



February 11, 2026 Board Minutes

Date: February 11, 2026

Location: Zoom/Telephone Call-in Meeting

Minutes Taken By: Tracey Edwards

Time: Meeting called to order at 11:05 am CST by Chase Christianson, Chair

ELCNWF Staff members present in person: Suzan Gage, Executive Director; Sam Sweazy, Finance Director;

ELCNWF Staff present via Phone/Zoom: Matt Bonner, Administrative Director; Ken Whittaker, Operations Director; Tami Valdez, Community Impact Director; Lindsay Holmes, Education Services; Priscilla Greco, Staff Accountant; Felecia Dorchuck; Accounts Receivable Specialist; Tracey Edwards, HR and Administrative Support Specialist

Guests present: Jeff Carter, Board Attorney;

Full Board: Yes No Quorum: Yes In attendance: 11/24

Executive Comm. X Yes No

Roll Call to Include Board Members on Zoom/Telephone: Yes

Executive Committee	First Name	Last Name	Present	Present Via Phone/Zoom	Excused Absence	Unexcused Absence
●	Tony	Bennett		1		
	Rachel	Chima		1		
●	Chase	Christianson		1		
●	Irvin	Clark			1	
	Doug	Crosby		1		
	Sharon	Gaskin			1	
	Zach	Gilmore		1		
	Kenneth	Griffin			1	
●	Tiffani	Hinds		1		
	Jeanne	Hitchcock			1	
	<u>Lee Ann</u>	<u>Case</u>			1	
	Erin	Johnson		1		
	Missy	Lee			1	
	Gina	McAllister			1	
	Mary	McKenzie		1		
	Juliana	Melara		1		
	Crista	Miller			1	
	Sarah	Quantara			1	
	Thomas	Register			1	
●	Joe	Seabrook		1		
	Joseph	Taylor		1		

	Richard	Williams			1	
●	Myrtis	Wynn			1	
	Veronica	Watkins			1	
		Total		11	13	

Utilization Report for Direct Services

We reimburse contracted providers in each of the seven counties served. The information below shows the payment to School Readiness and VPK providers for direct services (slots) and compares the previous month.

SCHOOL READINESS		
	November 2025	December 2025
<u>School Readiness</u> Payments to Child Care Providers for Direct Services (Slots)	SR Slot Dollars – \$1,132,437.71	SR Slot Dollars – \$1,295,483.20
	Children Paid – 2,305	Children Paid – 2,367
SR + Direct Service \$	\$959.72	\$1,015.30
SR + Children Paid	5	4
VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN		
<u>VPK Program</u> Payments to Child Care for VPK services	November 2025	December 2025
	VPK Payments – \$358,558.83	VPK Payments – \$354,269.14
	Children Paid – 1,501	Children Paid – 1,504

1. CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTION OF MEMBERS, GUESTS, AND STAFF at 11:05 a.m. CDT by Chase Christianson, Chair

2. APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA AND CONENT AGENDA – Chase Christianson

VOTE NEEDED: To approve the meeting agenda and the consent agenda as presented.

MOTION: Tiffani Hinds moved to approve the meeting and consent agenda as presented.

Seconded by Tony Bennett

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3. COMMITTEE/FULL BOARD REPORTS – Chase Christianson

3.1. Executive Committee- Chase Christianson

3.1.1. No report.

3.2. Finance Committee – Tiffani Hinds, Treasurer and Committee Chair

3.2.1. FY25 MKA Audit Presentation – *Vote Needed*

MKA has completed the annual single audit and will present the draft report to the board for approval at the February board meeting. A copy of the draft report will be sent to board members prior to the meeting.

VOTE NEEDED: To approve the FY25 Audit Report as presented.

MOTION: Tiffani Hinds moved to approve the FY25 Audit Report as presented.

Seconded by Tony Bennett

Motion carried unanimously with no members recusing from vote.

