Mentor Director Program/Bakersfield College;
- California Preschool Instructional Network;
- Community Connection for Child Care
- First 5 Kern
- Fresno County Superintendent of Schools Office
- Kern Chapter of California Association for the Education of Young Children
- Kern Early Stars



Communications

Consumer / Community Awareness

The Council continued to use Facebook to distribute informational messages to the early childhood field and parents. Tips, resources and event announcements are shared with a broad audience on a regular basis.

Information Distribution

Email notices were distributed regularly to provide relevant information to early childhood educators and community partners, encouraging them to share with staff and the families with whom they work. Information included training opportunities, health and legislative updates, current best practices and job opportunities within the early childhood education field.

Website

The Council houses its current document library on its website. This allows documents to be updated in a timely and cost-efficient manner and reaches a broad audience. Meeting information, resources, professional growth, employment opportunities and links to other relevant websites are posted. The Council's website can be found at: www.earlychildhoodkern.org.

Annual Report

The 2018-2019 Annual Report was distributed electronically to early childhood educators, elected officials, county departments and community organizations. The report and prior years reports are posted on the Council's website under the Data and Resources tab.

Reporting

Quarterly written reports were submitted to the Council's governing bodies - the Kern County Board of Supervisors and the Kern County Superintendent of Schools. Written reports were submitted to the California Department of Education, Early Learning and Care Division and the Kern County Department of Human Services as required. Additional reports were submitted based on contractual requirements.



Early Childhood Council of Kern 2019-2020

Maria Aleman, Public Agency Member – Kern Behavioral Health and Recovery Services

Myetta Beavers, Child Care Provider – Child Haven Preschool

Kevin Bartl, Community Member – First 5 Kern

Mike Bledsoe, Child Care Provider –

Delano Union Elementary School District Child Development Programs

Jo'L Braden, Public Agency Member – Bakersfield College

Lisa Brum, Child Care Provider – First Steps Family Child Care

Rosita Curry, Child Care Consumer – Community Action Partnership of Kern

Carrie Eveland, Community Member – Clinica Sierra Vista, Adolescent Family Life Program

Yolanda Gonzales, Child Care Provider –

Community Action Partnership of Kern, Head Start and Early Head Start

Megan Gretona, Discretionary Member – California Preschool Instructional Network

Meghan Hall-Silveira, Discretionary Member – Taft College Children's Center

Alesha Hixon, Child Care Provider – The Wonderful Company

Carlos Lara, Community Member

Christine Lollar, Community Member – Adventist Health

Shannon Oastler, Public Agency Member – Kern County Department of Human Services

Shirelle Perez, Public Agency Member – Community Connection for Child Care

Betty Phillips, Discretionary Member – Former Preschool Teacher

Andrya Salazar, Public Agency Member – Kern County Department of Child Support

Jennifer Slayton, Child Care Consumer – Lamont School District Pre-K Programs

Amanda Tumblin, Discretionary Member – California State University, Bakersfield



About the Council

The Early Childhood Council of Kern meets on the first Wednesday of each month (no meeting in July or January) from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. The public is welcome to attend and actively participate in general and committee meetings, typically held in Bakersfield (the County seat). However, sites of meetings may vary. Attendees are encouraged to call the Council office or visit the Council's website to verify meeting date, time and location. Due to COVID-19, the March through June Council meetings were held via zoom and call in. Meetings will continue to be held virtually until current meeting restrictions are lifted.

How to be involved?

- Attend a meeting
- Participate with a committee
- Provide input at meetings
- Apply for membership

Council Membership Opportunities

The Early Childhood Council of Kern recruits members interested in serving as an appointed member. The Kern County Superintendent of Schools and the Kern County Board of Supervisors are the formal appointing entities. State legislation that governs the Council is specific in regard to composition, stating that membership should consist of these percentages:

- 20% Child Care Consumers;
- 20% Child Care Providers;
- 20% Public Agency Representatives;
- 20% Community Representatives; and
- 20% Discretionary.

Additional information regarding appointments to the Council can be obtained from the Council's website or by contacting the Council office.

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