

CEO Update
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The NC Alliance of YMCAs, in partnership with the NC Center for Afterschool Programs (NC CAP) and the NC Recreation and Parks Association (NCRPA), convened 31 North Carolina childcare stakeholders on Wednesday, April 10th to workshop ideas for modifying childcare licensing rules to make them more developmentally appropriate for school-age children.

The work session opened with an overview of the current state of school-age childcare, delivered by Jon Williams, Statewide School Age Project Manager for the Southwestern Child Development Commission. Jon stated that out of school (OST) program needs center mostly around the mental health needs of both staff and students, staff training and education, funding and resources, and transportation.

I provided remarks about the challenges unlicensed programs that serve only school-age children identify most often in trying to license their programs, including:

- staff pre-service education requirements and ongoing professional development that lacks school-age relevance,
- the different curricula and programming needs of school-age children, and
- the different health and safety needs of this population.

Childcare stakeholders then worked in small groups to find common ground and discuss the benefits and challenges of modifying rules to support the needs of providers of exclusively school-age programs and identify the challenges we will face in making change. The group prioritized near, intermediate, and long-term outcomes, and completed action planning on three near-term objectives to be accomplished in the next 12 months, if not sooner.

The top priority in the short legislative session will be to align family eligibility for subsidy with the federal guidelines, set at 85% of state median income. This will begin to address the fact that school-age children are not eligible for subsidy currently unless their family's income is at 130% of federal poverty levels, whereas for younger children, it is 200%. This would begin to even out that discrepancy.

We discussed having an advocacy effort around this specific issue in the short session, so stay tuned for more information about a childcare subsidy specific advocacy day at the legislature in the short session.

The group also made a commitment to continue to work collaboratively, reconvening in six months to check progress on the top three objectives, and to continue planning for the next few near-term objectives on the list.

The NC Alliance, NC CAP and NCRPA hope to use the results of the day's event to continue to advocate on behalf of modifying licensure rules to allow more programs to seek licensure, thereby increasing access to valuable afterschool programs to

low-income families who need care for their children while they work or go to school.