



South Carolina
**Early Childhood
Advisory Council**

Meeting of the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council

Thursday, March 19, 2026

Immediately following the SC First Steps Board of Trustees Meeting

636 Rosewood Drive or Virtual (via Zoom)

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82892094043?pwd=yzXW3blihezxl0Gpl7EnY53yW7XsKv.1>

AGENDA

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| I. Call to Order and Approve the Agenda | David Morley, Chairman |
| Motion: To adopt the agenda as submitted | |
| II. Meeting Minutes | Chairman Morley |
| Motion: To adopt ECAC meeting minutes from December 4, 2025 | |
| III. Early Integrated Data System (ECIDS) Update and Next Steps | Emika Aroh, Ph.D.
Chief of Strategy |
| IV. SC's Birth to Five Plan Next Steps | Ann Vandervliet
Agency Director |
| V. Early Childhood System Updates | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• SC Department of Social Services• SC Department of Education• Children's Trust of SC• Head Start Collaboration Office• Department of Public Health• Other? | |
| VI. Adjournment | Chairman Morley |
| Motion: To adjourn the meeting of the SC Early Childhood Advisory Council | |

Attachments:

- ECAC Meeting Minutes – December 4, 2025
- ICC Meeting Minutes – February 9, 2026



Minutes from the December 4, 2025 Meeting

Council Members Present (15): Rep. Terry Alexander, Frances Anderson, Tony Cantone, Jacque Curtin, Mary Lynne Diggs, Dr. James Durant, Sen. Jason Elliott, John Hayes, Jack McBride, David Lisk, Dave Morley (Chair), Dorothy Priester, Dr. Amy Williams (Vice Chair), Wes Wooten, Sue Williams

Council Members Absent (9): Dr. Robert Bank, Rep. Shannon Erickson, John Hayes, Sen. Greg Hembree, Constance Holloway, Jesica Mackey, Eunice Medina, Janie Neeley, Roger Pryor, Dr. Edward Simmer, Ellen Weaver

Others Present (26): Alisha Green, Bett Williams, Betty Gardiner, BJ Tucker, David O'Kelly, Diamond Samuel, Dr. Emika Aroh, Emily Prillaman, Gina Beebe, Jade Wright, Karen Oliver, Kate Roach, Kenna Hoover, Dr. Kerry Cordan, Laura Baker, Martha Strickland, Michele Bowers, Molly Tuck, Samantha Ingram, Sarah Crowne, Sue Williams, Tammy Graham, Teke Burrell, Van-Kim Lin

The meeting was called to order at 1:44 p.m.

Chairman Dave Morley asked for a motion to approve the agenda. Dr. James Durant made the motion, seconded by Mr. Wes Wooten. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to approve the September 18, 2025, minutes. Mr. Wooten made the motion, seconded by Mr. Jack McBride. The motion was unanimously approved.

Sue Williams, Children's Trust of SC, CEO, provided an overview of the study, the Economic Impact of Child Abuse and Neglect. She shared that adverse childhood experiences (ACES) costs \$74.7 billion annually in economic losses across South Carolina. The study suggests that the state could save \$2.1 billion in annual recurring impact by modest prevention and intervention efforts.

Rep. Terry Alexander asked how they are reducing debt. Ms. Williams responded that they are implementing home-visiting programs and professional development for childcare providers.

Bett Williams, Children's Trust of SC, Chief Communications Officer, shared updates on the efforts of the Communications Roundtable. The goals of this group are to align family-facing portals, share a content and events calendars, and create an almanac. First Steps will implement consumer research to inform work across the system.

Ann Vandervliet invited agency partners to share updates. Michelle Bowers, Department of Social Services Program Manager II, shared that funding was paused due to the government shutdown, but families will not lose eligibility. Mary Lynne Diggs, SC Head Start Director, shared that funding was impacted due to the shutdown, but it varied by county. She also shared there is an interim director of HSS assigned to Head Start that is working on improving the foster care system. Dr. James Durant shared his involvement with children with autism.

Mr. Morley asked for a motion to adjourn. Sue Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. McBride. The motion was unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 2:14 p.m.



**Interagency Collaboration Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 9, 2026, 1:30 PM**

Present: Amber Gillum, Department of Social Services; Eric Bellamy, Children’s Trust; Michele Bowers, SC Department of Social Services; Salandra Bowman , SC ETV; Beverly Brockington, Department of Public Health; Susan Callahan, Help Me Grow/ SC Infant Mental Health Association; Mary Lynne Diggs, Head Start Collaboration Office; Sherrie Evans, SC Department of Education; Heather Googe, SC Child Care Inclusion Collaborative; Alisha Green, SC Department of Education; Erin Laughter, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (Mental Health) David Lisk, York County First Steps; Dorothy Priester, Cherokee County First Steps; Kerrie Schnake, SCIMHA; Kristen Shealy, Department of Public Health; Ann Vandervliet, SC First Steps/ECAC

Absent: Leesa Aiken, SC State Library; Stephanie Donald, Department of Health and Human Services (BabyNet); Anita Ellison-Porter, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (Mental Health) (SCIMHA); Jennifer Jaques, Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (Disabilities); Berry Kelly, Department of Health

ECAC Staff: Emika Aroh, Beth Moore, Karen Oliver, Martha Strickland, Molly Tuck

Welcome

Amber Gillum welcomed participants to the SC Department of Social Services, the host for the meeting.

