



**MINUTES EARLY CARE & EDUCATION COMMITTEE MEETING**

Workforce Solutions Alamo  
100 N. Santa Rosa St., Suite 120  
Boardroom  
San Antonio, TX 78207  
January 16, 2026  
9:00 AM

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:** Ana DeHoyos O’Connor, Leslie Cantu, Dawn Dixon, Elizabeth Lutz, Eunice Grant

**VOLUNTEER MEMBERS:** Mark Larson, Dr. Todd Landry, Ashley Orihel, Jennifer Martinez, Tessa Harlin, Liza Gomez, Lisa Elizondo, Lisa Niemietz,

**STAFF:** Adrian Lopez, Eric Vryn, Gabriela Navarro Garcia, Jessica Lockhart, Rebecca Espino Balancia, Teresa Chavez, Cecilia Ibarra, Kimberly Gomez, Sandra Alvarez, Jessica Bracamonte, Rebecca Flores, Patricia Alejandro, Jamesetta Stallion-Head, Gregory Villines, Trema Cote, Dr. Ricardo Ramirez, Donavon Berry, Kristen Rodriguez

**GUESTS:** Melissa Williamson

**LEGAL COUNSEL:** None

**AGENDA**

*Agenda items may not be considered in the order they appear.*

Citizens may appear before the Committee to speak for or against any item on the agenda in accordance with procedural rules governing meetings. Speakers are limited to three (3) minutes on each topic (6 minutes if translation is needed) if they register at the beginning of the meeting. Questions relating to these rules may be directed to Janel Santos (210) 850-2160.

*The Chair of the Committee will be at the Host Location. The Host location is specified above. Meetings will be visible and audible to the public at the Host location, and there will be a visual or audio recording of the meeting. There will be a two-way audio and video of the meeting between each Board member sufficient that Board members and public can hear and see them. WSA will comply with all Videoconferencing Guidelines.*

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During the Public Comments portion of the meeting (Agenda Item 4), the Public may type their name into the chat box or unmute themselves and state their name. The meeting host will call each member of the public for comments; in the order their names were submitted.

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**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O'Connor, Committee Chair

**At 9:28 AM, Chair Ana DeHoyos O'Connor called the meeting to order.**

**II. ROLL CALL AND QUORUM DETERMINATION**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O'Connor, Committee Chair

**The roll was called, and a quorum was declared present.**

**III. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT-OF-INTEREST**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O'Connor, Committee Chair

**None.**

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O'Connor, Committee Chair

**None.**

**V. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON MEETING MINUTES**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O'Connor, Committee Chair

a. Meeting Minutes – October 17, 2025

**Motion to approve the meeting minutes by Mark Larson, seconded by Leslie Cantu. All in favor of approving the minutes of the meeting being held on October 17, 2025**

**VI. CONSENT AGENDA (DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION)**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O'Connor, Committee Chair

a. Texas Rising Star Update

**Motion to approve the consent agenda by Dawn Dixon, seconded by Leslie Cantu. All in favor of approving the consent agenda as presented.**

**Kimberly Gomez, Assistant Director of Child Care Quality provided an update on Texas Rising Star that included the following: The Texas Rising Star (TRS) program, administered through the Texas Workforce Commission's Child Care Services program, recognizes and supports high-quality early childhood education providers. It offers three certification levels—Two-Star, Three-Star, and Four-Star—that encourage continuous quality improvement and provide higher reimbursement rates for providers serving children with childcare scholarships. TRS-certified programs exceed state minimum standards and help promote stronger school readiness and child development outcomes. As of January 1, 2026, the Alamo region has 475 Texas Rising Star (TRS)-certified programs out of 589 CCS providers, representing 81% participation. This includes 274 Four-Star, 153 Three-Star, and 48 Two-Star programs, supported by 18 TRS mentors who assist centers with quality improvement. TRS mentors and workforce boards coordinate with the Centralized Assessment Entity to ensure consistent assessment processes, while scholarship agreements across providers continue to fluctuate.**

**VII. INTRODUCTION FOR TIMOTHY SCHINDLER – DIRECTOR OF CHILD CARE SERVICES**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O'Connor, Committee Chair

**Timothy Schindler, Director of Child Care Services, Workforce Solutions Alamo**

**Tim Schindler provided an overview of his background and expertise in child care, highlighting how he has made a meaningful impact through his work and will continue to contribute to the organization's success. He also emphasized how each member plays a vital role in making an impact.**

**VIII. PRESENTATION: AT THE HEART OF TEACHING, LEARNING, & LEADERSHIP (DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION)**

Presenter: Melissa Williamson, EdD, CTP, Founder and CEO of At the Heart of Teaching, Learning, & Leadership.

