

ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN  
MEETING MINUTES

**Tuesday April 6 2021, 5:45 PM**

Virtual meeting on Cisco WebEx:

advisorycommitteonthestatusofwomenwebex@cow.webex.com

Call in number: 415-655-0001; Access code: 160 850 2789

This meeting was not live streamed. A video recording is posted on the city website.

**Members Present:** Samantha Sendrowski, Tracey Whitney, Rubby Wuabu Coretta McCarter, Kayanna James

**Members Absent:** Heather Borelli, Ariel Lim, Casey Thomas

**Staff:** Jayna Turchek

**Call to order, introductions and instructions for virtual participation**

The meeting was called to order at 5:50pm

**Review and approval of March 2, 2021 meeting minutes**

Committeewoman Sendrowski made a motion to approve minutes as written and Vice Chairperson James seconded to approve the March 2 meeting minutes. All approved.

**New Business**

Reflections/statement condemning violence against women in Atlanta and around the world

Chairperson McCarter requested to revise the statement to include women of color. Chairperson McCarter to begin the statement and have Committee members collaborate.

Discussion on ACSW COVID family structure recommendations (Samantha Sendrowski)\*

Guest speakers

**Kim Dion Assistant VP and Mary Beth Brown, Information and Referral Manager (Child Care Resources, Seven Hills)**

- Child Care Resources (CCR) is the child care resource and referral agency for Central Massachusetts
- CCR manages the child care voucher program and places families on the state waitlist for child care
- CCR works with child care providers to accept subsidy and has an updated data base to provide referrals to all legally operating child care programs
- From mid-March through June 30, 2020, Governor Baker shut down all child care facilities
- All programs were allowed to apply to reopen as of June 29, 2020.
- Many programs delayed opening due to continued Covid concerns
- The state began to cover parent fees in March 2020 and continue to do so until further notice
- The state has continued to pay for a child's voucher even if the parent is not comfortable returning the child to care at this time
- The state has increased job search to 26 weeks due to the pandemic

- The state has waived explained absences for children at this time to encourage families to keep children home if they are not feeling well
- Child Care providers are required to work with lots of new health and safety protocols
- There are new ratios and programs are limited as to staff who can cover breaks/extended day as EEC tries to limit contact outside of established groupings
- Providers had to pivot quickly to accommodate remote and hybrid School Age learners. The state allowed subsidy payments for full day SA care this academic year.
- Center based programs across the state have reopened at 84%, in Central MA at 88%
- Family Child Care programs across the state have reopened at 83%, in Central MA at 82%
- Total capacity at programs has been reduced to an average of 87% of their pre-Covid capacity
  
- Worcester Program Closure information:
  - o 24 Family Child Providers and 2 Group Care Providers have permanently closed with a total licensed capacity of 230.
  - o 23 Family Child Care Providers have not applied to reopen, with a total licensed capacity of 160.
  - o Currently, there are 326 children on the statewide waitlist for a child care voucher.
  
- Future Funding Opportunities
  - o 2% Rate increase coming with April's subsidy billing (retroactive to July 1, 2020)
  - o Stabilization grants (\$110M – fy21) Distribution formula tbd but will be available for all child care programs
  - o Workforce Investment grants available to centers who hold a subsidy agreement and family child care providers regardless of their subsidy status
    - \$750/every 5 children in licensed capacity for group
    - Up to \$3,000 per FDC program
  
- Individuals can call 211 to complete a pre-screening process for a childcare voucher

### **Dodi Swope (Together for Kids Coalition)**

- Together for Kids Coalition engages early childhood champions in our collective mission to promote the social-emotional well-being and general health of young children (prenatal through eight) and families in Greater Worcester.
- TFK Coalition's work is guided by four principles:
  - o Children's success is everyone's job
  - o There is no time to wait
  - o Early childhood is critical to health and social equity
  - o The return on investment (ROI) is significant
- Our Theory of CHANGE - IF EVERY FAMILY HAS:
  - o Access to work at living wage jobs that enable them to support a family
  - o Access to safe affordable homes, quality affordable food, effective transportation
  - o Access to affordable high quality early education and care and preschool
  - o Access to primary preventative care, healthy development knowledge, support as a parent
- THEN:

- Parents and caregivers of children prenatal to age eight are completely able and ready to provide the environment needed to raise healthy young people.

**Kim Davenport, Managing Director, Birth to 3rd Grade Alignment at Edward Street (Common Start Coalition)**

- Common Start Coalition Vision and Policy Scope
  - Goal: High-quality early education and child care are available and affordable to all Massachusetts families
  - Introduces broad reaching plan with an income-sensitive, incremental roll-out over 5 years
  - Affordability ensured for all families; No restrictions based on service need; Covers same age ranges as current system, including after- and out-of-school time.
  - Provides a framework to increase scope of public investment over time; Plan includes protections for families now receiving subsidies and no changes to DCF/TAFDC
  - Aims to ensure providers are funded for the full cost of high-quality care
  - Uses new public funding programs to support provider sustainability and family affordability
  - Uses public funding to ensure higher educator salaries and benefits, support program quality
  - Maintains existing mixed delivery system of early education and child care
- Families can benefit from subsidies that vary based on income levels, with lower-income households paying no fees and a sliding-scale used thereafter
- Bedrock Funding provides sustainable revenue for programs and is not tied to enrollment: Helps protect providers against attendance and enrollment swings and assists in long-term planning

Chairperson McCarter requested to have the guest speakers back at a future meeting to discuss further.

**Policy/legislative items of interest**

The Committee reviewed a request to sponsor Equality Model MA bill No. HD.3437/SD.2115, An Act to Strengthen Justice and Support for Sex Trade Survivors. The Committee agreed to take up this item at the next meeting with request for Nicole Bell of LIFT to come to discuss.

The Committee also reviewed the update regarding the Worcester Public Schools sex education curriculum review/update (See School Committee Subcommittee on Teaching and Learning and Student Supports meeting 3/30/2021). The Committee discussed the need to be aware and educated on the changes the Subcommittee is trying to make and wanted to ensure that the community voices are being heard by the School Committee.

**Old Business**

Review request for proposals and timelines for 2021 programs, events, and activities

Mentor program/day (Rubby Wuabu)

Committeewoman Wuabu discussed the aim for an in-person mentor day as a yearly program. Chairperson McCarter suggested holding a virtual Zoom event to increase accessibility to students with disabilities. Chairperson McCarter will follow up with Director Turchek to determine if a collaboration with the Committee on Accessibility is possible.

Wonder Women of Worcester Poster Series – round 2 (Tracey Whitney) – TABLED  
Updates and planning for “The Talk” virtual forum and “We Are the Women of Worcester  
calendar” (Coretta McCarter and Kayanna James)

Chairperson McCarter shared that many organizations have been in touch and shared their interest about being involved in “The Talk.” Many Asian families have shared that they have similar talks with their children. Chairperson McCarter is exploring making “The Talk” be more inclusive of more ethnicities for more families, and to engage more of the community. Chairperson McCarter to provide more updates at a later date.

**Suggestions for future agenda items**

- There was a request to have the guest speakers back on a later date to discuss further.
- Committeewoman Wuabu suggested more educational guests at future meetings.

**Next Meeting:** May 4, 2021 at 5:45pm

Guest speaker: Stephanie Williams, City of Worcester Chief Diversity Officer

**Meeting adjourned at 7:40pm**

*“We are not going back to normal — we are going better ... normal was hurting too many residents.” – Kim Janey*

\*PowerPoint presentations available upon request through the office