# Fair Start for Kids Act (FSKA)
# Meeting Minutes
May 4 2022- 7:00pm to 9:00 pm
Virtual Meeting

**Welcome, Introductions & Virtual Meeting Protocols**
DCYF Community Engagement Manager, Emily Morgan, welcomed attendees and reviewed virtual meeting protocols. DCYF Deputy Director of Community Engagement, Deanna Stewart, initiated introductions and reviewed the meeting agenda.

**MERIT**
DCYF Professional Development Administrator, Angela Abrams, and Erin Schoch, Professional Development & Workforce Registry Lead, provided a presentation on the recently updated MERIT dashboard including pathway options for meeting staff qualifications.
- Presentation
- Discussion Question Responses

| Discussion | |
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| | • It is great that we can see background checks in MERIT, but not so great that there's an expectation that all staff records be in MERIT. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) states paper records can be thrown out after verified in MERIT, however, providers can be written up for not having everything up to date in MERIT, and I feel there is a benefit of having paper records.<br>    o One of the benefits of going online is to help manage professional records through their career, without having to rely so heavily on paper documents, but we do understand the benefit of paper records.<br>• It may be a flaw in the MERIT example being shown, but it strikes me as odd that experience says "do not need" but job role education is needed.<br>• Is there going to be a time when employers can submit records on behalf of their employees? There have been concerns with delays and staff cannot always be accessible to answer phone calls while they are working.<br>    o There are times when prompt responses do not occur, and this is something we are working on as our navigation team grows. The language access support is also expanding to be able to provide support in languages such as English, Spanish, Somali, Russian and Ukrainian.<br>        ▪ I do agree that this will be better, however, there are still concerns with the employer being written up for not being in compliance, when the employer does not have access to the records. There are some staff members who do not know how to navigate the system. Employers should be able to submit records when necessary.<br>        ▪ The dashboard system has been updated to provide more tools for the employer to be able to see what is in a staff's professional record.<br>        ▪ You can always email the paper records to us and we can help enter them, or have the staff email them and copy you.<br>• How do employment laws regarding personnel records align with licensing rules about employee records?<br>    o Licensing is not my area of expertise; however, I would be happy to reach out to our licensing division for further feedback.<br>        ▪ If someone is "program hopping" and they were let go (for a large issue, for a finding, or not a concern at all), and there was a character judgement that showed up, we do not have a way to collect that information. |

- If there was an incident that occurred at the center, but did not rise to the level of abuse/neglect, it lives on the center's record for up to seven years, which parents can see. This is a source of frustration for providers, when these types of issues should be tied to the staff member, not the employer/center.
- We do not want to breach employee's privacy/confidentiality, however, when the focus is child safety, providers need to be aware of any past concerns.
  - Thank you, that is a great point.
- Is there a way for providers to receive updates on the background check/finger printing process? I hired two employees in early April and they have still not received an email for fingerprinting.
  - The application lives in MERIT, and the processing for fingerprinting is in another system. This is something I can bring back to the background check department to see about any recommendations for this process, as we have had conversations previously around how to keep employers informed.
- We've experienced a LOT of turn over and continue to run into issues with the change of management process so directors have access to the Facility Site tab. I would love to see admin (organizational/corporate) access so we can approve directors, and view center dashboards, across multiple sites.
  - We are currently reviewing how that process works and how that process can be made smoother. There is currently an organizational pilot being conducted to look at how an organization can be represented in MERIT when there are multiple sites.
- Will you be updating so that someone doesn't have to have two listings in MERIT if they hold more than one role?
  - The employment section can only be accessed by DCYF admin for editing purposes. An employer or administrator can go in to confirm the employment record, but the individual/employee cannot delete.
- Does DCYF and MERIT consult with a legal team, related to employment laws and employee rights? Some of what I am hearing is raising some red flags for me in terms of employee rights and what would be considered infringing on those rights. I would like to know what is being done on the back end that provides protection for everyone.
  - You are raising a lot of good points. DCYF does work closely with the Attorney General's office, however, I do not believe we are at that point yet.
- Employees do not tend to share complete resumes, sometimes picking and choosing which jobs they want to list. If MERIT listed all early learning employment, it would be very helpful.
- That's a good suggestion about printing out their MERIT history. They can't delete any of it?
  - No, information cannot be deleted and roles cannot be changed.
- I will often have people in MERIT that no longer work for me (coming back from breaks from college) or someone who substitutes occasionally, and might have an expired CPR license. Is there a way to list them as a substitute or inactive?
  - At this time if an employee is not active, they can enter an end date of employment, then start a new one when they come back.
    - A lot of people don't remember their log-in information.
    - The question/suggestion was to list an "inactive" role to not have to re-enter the whole new role if someone is away for a period of time (example: over a summer).
      - That is a great idea
- How does this work with substitutes from Imagine Institute?