**Impact of Trauma on Young Children; Creating a Safe Environment; Supporting Challenging Behaviors and Using Literature for Tough Conversations. Fall Giveback Webinar Series: Grounding & Centering the Nervous System; Fostering Social & Emotional Development; Destressing: Supports for Adults; Using Literature for Tough Conversations. Response: Over 600 participants; Two Child Development Associate scholarships awarded Participant Feedback The webinar was very informative about how to calm our bodies down in a state of crisis or anxiousness or nervousness. I enjoyed getting to do some breathing exercises to help put our bodies in the mood for the space I was in for this webinar and “I appreciate everything you have taught me, and I will remember what I've learned. I've never learned so much out of a program, and I think you all did an amazing job.”**

**IX. CHILD CARE UPDATES (DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION)**

Presenter: Timothy Schindler, Director of Child Care and Kimberly Gomez, Asst Director of CCQ

a. Community Feedback Survey: Strategies for Next Steps

**This item presents results from a collaborative survey conducted with Early Care & Education Committee members and Early Learning Programs to inform BCY 2026 planning. Workforce Solutions Alamo invested \$6.6M in quality initiatives in BCY 2025 and anticipates \$7.4M for BCY 2026. Survey data (346 valid responses from 12 counties, representing 3,875 staff and over 2,400 classrooms) is being used to prioritize quality initiatives aligned with community needs. The committee is asked to support cross-organizational collaboration and funding alignment. This effort supports Strategic Goal 2: Service Optimizers by enhancing the efficiency, quality, and accessibility of workforce services.**

b. Texas Education Freedom Accounts for Pre-K (TEFA)

**The Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 2 establishing the Texas Education Freedom Accounts (TEFA) program, an ESA initiative that provides public funds for PK–12 students to cover private education expenses, including tuition, tutoring, homeschooling resources, and special education services. Administered by the Texas Comptroller through Odyssey, with support from Outschool, TEFA aims to expand school choice while maintaining provider eligibility and payment oversight. The program aligns with workforce goals by supporting talent development, improving service access, and strengthening partnerships. Beginning in the 2026–2027 school year, TEFA is expected to serve 70,000–100,000 students, with funding averaging \$10,474 per student and up to \$30,000 for students with disabilities.**

c. Parent Cafe- Be Strong Families Parent Cafe Training Institute

**Workforce Solutions Alamo is implementing Parent Cafés to strengthen parent/family engagement and support early childhood development, aligned with Texas Rising Star Category 3 standards. Six mentors have been trained to facilitate structured, small-group conversations that create safe spaces for families, build community, and encourage peer support. Planning began January 2026, with sessions scheduled for April 30 and June 25, 2026. Outreach efforts will target specific zip codes, coordinate resources like the Workforce One Bus, and identify community partnerships to support participation.**

d. **TWC Performance Target**

**TWC will review BCY'25 reconciliation data to determine if additional BCY'26 target adjustments are needed for Boards that use future funds to cover prior-year care. Boards meeting performance is advised to pause new enrollments until revised targets are finalized, as targets are expected to decrease. Updated BCY'26 targets will be implemented through the CCS Mid-Year Review process.**

