



## Child Health Advisory Committee

### Minutes

February 17, 2022 · 9:05 a.m. – 9:32 a.m. · Zoom Only

**Call to order: 9:05 a.m.**

**Zoom:** Jerri Clark, Paul Rawls, Michele Brown, Josh Phelps, Tammie Works, Lucas Harder, Sean Engle, Mike Motley, Elaine Prewitt, Cheria McDonald, Gary Williams **Absent:** Rosa Hatch, Melinda Kinnison, Patrick Casey, Bala Simon, Ashley Williams, Loretta Alexander, Carole Garner, Dave Oberembt, Dan Breshears

**Staff:** Shannon Borchert, Shy Whitley

**Guests:** Shelia Chastain, Lori Arnette, Erica Benoit, Kathryn Motsinger, Rhonda McDonald, Chenell Tucker, Ariel Rogers, Detrich Smith, Lisa Mundy, Tommie Rogers, Pam Hutchins

**Quorum not present**

**Review of January minutes:** minutes reviewed with no comments

### **Act 1220 Coordinator and Coordinated School Health Reports**

#### **Act 1220 Report**

School Health at Arkansas Department of Health is submitting changes for the website for information provided on the CHAC, School Wellness, the CSH Program, School-Based Health Centers, State School Nurse Consultant, and the Community Health Nurse Specialist and Community Health Program Specialist.

School Wellness: awaiting rules changes; wellness reports are under review with additional support provided to schools struggling to submit their plans.

SWAG: Reports and activity have been delayed due to COVID, school calendars, and weather.

CHAC: CHAC Member Orientations were held on

- February 10, 2022: participants were T. Works and S. Engle
- February 16, 2022: participant was G. Williams

Anyone can request a training session with the staff.

#### **CSH Report**

The third quarterly Coordinated School Health meeting was held virtually 2/2/22. The topic of the meeting was mental health and presentations included the Arkansas AWARE Project and a live taping of their podcast; Trauma Sensitive Schools and Social-Emotional Learning; and Secondary Traumatic Stress and Creating sustainable Self-Care Plans. There were 153 attendees. The meeting recording can be found on the Coordinated School Health [website](#) and more information on Arkansas AWARE can be found [here](#).

### **Old Business**

### **New Business**

**Nutrition Support for Schools in Arkansas Letter:** The letter content completed and will be put to CHAC letterhead. Content is immediately preceding minutes..

### **Member Updates**



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**Paula Rawls (Arkansas ASCD):** Arkansas ASCD summer conference will be June 6-7, 2022. The conference will be in Bentonville and the keynote speaker is Tim Kanold.

**Mike Motley (Arkansas Center for Health Improvement):** BMI calculations complete; the report does show an increase in BMI across the state. The report will be posted on ACHI BMI Program [website](#) once it's available.

**Adjourn: 9:32 a.m.**

**Next meeting:** Thursday, March 17, 2022 from 9:00 a.m. – 11:00 p.m. Zoom Meeting Only. Join Zoom Meeting: <https://zoom.us/j/96682665672> Meeting ID: 966 8266 5672 One tap mobile +13126266799,,96682665672#

#### Letter content:

The Child Health Advisory Committee (CHAC) was created by the Arkansas General Assembly through Act 1220 of 2003. The General Assembly charged CHAC with developing nutrition and physical activity standards and policy recommendations to address Arkansas's youth obesity crisis. In 2007, CHAC was given additional responsibilities by the General Assembly to examine the progress and implementation of the Arkansas Coordinated School Health Program and make recommendations as necessary.

To help fulfill these responsibilities, we are writing to you regarding three components of the Build Back Better legislation that we believe should be rescued from it, should pieces of it be pulled into a separate, smaller, more focused piece of legislation. These areas are the expansion of the Community Eligibility Provision and Summer EBT Program, as well as funds for updated kitchen equipment.

You and other Arkansas members of Congress have an opportunity in 2022 to build upon the successes of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic to continue to strengthen and expand the reach of these child nutrition programs. These programs provide an integrated system of nutrition support and are a critical line of defense against food insecurity for thousands of Arkansas's children. The benefits extend to our entire communities, as well. In federal fiscal year 2021, the child nutrition programs in Arkansas public schools currently have had an annual economic impact of \$261.7 million on the economy of the state and could be much more.

Unfortunately, the diets of most children continue to fall far short of recommendations for good health despite the widespread efforts of child nutrition programs. According to an Arkansas Advocates for Children and Families report, prior to the pandemic, 23% of Arkansas children lived in a food insecure household. Due to the detrimental economic impacts of the pandemic, that child food insecurity rate has risen to an estimated 32%. The pandemic also has led to school closures, disrupted routines, increased stress, and fewer opportunities for physical activity and proper nutrition, leading to weight gain among children and adolescents. The Arkansas Center for Health Improvement published a study that revealed that overall obesity prevalence was 23% in the pre-pandemic period (from 2019 through March 2020) and if Arkansas follows national trends, that level may now be over 26%.



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The **Community Eligibility Provision** (CEP) allows all students attending an eligible school to have access to the nutritious breakfasts and lunches that are vital to optimal learning. It will also reduce stigmas associated with subsidized lunch status and allow more time for students to eat by streamlining and simplifying the point of service processes that have required the counting of meals across eligibility categories. The proposed expansion would increase the number of schools able to adopt community eligibility and would increase federal reimbursements, making it financially viable for more schools to participate. In the 2020–2021 school year, 255 schools had adopted community eligibility. With the expansion, 565 additional schools could implement the program for a total of 820 schools being able to offer free meals to over 104,000 children.

When schools close, children lose access to healthy meals. The existing summer nutrition programs are designed to replace school meals for low-income children but the reach is low, serving just one child for every seven who receive free or reduced-price school meals. The proposed **Summer EBT Program** would provide a \$65 per month grocery benefit on an EBT card for the summer of 2023 and 2024. This would help roughly 324,000 children in Arkansas. Evaluations of Summer EBT demonstrations have found that they reduce food insecurity and improve nutrition.

For more than a decade, Congress has funded USDA for **school food service kitchen equipment grants**. However, the funds allocated have not come close to the need and few school food service units have the budget to purchase the type of equipment they need to cook and serve healthy meals to their students. The Arkansas Department of Education Child Nutrition Unit reported that for 2021 — a typical year for equipment fund requests — they had over 100 applications, but could only fund 20 applications. Requests totaled more than \$1,130,000 but the funds received from USDA were just under \$350,000.

In summary, we ask that you continue to help support Arkansas children by working to save/rescue the child nutrition components of Build Back Better: CEP Expansion, Summer EBT, and Kitchen Equipment Grants, and place these vital components into a separate or smaller piece of legislation to be passed later this year.

The members of CHAC (listed on the left column on this letterhead) look forward to having a conversation with you about supporting student health in Arkansas at one of our monthly meetings. The CHAC meets every third Thursday of the month at 9 a.m., and we would be happy to work with your staff to arrange this discussion at a time that works with your schedule.