



Pennsylvania Office of Child Development
and Early Learning (OCDEL) Early Head Start
Policy Council By-Laws 2024-25

Early Head Start Policy Council

The OCDEL Early Head Start Grantee is the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Office of Child Development & Early Learning, OCDEL. OCDEL in turn subcontracts the Early Head Start program management to the PA Key and direct services are contracted to community based providers. This document serves as the Policy Council by-laws for the body responsible for ensuring compliance across OCDEL and its sub-contracted partners.

Purpose of Policy

The OCDEL Early Head Start Policy Council is an independent group with Operational Responsibility for the Early Head Start grant, 03CH011343 (Early Head Start Home Visiting). Members shall work in conjunction with the OCDEL Early Head Start Governing Board and Staff to review policy, monitor program activities and provide guidance for the implementation of Early Head Start in accordance with the Head Start Act, Head Start Performance Standards and other regulations.

Membership

Section I: Definition of Members

A Policy Council Member is one of 2 types, the first being a currently enrolled pregnant woman, or the parent or legal guardian of an enrolled OCDEL Early Head Start Child. The second type is an interested individual from the community at large.

Parents or legal guardian members must make up 51% or greater of the Policy Council Membership. Each lead agency will be required to have the following number of parent representatives serving on policy council at all times:

Lead Agency Funded Enrollment	Number of Policy Council Representatives Required
1-24 slots	1 parent representative & 1 community representative
24-50 slots	2 parent representatives & 1 community representative
51-75 slots	3 parent representatives & 2 community representative
76+ slots	4 parent representatives & 2 community representatives

Additional members from each partner/hub may be added once minimum membership is met.

Membership on the Policy Council is voluntary. A member is an individual who has been apprised of the roles and responsibilities of the Policy Council and willingly accepts those responsibilities. Members are prohibited from being program staff with direct grant implementation responsibilities or who have a conflict of interest according to guidance in the Head Start Act 2007.

Section II: Selection of Members

Members of the Policy Council are selected by parents from their lead agency. To serve as a parent representative you must be enrolled as a pregnant woman or be the parent or legal guardian of a child currently enrolled in the OCDEL Early Head Start Program. Interested parents or legal guardians complete an application and elections are held in January of the program year. The parents or legal guardian with the most votes will be the seated members from that partner agency.

Community members are selected by recommendation of the Governing Board, the Policy Council members who's children have transitioned out of EHS.lead agencies.

Section III: Terms of Office

Parent or legal guardian members on Policy Council are elected annually. Parents or legal guardians can only be seated members of the PC for a maximum of 5 one year terms. The PC term operates from February through January with the elections occurring in January annually. As part of the process, new Policy Council members will receive an orientation (conducted by their lead agency family services staff) prior to the end of February to better understand their roles and responsibilities.

Parents whose children transition to a preschool age program will remain seated until January, as a parent, on the council, unless they chose to resign. When elections take place in January, parents whose children have transitioned out of the EHS program may chose to remain on the council as a Community Representative.

New Policy Council members seated during the year, and after the initial orientation in February, will be provided with the orientation within one month of their election to Policy Council.

Community members, when selected for Policy Council, can only be seated members of the PC for a maximum of 5 one-year terms. At the end of that time period, they are not permitted to return to Policy Council as a member.

Section IV: Resignation of Members

When circumstances arise and a member believes he or she can no longer serve on the Policy Council, that individual may voluntarily resign her or his membership by submitting a letter to the EHS Team member responsible for governance. This letter should include a date by which that the member will no longer participate on the PC.

Section V: Termination of Membership

Each Policy Council Member will sign a conduct statement. If a member violates the terms of the Conduct Statement, continued membership on the Policy Council will be discussed among the remaining members. If it is determined that the violation is egregious, the Policy Council will vote on the continued inclusion of the offending member. If the Policy Council is in consensus that the member's responsibilities should be terminated, the member will be notified in writing, and a replacement will be identified.

All members are expected to participate in regularly scheduled meetings. Participation is defined as present during a virtual meeting or submission of an absentee ballot. If a member is absent from 3 consecutive meetings they will be asked to relinquish their membership. Lead agencies will be responsible for ensuring a new PC rep is identified and oriented within 30 days.

Section VI: Transfer of Membership

In the event a member leaves midyear, the lead agency will be responsible for finding a new parent to assume the vacant position. As membership is transferred from one member to the next, the new member will receive a Policy Council orientation.

In the event that a community member position is vacant, there is only a potential transfer of membership if a replacement from the community member's agency is willing to fill the remaining term. If there is not an interested replacement, recommendations will be sought from a joint sub-committee of Governing Board and Policy Council with the EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager's involvement.

Section VIII: Vacancy

It will be the goal of the Policy Council to fill all parent vacancies within 30 days of their occurrence. In the event of a vacancy, regular business of the Policy Council will continue as long as a quorum of members is available to vote on issues.

