

**MINUTES OF THE
WORKFORCE SERVICES AND COMMUNITY
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT INTERIM COMMITTEE**
Wednesday, July 20, 2005 – 2:00 p.m. – Room W025 House Building

Members Present:

Sen. John W. "Bill" Hickman, Senate Chair
Rep. David N. Cox, House Chair
Sen. Karen Hale
Rep. Steven R. Mascaro
Rep. Karen W. Morgan
Rep. Mark W. Walker
Rep. Peggy Wallace

Members Absent:

Sen. Dan R. Eastman
Sen. Peter C. Knudson
Rep. Janice M. Fisher

Staff Present:

Mr. Arthur L. Hunsaker, Policy Analyst
Mr. James L. Wilson, Associate General Counsel
Ms. Glenda S. Whitney, Legislative Secretary

Note: A list of others present, copy of related materials, and an audio recording of the meeting can be found at www.le.utah.gov.

1. Committee Business

Chair Cox called the meeting to order at 2:56 p.m. Rep. Fisher was excused from attending the meeting.

MOTION: Rep. Morgan moved to approve the minutes of June 15, 2005. The motion passed unanimously with Sen. Hickman and Rep. Wallace absent for the vote.

2. Proposed Legislation

Mr. Bill Starks, Director, Unemployment Insurance, distributed handouts "Unemployment Compensation Social Security Offset" and "Legislative Changes to the Employment Security Act." He explained the proposed changes to the Unemployment Compensation Social Security Offset provision to extend the sunset date by four years and other legislative changes to the Employment Security Act.

Mr. Wilson distributed copies of the draft legislation "Unemployment Compensation - Social Security Offset" and "Employment Security Amendments" for the Committee to consider for the 2006 General Session.

Ms. Tani Pack Downing, Executive Director, DWS (Department of Workforce Services), introduced her staff: Mr. Chris Love and Mr. John Nixon, Deputies; Mr. Mike Richardson, Director, Governmental Affairs; Ms. Helen Thatcher, Assistant Director over Employment Counseling; and Ms. Lynette Rasmussen, Director of Office of Child Care. Ms. Downing reported on the activities and awards that have been presented to DWS for the fiscal year 2005.

Rep. Wallace asked Ms. Downing for a listing of the different awards, names of recipients, and the time frame for the awards.

3. Timely Payment of Child Care Assistance Funds

Ms. Lynette Rasmussen, Director, OCC (Office of Child Care), discussed the timeliness of Utah's Payment-to-Parent Child Care Subsidy Program. She said case timeliness and accuracy are key priorities

for the OCC and have been the focus of policy review and training for the past four years, with an emphasis on simplification and efficiency.

Ms. Rasmussen reviewed and provided a copy of a graph "Child Care Average Days to Approve or Deny."

She said that the data collected by the Department indicates that timeliness has steadily improved over the past three years. The OCC has seen a 5.6 percent increase in timeliness in the first five months of 2005, which it believes is the direct result of changes in child care policy that were effective April 1, 2005. She noted that all indications are that this trend will continue.

Mr. Johnny Anderson, Executive Director, Utah Private Child Care Association, discussed the results of a quick straw poll from its members on the timeliness of payments for child care which differed from the DWS report. He suggested to the OCC two ideas that would help with slow payments and nonpayments for subsidy clients: 1) OCC could offer parents the opportunity to sign a waiver allowing child care providers to work with OCC workers on behalf of the parents; and 2) OCC could use state child care funds to give a 30-day conditional approval for child care while it works the case. If child care is denied, OCC could inform the provider that after the initial 30 days, child care would no longer be paid. If the case is approved, the OCC could use federal funds to pay for the first 30 days as well as ongoing subsidies.

Mr. John Nixon responded to timeliness of payment questions from the Committee.

Ms. Karen Silver, Salt Lake Community Action Program, commented on the provider help line that was set up to resolve provider issues. She said the timeliness of payment has greatly improved.

Ms. Joan Nichol, Utah Private Child Care Association, expressed concern with child care providers going out of business waiting for payment from clients.

Ms. Deborah Tilley, Tilley Time, distributed a calendar that identified when payments were received during the month. She said payment issues are a big problem and expressed concern with the time it takes to receive payment for child care from clients.

Mr. Rasmussen responded to comments and concerns regarding the child care assistance fund.

Sen. Hickman suggested that representatives of OCC meet with Ms. Tilley to resolve the discrepancies between Ms. Tilley's timeliness of payment data and the OCC's data and asked that OCC report the results of the meeting to the Committee. He also said that increasing agency staffing to improve service should be considered.

Mr. Patrick Marino, Lit'l Scholars, also expressed concern with the timeliness of receiving payment for child care services.

4. Report: Status of Child Care in Utah *(Required by UCA Section 35A-3-203)*

Ms. Rasmussen distributed and presented an overview on the report "FY05 Office of Child Care Annual Report."

5. Report: Adequacy of Family Employment Program Cash Assistance Grant Levels (*Required by H.B 1, 2003 General Session, Item # 80*)

Mr. Mike Richardson, Director, Governmental Affairs, distributed and reviewed the report of the "Adequacy of Family Employment Program Cash Assistance Grant Levels."

Ms. Silver distributed a handout "Eroding Value of FEP Grant Leaves Utah Families Vulnerable," and reviewed policy recommendations presented in the handout.

Ms. Robyn Lipkowitz, Utah Issues, distributed and reviewed a handout "Eroding Value of FEP Grant." She said the chart in the handout shows that families on welfare are actually earning less today than when reform took place.

6. Other Items / Adjourn

MOTION: Rep. Wallace moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously. Chair Cox adjourned the meeting at 4:35 p.m.