3.2.2. FY26 DEL Fiscal Monitoring Update – Information Only

DEL and its contacted monitoring firm, Thomas Howell Furgison (THF), conducted fieldwork during the week of February 2nd from their sample selections. The next steps will be for THF to prepare a draft monitoring report for DEL’s approval before presenting the draft report to ELCNWF for response. The Treasurer and ELCNWF staff will continue to keep the Board informed of the monitoring progress and any reports issued by DEL and THF.

3.3. Policy and Personnel Committee- Joe Seabrook

3.3.1. No Report

3.4. Education and Program Committee- Dr. Irvin Clark

3.4.1. FY26 Workplan Goals and Outcomes Status Report (thru Q2) – Information Only

ELCNWF tracks and reports outcomes for its FY26 Education Services and Community Impact workplans on a quarterly basis. Copies of the Quarter 2 reports have been included in the board meeting packet for review. The reports show goals and outcomes that are on track, off track, and have already been met.

3.5. Development Ad Hoc Committee – Erin Johnson

3.5.1. Bay Health Foundation Grant

ELCNWF was notified on January 27, 2026, that we were awarded \$10,000 to support the efforts towards increasing the completion of developmental screening in Bay County. This is the 2nd year we have received the award and the amount awarded is a 100% increase over the previous award.

4. Executive Director Overview

4.1. Organization Update

4.1.1. All In for Early Learning Day

On January 26th, ELCNWF and others joined across Florida to celebrate All in for Early Learning Day — a statewide moment to highlight why early learning matters now and for Florida’s future. The event brought together almost 70 parents, educators, business leaders, and local officials to learn more about why early learning matters and what is being done in Bay County to ensure that all children start kindergarten ready to learn. Our very own Board Chair, Chase Christianson, Education and Program Committee Chair, Dr. Irvin Clark, and Executive Director, Suzan Gage, spoke at the event to discuss why early learning matters to them and to the communities we live and serve in. A local provider, Kim Guynn, and a parent, Shelbie Scippio, also spoke and shared the impact early learning makes from their personal shared experiences.

The event also included a panel discussion that included Mark McQueen, Bay Co. Schools Superintendent, Sean Kim, Vice President of Strategic Partnerships with the Bay Co. Chamber of Commerce, and Suzan Gage, Executive Director of ELCNWF. Also, a big thank you to Aerial Payne, of Maranta Copy Co. for being the MC of the event.

4.1.2. Save the Children Gulf Coast Resilience Network Summit and Advocacy Visit to DC

ELCNWF is part of a regional collaborative of community-based organizations, early childhood leaders, and resilience partners working across the Gulf Coast and Southeast from multiple states including Florida, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee to strengthen emergency preparedness, response, and recovery for young children, families, and child care. The Gulf Coast Resilience Network (GCRN) was the first regional Resilience Network launched by Save the Children, serving as a foundational model for national expansion.

Save the Children hosted a GCRN summit the week of January 26th in Washington, D.C. where representatives from each agency, including Lindsay Holmes and Matt Bonner from ELCNWF, engaged in feedback sessions, training activities, and even day on the Hill as part of advocacy with legislative staff about the challenges facing the child care sector before, during, and after emergencies.

4.1.3. Gulf Co. Handle with Care Program Feasibility Workgroup

On February 3rd, Lindsay Holmes and Matt Bonner with ELCNWF met with the Gulf Co. Sheriff and ranking officers, Port St. Joe Chief of Police, local child care providers, DCF, and other local stakeholders to discuss the potential of bringing a new program to the county.

Handle with Care: Florida is an initiative aimed at helping children succeed in school [and childcare] by alerting school [and childcare] staff with a simple notice when a student experiences a traumatic event involving law enforcement or Child Protection Services (CPS).

Officers at the scene of the event are trained to identify the children present, find out what school [or childcare] they attend and send the school [or childcare] a confidential email that simply says, "Handle [child's name] with Care." The email will not provide any other details to protect the family's privacy.