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| | <ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">There is a separate profile stating they want to be a substitute, and there are different roles/processes. There are daily uploads to the Imagine Institute regarding where individuals are in the process, if they have been approved/cleared, etc.</li></ul><ul><li>Will you be offering training to owners and directors so that we can learn this system better to help staff navigate and choose a path?<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">We have been gathering documentation online. The DCYF webpage that talks about merit instructions (https://dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-profdev/merit). Hoping to grow it out to video tutorials as well. Providers can also access MERIT support (merit@dcyf.wa.gov).</li></ul></li><li>What are we hoping to achieve with this?<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">The goal is to receive feedback from providers on how things can be improved for providers. A recommendation report will then be provided later this year.</li></ul></li><li>I am confused about how the licensing process period relates to MERIT.<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">Tonight, we are doing a walk through of the MERIT process, however, if you have any additional feedback/questions on the licensing process please feel free to email the Community Engagement Team at dcyf.communityengagement@dcyf.wa.gov.</li></ul></li><li>If someone has a specific topic that they want further input on, and cannot find, what is the best way to reach someone?<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">Contact through the MERIT email is best.</li></ul></li><li>MERIT allowing us to upload PDF copies of documents like CPR etc. would be helpful. Can anyone confirm that if a record is verified in MERIT, that a hard copy onsite is no longer necessary? And would this be a record that you can accept when on boarding new staff? If not, why?<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">There are a lot of laws and security concerns with document uploads, however, we are looking at how that might be able to happen in the future.</li></ul></li><li>What options are available for translation of degrees?<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">We are working on an update for the international process, however, it is not published yet. The new process will ensure that new information will no longer need to be translated or evaluated. New tools will allow us to record into MERIT, and the need for translation will reduce. Hopefully this will be coming in July</li></ul></li><li>Would there be a time to get MERIT staff to work with provider/center staff to train everyone at one time?<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">Our team is growing and those are the types of things we would like to do. I would be happy to email you after this meeting to figure something out.</li></ul></li><li>Is there a timeline for the Education (transcripts) to be uploaded once they submit the data?<ul><li style="list-style-type:circle">Once all required documents have been received, DCYF is committed to verifying the documents in MERIT within 45 business days.</li></ul></li></ul> |
| **Next Steps/Follow Up** | <ul><li>Any follow up questions or concerns can be directed to the MERIT email address at merit@dcyf.wa.gov.</li></ul> |

**WA Compass Provider Portal**

DCYF's WA Compass Support Specialists, Michele Sampilo and Jennifer Buckley provided an overview of the functionality of the WA Compass Provider Portal.

- Provider Portal Support
- Discussion Question Responses

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| **Discussion** | <ul><li>Is there a plan to merge MERIT and WA Compass into one place?</li></ul> |

- o At this time, I am not aware of plans to merge the two, but that is something that can go to licensing leadership as a suggestion.
  - o No, we will not be merging. One is about individuals, and the other is about programs.
- I've been told using WA Compass is required. Is that true?
  - o I'm not sure about the requirement to use the Provider Portal, although we do encourage using it in certain situations.
- Could MERIT have a link to WA Compass?
  - o Depending on what you are envisioning, that is something that is maybe possible from a technical standpoint. I'd love to learn more about where you see some links that would be valuable for licensed providers.
    - It would help providers remember to log into WA Compass occasionally if the link was in MERIT
- Why wouldn't you want providers to update their phone number?
  - o That is because we want to ensure that licensors are able to update contact information for the facility in other systems, as well.
  - o Having the two systems linked would be helpful for new licensors.
- Is there a reason why there can only be two users? In a large agency it would be helpful to have multiple users able to access this.
  - o We can set up more than two individuals with access to the Provider Portal so that they can view the facility information. The system has a limitation where only two logins can be active simultaneously, but the Primary Contact can control which two have access (as long as they have been set up by the licensor or the Provider Portal team with access).
- Where is this data at for public view?
  - o Only certain information from the Provider Portal will display on Child Care Check (the external website for the public), such as the logo, website, site description, etc. There is also information that displays in relation to licensing history that displays in Child Care Check that pulls from our internal system.
- How much of this is viewable by the public?
  - o The information that is listed under the Child Care Check Info tab in the provider portal is the majority of the information that will display on Child Care Check. This information is more for the facility to use as a marketing tool, if so desired.
- This is the part that should be split between true violations or complaints against the facility and ones that should be against a person (a staff member).
  - o Thank you for that suggestion. I am not sure what is required by Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) guidelines related to compliance items, but this is something that I will pass along to licensing so that they can investigate the ability to split between site and individual staff member complaints.
- Where can parents find further information on providers/centers?
  - o Child Care Check is where parents can find information on a facility, required by CCDF.
- I understand that from your standpoint, MERIT is for the people vs. the program, but to providers it's all "program" since individuals are not the ones responsible to DCYF for keeping their profiles updated.
- Are all complaint visits and licensing visits housed here? How long are they left on WA Compass and who can delete previously listed complaint visits?
  - o Only complaints that were found valid will remain, and the system will show the last two years.
  - o I was referring to WA Compass regarding something that was deleted from late 2019.