**X. PARTNER UPDATES (DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION)**

a. **United Way – Alamo Quality Pathways and Directors of Excellence**

**Liza Gomez, Vice President, Ready Children, United Way of San Antonio and Bexar County, presented on the Alamo Quality Pathway, highlighting a coordinated approach to strengthening early childhood systems. The Alamo Quality Pathway, a framework designed to strengthen early childhood systems through coordinated quality improvement efforts. The presentation highlighted three core components: (1) Professional Development focused on system alignment, standards-driven practices, and data-informed feedback; (2) Coaching Capacity Expansion through strategic investment, expanded qualifying criteria, enhanced service delivery, and improved system responsiveness; and (3) Directors of Excellence, which promotes peer leadership, includes initial meetings and caseload disbursement beginning January 2026, and establishes ongoing collaboration with mentors and coaches.**

b. **Pre-K for SA – Updates on Quality Initiatives**

**Ashley Orihel with Pre-K 4 SA presented on key quality initiatives aimed at strengthening early childhood education in San Antonio. Highlights included the opening of the Pre-K 4 SA South Education Center and the addition of a new Professional Learning Specialist to support educator development. She also discussed Operation Extended Watch, an initiative focused on expanding access to extended-hours, high-quality childcare for military families. Additionally, the San Antonio Shared Services Alliance continues to grow, now supporting 90 members, including 69 Child Development Centers (CDCs) and 21 Family Childcare Providers (FCCs), to enhance operational efficiency and program quality across providers.**

c. **Texas A&M University San Antonio**

i. **Early Matters –Staff introduction**

**Tessa Harlin, Early Matters presented Early Matters: 2025 Wrap-Up and shared key updates on the organization's ongoing work to expand access to quality early childhood education. Highlights included continued advancement of CLASS coaching, school voucher supports for families, and expanded business coaching for providers, building on partnerships with United Way San Antonio, Workforce Solutions, Pre-K 4 SA, and other community partners. She also reported that a new contract is underway to support 7 centers and 3 home providers in accepting military scholarships and extending operating hours through the Operation Child Care Project. Additional updates included the Inclusion Project, which will host three conferences this year and launch a mentoring/cohort model led by Brighton Center in collaboration with Texas A&M. Tessa also introduced Kshinté Brathwaite, Director of Talent, whose focus areas include the early education pipeline, professional development, articulation, and the Professional Pathways Workgroup/actions, all as part of Early Matters' broader ecosystem strategy.**

**XI. CEO REPORT**

Presenter: **Adrian Lopez, CEO**

a. **TWC Sunset Review**

**Adrian Lopez provided an overview of the TWC Sunset Review process and key milestones. The Sunset Review is a multi-year process (2025–2027) that evaluates TWC's effectiveness, with final decisions made by the Legislature on the agency's continuation and any reforms.**

interview schedule for February 24 was outlined, including coordinated sessions with leadership, board members, contractors, and direct-service staff. The schedule focuses on evaluating governance, program management (SNAP E&T and WIOA), service delivery, and contractor performance, with interviews conducted throughout the day, followed by a close-out discussion on preliminary observations and next steps.

b. Governor Task Force vs. Quad Meeting

**Adrian Lopez provided an update on the Governor’s Task Force vs. Quad Meeting: Governor’s Task Force: Focused on statewide strategy and policy reform for the child care system. Quad Meetings: Focused on agency coordination and implementation across TWC, TEA, HHSC, and DFPS. Key takeaway: Task Force = long-term strategy; Quad Meetings = day-to-day alignment and execution.**

## **XII. CHAIR REPORT**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O’Connor, Committee Chair

**Ana DeHoyos O’Connor, Committee Chair, thanked everyone for attending the meeting.**

## **XIII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

Pursuant to Chapter 551 of the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Committee may move into Executive Session for discussion on any issue for which there is an exception to the Act as set out in section 551.071 et. seq. including, but not limited to, the following:

- a. Government Code §551.072 – Discussions Regarding Purchase, Exchange, Lease, or Value of Real Property if Deliberation in an Open Meeting Would Have a Detrimental Effect on the Position of Workforce Solutions Alamo in Negotiations with a Third Party;
- b. Government Code §551.071 – All Matters Where Workforce Solutions Alamo Seeks the Advice of its Attorney as Privileged Communications Under the Texas Disciplinary Rules of Professional Conduct of the State Bar of Texas, Pending or Contemplated Litigation; and/or Settlement Offer;
- c. Government Code §551.074 – To deliberate the appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of a public officer or employee of Workforce Solutions Alamo.

**None.**

## **XIV. ADJOURNMENT**

Presenter: Ana DeHoyos O’Connor, Committee Chair

**There being no further item, the meeting adjourned at 11:07 AM.**