Work Group Reports

In advance of the ICC meeting, ICC workgroup leaders were asked to be ready to report

- 1) Budget proposals presented to SC House- as those requests related to young children and their families.
- 2) Any updates/insights about the federal budget that may impact (positively or negatively) work
- 3) Specific tasks or activities for which ICC partners could lend support.

The following updates were provided.

Early care and education update

Michele Bowers, Division of Early Education (DECE) at SC DSS, Alisha Green, Department of Education and Mary Lynne Diggs, Head Start Collaboration Office reported.

- Division of Early Care and Education may receive a small amount of new funds from the federal budget
- DSS and its Preschool Development Grant (PDG) partners may be eligible for a third year of PDG funding
- DSS is requesting 20 million for child care subsidies in the state budget

- The Governor's executive budget included an expansion of eligibility for state funded pre-K to 300% poverty
- Head Start providers may accept children whose families receive SNAP benefits, thus increasing income eligibility from 100 to 130% of poverty

Parenting and family support update

Eric Bellamy, SC Children's Trust, reported.

- Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) was reauthorized in the federal budget with increases.
- Community-Based Child Abuse Prevention (C-B CAP) funds remain the same
- There is a request in the SC House budget earmarked for home visiting
- Molly Tuck shared that a recent First Steps analysis showed that children who participated in both parenting programs and 4K programs were 3.5 – 9 times more likely to score ready on the KRA

Food and nutrition updates

Beverly Brockington, SC Department of Public Health (WIC), Amber Gillum, SC DSS Economic Services, reported.

- Current WIC participation is about 95,000 and there are no anticipated changes in federal funding
- SNAP will be impacted by HR1 in the federal budget.
 - SC anticipates a \$23 million increase in the administrative share paid by the state. This is an increase from 50% of administrative costs to 75% of administrative costs.
 - SC DSS is requesting \$23 million in the state budget to cover additional administrative costs
 - If a state's combined payment error rate (overpayments and underpayments) is 6% or higher, the state must pay for a portion (5-15%) of benefits themselves. While the SC error rate is below the national average, the state may need to cover 5% or more of benefits.

Health and safety updates

Kristen Shealy, SC Department of Health (maternal Child Health, reported.

- The Maternal Child Health Division is requesting funds in the state budget to support the Building Bright beginnings project
- The Department of Public Health also requested funds in the state budget to mitigate the consequences of chronic conditions (like diabetes) through community-based mini-grants. ICC partners may be eligible to submit applications.
- Work on the developmental screening registry continues. It will include case management and closed loop referral features.
 - A registry advisory committee is being organized, and ICC members are encouraged to participate. Contact Kirsten Shealy directly to indicate interest and learn more.

Communications Round Table update

Beth Moore, SC First Steps, reported.

- The round table is producing an explainer that helps system navigators better use the resources and referral pathways that support families in applying for and securing program services

- A magazine (guide) for parents of newborns will be produced and ready for dissemination before the end of the fiscal year
 - The Department of Public Health offers community health worker training and information used in the training may be useful for the project
- First Steps will be undertaking consumer research to better understand what parents want and need. The results will be shared to inform and guide strategies and tactics to engage and enroll parents in programs.

Feedback for Early Transitions Work Group

Heather Googe reported. The transitions work group is organized to facilitate smoother transitions of children from Part C to Part B services. The transitions project has been supported with Preschool Development (PDG) funds.

- The group has produced a number of assets that will be disseminated to a range of audiences: parents; early interventionists; care coordinators.
- A document that provides definitions for key acronyms was shared with ICC for feedback.
 - Four trainings will be offered across the state that feature assets like the key acronym sheet

Feedback from stakeholders about First Five

Karen Oliver provided an update about plans to update First Five. Parent feedback is essential in this process, and Oliver will reach out to ICC members to recruit families for feedback.

Discussion/feedback: Birth through Five Plan

ICC reviewed a timeline and steps for updating the Birth through Five Strategic Plan. Key indicators and strategies will be circulated to ICC for feedback. ICC will review a draft at a June 1 meeting and present the plan to ECAC at its June 18 meeting. Key features of the plan include goal and strategy selection criteria: Implementation of a strategy must require participation by at least two ECAC partners; a goal or strategy must be measurable in order to chart progress; the strategy must be funded.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 PM

ICC Meeting Dates

- Monday, April 13, 2026, 1:30 PM—SC ETV
- Monday, June 1, 2026, 1:30 PM—SC Department of Education