

Office of Early Childhood Care and Education

Authority/History

Louisiana's Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Advisory Council was created through Act 868 of the 2014 Regular Legislative Session to inform policies related to the unification launched by Act 3 of the 2012 legislative session, which established unified expectations for child care, Head Start, and pre-kindergarten programs.

Meeting Dates

- Wednesday, February 12, 2025
- Wednesday, May 7, 2025
- Thursday, July 17, 2025
- Wednesday, September 17, 2025
- Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Roles & Appointing Authorities

Chair: Dr. Paula Polito

Vice Chair: Maria Blanco

Role	Appointing Authority	Member	Title/Organization
Type III Early Learning Center	State Superintendent of Education	Tafta Miller	Owner/Director, The Cub House Early Learning Center and Cub House on the Bayou
Type III Early Learning Center	State Superintendent of Education	Arielle Hughes	Owner/Director, Carousel Preschool
Type II Early Learning Center	State Superintendent of Education	Brigit Bryant	Director, Blue Skies and Butterflies Academy
Type I Early Learning Center	State Superintendent of Education	Amy E. Moran	Director, St. Thomas More Early Learning Center
Head Start Program (LEA)	BESE	Jane C. Hamilton	Program Administrator, Beauregard Parish School Board Head Start Program
Head Start Program (non-LEA)	State Superintendent of Education	Antoinette Hoard	Grant Director-Louisiana, Innovative Network of Knowledge
Local Education Agency	BESE	Kristy Bennett	Early Childhood Coordinator of the Washington Early Childhood Network, Washington Parish School System
Local Education Agency	BESE	Carmen Brabham	Early Childhood Coordinator, Tangipahoa Parish School System
Nonprofit Advocacy Organization	State Superintendent of Education	Jonathan P. Pearce	Legislative Chair, Child Care Association of Louisiana
Nonprofit Advocacy Organization	State Superintendent of Education	Dr. Paula Polito	Member, Ready Start Louisiana and Jefferson Chamber of Commerce
Nonpublic School	BESE	Norma Palma	Director of Admissions, Gardere Community Christian School

Nonpublic School	BESE	Dr. Shanda Theriot	Principal, Resurrection of Our Lord School
Professional or Faculty Member with early childhood expertise	Commissioner of Higher Education	Dr. Michelle DeMeulenaere	Assistant Commissioner for Strategic Planning and Student Success, Louisiana Board of Regents
Louisiana Chapter of American Academy of Pediatrics	President, Louisiana Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics	Dr. Ashley Lucas	Pediatrics Medical Director for OLOL Physician Group
Advocacy or Service Organization, focusing on children with disabilities	State Superintendent of Education	Maria Blanco	Director of Early Childhood Initiatives and Assistant Professor of the Human Development Center, LSU Health Sciences Center
Representative of Louisiana Business or Community Org	BESE	Jen Roberts	Chief Executive Officer, Agenda for Children
Parent of a child current enrolled in publicly-funded early learning center	BESE	Jodie Joseph	Parent
Designee from House Committee on Education	Ex-officio member	Rep. Kim Carver	State Representative of District 89, House Education Committee
Designee from Senate Committee on Education	Ex-officio member	Sen. Rick Edmonds	State Senator of District 6 and Chairman of Senate Education Committee
Designee from House Committee on Health and Welfare	Ex-officio member	Rep. Jason Hughes	State Representative of District 100, House Health and Welfare Committee
Designee from Senate Committee on Health and Welfare	Ex-officio member	Dr. Libbie Sonnier	Executive Director, Louisiana Policy Institute for Children
Designee from Department of Children and Family Services	Ex-officio member	Shannon Wyche	Director of TASC K-5 Truancy Program, Volunteers for Youth Justice
Director of the Louisiana State Head Start Collaboration Project	Ex-officio member	Kahree A. Wahid	Director of the Louisiana Head Start Collaboration Office, Louisiana Department of Education
Representative of state agency responsible for programs under Section 619 or Part C of the IDEA Act	Ex-officio member	Caroline Nailor-Oglesby	Director of EarlySteps and Part C Coordinator for Early Intervention, Louisiana Department of Health
Director of Maternal and Child Health Program at the Department of Health and Hospitals	Ex-officio member	Amy Zapata	Director of the Bureau of Family Health and Title V Maternal and Child Health Block Grant Program State Administrator, Louisiana Department of Health
Director of the Child and Adult Care Food Program at the Department of Education	Ex-officio member	David Thibodeaux	Director of Child and Adult Care Food Programs, Louisiana Department of Education
Designee of the Louisiana State Fire Marshal	Ex-officio member	Deputy Chief Nicholas Heinen	Louisiana Office of State Fire Marshal
Representative from the Office of Sanitarian Services at the Department of Health and Hospitals	Ex-officio member	Aimee Ewing	Buildings and Premises Program Manager, Louisiana Department of Health-Office of Public Health
Representative from the Louisiana Workforce Commission	Ex-officio member	Jim Garvey	Executive Legal Counsel, Louisiana Workforce Commission
Representative from the Louisiana State Police Bureau of Criminal Identification and Information	Ex-officio member	Capt. Adam Albright	Bureau of Criminal Identification and Information, Louisiana State Police