Section IX: Voting Rights

Each seated member shall have one vote. Members can abstain from a vote at their discretion.

ARTICLE IV - OFFICERS

Section I: Officers - Definition

The OCDEL Early Head Start Policy Council will have 3 officers; Chairperson, Vice Chair Person and a Secretary. The duties of each are outlined below.

Section II: Election and Term of Office

In the initial year of Policy Council, the Chairperson will be appointed by the Governing Board. In subsequent years all officers to the Policy Council will be selected by the members. In the event multiple people are vying for the same position, each shall have the opportunity to describe her or his qualifications to the membership and a majority vote will determine the successful candidate for the position. If elections occur mid year due to unforeseen circumstances, officers will not be re-elected the following fall. This will result in a term lasting longer than one program year but will be limited to no more than 18 months.

Section III: Removal from Office

In the event that an elected officer neglects his or her duties to the board, members can make the motion to discuss removal of the person from her or his position. This process would follow parliamentary procedure, and the Policy Council membership must elect a new officer to fill the position.

Section IV: Officer Vacancy

In the event that an officer vacancy occurs, the remaining members will elect a new officer through discussion at the next regular or special meeting.

Section V: Duties of the Chairperson

The Chairperson will facilitate regular and special meetings. It is the Chairperson's discretion to call special meetings as need arises for the effective implementation of the program. The Chairperson will serve as the point of contact for the OCDEL and PA Key administrators. Additionally, the Chairperson will be the designated contact for the Governing Board and staff.

The Chairperson or the Chairperson's designee will develop the Policy Council Meeting agenda in conjunction with the Infant Toddler Program Manager and implement parliamentary procedures to facilitate the meeting.

Section VI: Duties of the Vice Chairperson

In the event of an absence of the Chairperson, or a vacancy in that position, the Vice Chair will fulfill the role of the Chairperson.

Section VII: Duties of Secretary

To document the discussions of the Policy Council in the form of minutes and work with the Infant Toddler Program Manager to ensure that minutes are distributed.

ARTICLE V - QUORUM

Section I: Quorum

A quorum for all regular and special meetings has been determined to be 30% of the current number of members, of which the majority are parent members. In general, votes will be a consensus, majority vote as part of the parliamentary procedure. A first and second motion will be made to approve the agenda item, and a roll call vote will be conducted to document member votes. Absentee ballots that have been submitted will be included in the roll call vote. In the event that vacancies occur on the Policy Council for Parent members or Community Members, Policy Council will continue to complete business as long as a quorum is achieved. In the event a member knows in advance they are unable to participate in a meeting, they may vote to approve, table the discussion until such time the full board can meet, or vote to disapprove in absentia. This absentee voting will be conveyed in writing, using the provided absentee ballot submitted via email to the appropriate staff facilitator, who in term will read the member's response at the time of meeting. The vote will not be shared with other members in advance to the general vote. At the conclusion of the vote, the written communication will become part of the meeting minutes. Absentee ballots will count towards quorum, however, there must be at least 2 members present for the meeting in order for it to be conducted.

If quorum is not achieved at two consecutive policy council meetings, the agenda items will become the governing board's responsibility to approve at the next meeting. Policy council members will be notified of the outcome of the governing board approvals.

ARTICLE VI - COMMITTEES

Section I: Special Committees

Special committees shall be enacted at the discretion of the Chairperson. Terms of office, membership, duties and scope of a special committee is the discretion of the Chairperson.

Section II: Quorum/Special Committees

A quorum for special committees shall be 50% of the membership of that committee. The work of the special committees and votes by membership shall be reported to the Policy Council as recommendations for Policy Council consideration or vote.

ARTICLE VII - MEETINGS

Section I: Regular Meetings

Regular meetings are scheduled annually for a minimum of 6 meetings, but typically 11 meetings are scheduled. At least one meeting will be held during the following months: October, December, February, April, June and August. The schedule of meetings is shared with members, program administration and partner staff. Policy Council members are offered an iPad for their use during meetings to ensure that virtual meetings are not a hardship for members. Meetings are conducted through the "zoom" platform, and accessed by using the link provided on meeting agendas. Meetings are held at a time of day determined by majority rules vote of members.

Section II: Special Meetings

The need for special meetings is determined by the Chairperson in collaboration with grantee administrative staff. Special meetings can be convened with members via zoom.

Section III: Notice of Meeting

Regular meeting times will be determined by the Policy Council annually. Dates will be posted separately with the minutes of Policy Council meetings. Each meeting format and time will be determined by Policy Council and published as part of the meeting minutes which should be posted at each partner location for public viewing.

Special meetings will be called and the time determined by the Chairperson. Notification for a special meeting will be sent via email, and text message, with a response expected to determine if a quorum of members is available for the meeting.