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|  | <ul><li>▪ Does that answer your question? Is there any further follow up we can assist with?<ul><li>○ Not really. Who can I contact about the information that was deleted?</li><li>○ DCYF.providerportal@dcyf.wa.gov would be the best email.</li></ul></li></ul><ul><li>• I think this subcommittee could recommend removing the "emergency" WAC around reporting our openings. It's not useful and is redundant.<ul><li>○ That is a good point. The emergency order was a response to COVID, and there has been discussion of providing updates.<ul><li>▪ I agree, we should also recommend ensuring staff member's full names are not listed in Child Care Check.</li></ul></li></ul></li><li>• Why does it show employees that haven't worked for me for years and years?<ul><li>○ That is not seen by the public, and is only for director use. There have been integration issues between the two systems.</li></ul></li><li>• How long do complaints stay with the facility. It's tough when an employee clearly was in fault of a finding, however, terminating the employee for cause still leaves the agency with this on their record.<ul><li>○ The internal system has access to all complaints for the life of the facility. In Child Care Check, issues only display for 3 years (federal minimum). Changing the issues from the agency to the individual would have to change in licensing.</li></ul></li><li>• Why are licensing reports and inspection reports in the same area?<ul><li>○ There are two sections, complaints for WAC violations and inspection reports, but you will see inspections reports in the same area.</li></ul></li><li>• If an annual review was completed, it should not be listed in the complaint?<ul><li>○ It should not. The licensing inspection report is both for annual inspection and complaints. If there was a valid complaint, you will see an inspection report under the complaint. Please feel free to reach out if you have any questions or concerns about this at DCYF.providerportal@dcyf.wa.gov.</li></ul></li><li>• "License Status Reason" says UNKNOWN. What does that mean?<ul><li>○ That is from the prior system. The previous system required they be renewed every 3 years, and there has been some carry over from other systems.</li></ul></li><li>• Another recommendation: unfounded complaints drop off immediately; WAC violations drop off after the site is brought into compliance, and founded complaints drop off after a set period of time (especially when it is the fault of a staff member who was let go).</li><li>• If the complaint was unfounded, it will not show under Child Care Check or in the portal. Only valid complaints will show.<ul><li>○ Yes - in regards to Monitoring Visit Inspections and Complaints, that information drops off once it has aged past 3 years.</li></ul></li><li>• We benefit when we meet with everyone in groups when talking about recommendations, and benefit when hearing about other's experiences the systems.<ul><li>○ Typically, we do break out rooms to have those conversations. Unfortunately, we ran out of time. We will be sending out the jamboard link for further feedback and the recommendation document will be sent out to the group for reviews/changes, before submitting.</li><li>○ Not everyone feels safe to speak up. Going into smaller groups allows individuals to learn from others who might have more experience in certain areas.</li></ul></li><li>• If something is incorrectly posted to my portal, what is the best way to address that?<ul><li>○ You can contact the licensor or the portal email.</li></ul></li></ul> |
| **Next Steps/Follow Up** | <ul><li>• For any additional questions regarding WA Compass, please reach out to Michele Sampilo (michele.sampilo@dcyf.wa.gov) or Jennifer Buckley (Jennifer.buckley@dcyf.wa.gov).</li></ul> |

**2022 Meetings, Closing Remarks and Adjourn**

| Discussion | • The next meeting is scheduled for May 25, 2022 to discuss DCYF Communications and Background Checks.<br>• At the June 15 meeting we will walk through recommendations thus far and work in small groups to plan the remaining meeting topics. |
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