The workgroup seemed interested in pursuing the possibility of implementing the program but needs to work through a few concerns including how to protect criminal justice and personally identifying information of individuals. Lindsay and Matt will have a follow-up conversation with the Sheriff's office and child care providers and bring a recommendation back to the workgroup for further considerations. Funding for the initial work and convening the workgroup was generously provided by Save the Children.

4.1.4. Organization and Community Engagements

Below is a list of organization and community engagements attended by the Executive Director during January 2026 that aligns with the ELCNWF's strategic plan, strengthens our partnerships, and advances the focus of early learning at the local, state, and national level.

1/7 – Kindergarten Readiness meetings with Bay Co. Superintendent McQueen and FSU-PC Associate Dean Dr. Irvin Clark

1/14 – Bay Co. EDA Investors Meeting

1/15 – Holmes Co. Chamber of Commerce Meeting

1/16 – Integrating Healthcare for Kindergarten Readiness Discussion at FSU-PC

1/21 – Bay Co. Chamber of Commerce Meeting

1/22 – Jackson Co. Chamber of Commerce Meet and Greet

1/23 – Bay Co. Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner

1/26 – All In for Early Learning Day

1/29 – FY26 Chamber Legislative Trip to Tallahassee

4.1.5. Legislative Updates

The Executive Director will share a report from the Florida Alliance of Children's Councils & Trusts (FACCT) that shows some of the session's most consequential policy areas including education, early learning, healthcare, child welfare, and juvenile justice. A copy of the report has been included in the board meeting packet.

4.1.6. 2025-2026 DEL ELC Board Member Survey

DEL recently informed us that Coalition/RCMA board members will be contacted to respond to the Customer Satisfaction Survey required by s. 1002.82(3) F.S., and Rule 6M-9.120(3), F.A.C. The survey should be released by March 1st in an email from the University of Florida. Additionally, after completing a two-year baseline implementation phase, DEL will compile the data specified in Rule 6M-9.120(2), F.A.C., to formulate the Early Learning Coalition (ELC) Performance Standards required by s. 1002.82(3), F.S. Thank you in advance for completing the survey and providing your invaluable feedback.

4.1.7. January Data Dashboard

Coalition staff have created a new monthly dashboard to review and highlight certain monthly services by each department. A copy of the January dashboard has been included in the board meeting packet for the Board's review.

4.2 Monthly Service Numbers (January 2026)

4.2.1. School Readiness and VPK Enrollment Numbers and SR Waitlist (See SR and VPK Enrollment Numbers and SR Waitlist Report)

4.2.2. Contracted Providers (See Total VPK Contracted Providers VS. VPK Programs with CLASS Scores Report)

4.2.3. Education Services (See Service and Numbers for Education Services Report)

- 4.2.4. Media Coverage/Activity/Events (See Media Coverage.Activity.Events Report)
- 4.2.5. Child Care Resource and Referral Numbers (See Childcare Resource and Referral Service Numbers Report)
- 4.2.6. Help Me Grow Service Numbers (See Help Me Grow Data Reports)
- 4.2.7. Inclusion/Child Service Numbers (See Numbers for Child Services Report)
- 4.2.8. Early Childhood Care Coordination (See Service Numbers Report)
- 4.2.9. Contracted Provider CLASS Scores (See Service Numbers Report)

4.3 Coalition Fraud Update

4.3.1. ELCNWF staff have referred one School Readiness recipient case to DEL and the Bureau of Public Assistance Fraud (BPAF). The case is currently under review with BPAF with a pending assignment status. The Executive Director will continue to provide updates on this case and any new cases at upcoming board meetings.

4.4 Internal Monitoring *(See Internal Monitoring Reports)*

- 4.4.1 Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)
- 4.4.2 EC3 Program
- 4.4.3 ESD-A and Intervention Practices

5 DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES REPORT

- 6 PUBLIC COMMENT:** Members of the public are allowed up to 3 minutes each to address the board.
- 7 NEXT MEETING:** March 11, 2026
- 8 ADJOURN:** Meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.