Section IV: Verification of Receipt of Policy Council Materials

Materials are sent to members by email. The EHS staff person who sends the information will include the read-receipt option. When a member receives the materials via e-mail they will submit the read-receipt or acknowledgement email to the sender within four days of receipt of materials. Should a member request a hard copy of the meeting information, they will document receipt of Policy Council materials by completing the Cover Sheet. Completion of the Cover Sheet requires checking off the items received and signing and dating at the bottom of the Cover Sheet. Cover sheets should be submitted to the Home Visitor or to program staff at or before the Policy Council meeting.

Section V: Decisions of the Policy Council

Decisions of the Policy Council are made with consideration of input from the Governing Board, OCDEL, PA Key, Partner Administrators and Parents. The Policy Council has approval or denial authority regarding the PA Early Head Start Program decisions that are implemented into policy. In the event that the Governing Board and Policy Council do not agree in areas of shared governance, the steps identified in the approved Impasse Policy will be followed.

Section VI: Conduct of the Meeting

Meetings will be conducted in following parliamentary procedures.

Section VII: Reimbursement of Parent Expenses

Policy Council will review and vote annually on the policy to reimburse the Parent Policy Council and Alternate members for child care and transportation costs associated with participating on Policy Council. The minutes of that meeting will serve as documentation of the discussion and approval of the policy. The previous approved policy will remain in effect each year until the Policy Council reviews and updates the policy.

ARTICLE VIII – AMENDMENTS

The Policy Council by-laws can be amended as needed by its members. By-law amendment must be an agenda item, distributed to all members prior to a scheduled meeting of members. The staff facilitator will collect documentation of delivery receipt of the email distribution to all members. Proposed changes will be completed in track-changes in order for members to clearly see the edits to the document. During the next scheduled meeting, members will have opportunity to discuss the amendments. In order to facilitate timely approval, if members are in agreement with the changes and a

quorum is present, members can motion to approve posting of revised by-laws, and after a 30 day period members can vote to finalize the changes.

ARTICLE IX - IMPASSE PROCEDURE

Section I: Introduction

To ensure that the Early Head Start Policy Council is included on significant issues as referenced in the Head Start Performance Standards and Head Start Act, the following procedure for internal dispute resolution has been established.

Section II: Purpose

To resolve internal disputes between the Council and the Governing Board or Early Head Start (EHS) Infant Toddler Program Manager without disrupting services to EHS children and families.

Section III: Definition of Dispute

Should a dispute occur, the Council Chairperson shall be authorized by the council to send written notice within five working days following the final action by the Board or Director. This written notice shall be submitted to the EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager.

The EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager shall meet with the Council Chairperson within five working days after receiving the written notice. If a resolution plan is developed, the written plan shall be submitted to the Board within five working days after being agreed to by the EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager and the Council Chairperson. The Board will review and approve or disapprove the resolution plan at its next meeting the approved plan of action.

If the EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager and the Council Chairperson cannot develop a resolution plan, or if the Board disapproves of the resolution plan, then impasse occurs. If impasse occurs, a written notice of impasse must be submitted to the Council and Board within working days.

Section IV: Impasse Committee's Composition and Powers

Within five working days following the receipt of written notice of impasse, the EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager or designee shall call for an Impasse Committee meeting. The Impasse Committee shall then convene as soon as it is feasible.

The Impasse committee shall be made up of four persons as follows:

- Two members of the Board, chosen by the Board;
- Two members of the Council, chosen by the Council

In addition, the EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager or their respective designees shall serve as a resource person to the committee. The four Impasse Committee members shall all agree to the final written resolution plan prior to submitting it to the Board and Council.

The Impasse Committee shall have five working days from the date of its first meeting to develop a written resolution plan and submit it to the Board and Council. The Board and the Council will approve or disapprove of the plan at their next meeting and notify the other entity. If the Impasse Committee fails to agree on a resolution plan, it shall promptly notify the Board and Council.

Section V: Non-Binding Arbitration Committee's Composition and Powers

In the event that the Board and/or the Council reject the resolution plan of the Impasse Committee, or the Impasse Committee cannot agree on a resolution plan, a Non-binding Arbitration Committee shall be established.

Within five working days following the Board and/or the Council disapproval of the resolution plan or five working days after the Impasse Committee notifies the Board and Council of its failure to agree to a resolution plan, the EHS Infant Toddler Program Manager or designee shall call for a meeting as soon as is feasible.

The Non-Binding Arbitration Committee shall be made up of three disinterested persons who have agreed to serve as arbitrators. Disinterested persons shall not include a parent or family member of children currently enrolled in the EHS program, EHS staff or a member of their family, PA Key staff or a member of their family, EHS partner staff or a member of their family, or a Board member or a member of their family. The Non-binding Arbitration Committee is composed of the following.

- One representative selected by the Board
- One representative selected by Policy Council Officers
- One representative from the Grantee Executive Staff

The Non-binding Arbitration Committee shall have five working days from the date of its first meeting to develop a written resolution plan and submit it to the Board and Council. The Board and the Council then have 15 working days to approve or disapprove of the plan.

Approved by Policy Council: 05/22/24