

## Section 2: The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee

This section addresses the local NC Pre-K Committee structure and responsibilities.

### A. Purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee

The NC Pre-K Program is built upon a system of existing local Smart Start partnerships, public school systems, Head Start agencies, and other entities that demonstrate the ability to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten services for eligible four-year-old children.

The NC Pre-K Program requires that every county (or region) that participates in providing services for NC Pre-K must establish and maintain a County/Region NC Pre-K Committee.

The purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee is to:

1. Select a Contracting Agency;
2. Review Contract with DCDEE annually to include revisions and/or updates based on changes to NC Pre-K due to legislation;
3. Develop operational policies and procedures;
4. Ensure collaboration and shared responsibility for developing, approving and implementing the local plan for delivering NC Pre-K services at the county/regional level;
5. Ensure NC Pre-K services are implemented based on the existing early childhood service delivery system and that service providers in the county/region, with the ability to provide NC Pre-K services, can express interest and be considered to serve as NC Pre-K sites (i.e., standardized site selection process);
6. Provide ongoing, collaborative advice about local policies and procedures in the implementation of NC Pre-K services; and
7. Provide oversight for the local program (both programmatic and fiscal).

### B. Committee Structure and Meetings **(NEW)**

#### NC Pre-K Contracting Agency Staff

The NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, NC Pre-K Fiscal Administrator and the NC Pre-K Program Contact (individuals named in the NC Pre-K Plan) work for the Contracting Agency and serve as a resource and provide support to the NC Pre-K Committee. These individuals **may not** serve as a co-chair, facilitator or member of the NC Pre-K Committee.

## **Responsibilities**

Contracting Agency staff:

- Maintain Committee membership information in NC Pre-K Plan
- Recruit and recommend new members to the Committee for approval, as needed
- Provide training/orientation for new Committee members
- Organize Committee meetings (securing locations, setting dates, posting public notifications including changes and cancellations, etc.)
- Create Committee meeting agendas in collaboration with co-chairs
- Create handouts and other resource documents to be shared with Committee
- Create and maintain Committee meeting minutes
- Provide local and state-level program updates to Committee

Contracting Agency staff may **not**:

- Serve as NC Pre-K Committee members or be listed as Committee members in NC Pre-K PLAN
- Facilitate Committee meetings
- Call to order and/or adjourn Committee meetings
- Establish the presence of a quorum
- Call for votes, motions, and/or discussion related to actions requiring Committee vote
- Make or second a motion
- Vote

The NC Pre-K contracting agency staff is responsible for ensuring that all Committee members are following the Section I, Assurances and Requirements as stated in the County/Region Plan document.

## **Committee Co-Chairs**

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee must be co-chaired by the school superintendent (or designee) for the local education agency (LEA) and the board chair (or designee) for the local Smart Start Partnership. The co-chairs are responsible for convening the Committee per the ***NC Pre-K Program Requirements & Guidance Manual*** and may only serve as co-chairs and not as other Committee representatives. Only the Committee co-chairs may facilitate the NC Pre-K Committee meetings.

If there is more than one LEA or local Smart Start Partnership in a county or region, one superintendent and one local Smart Start board chair may be designated to serve as the co-chairs. It is recommended that all superintendents (or designees) and local Smart Start board chairs (or designees) in a county or region serve as members of the Committee.

New co-chairs should receive an orientation training to review the purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee, the NC Pre-K Program Requirements, local NC Pre-K policies and procedures, as well as an overview of the funding and slot allocations across the county/region. New co-chairs will also be required to review and sign Section I of the County/Region Plan as well as the local Conflict of Interest Statement. Any changes to Committee co-chairs must be entered in the NC Pre-K Plan.

### **Designees**

If a designee is assigned to **serve as a co-chair**, it must be documented in writing and that individual must be named in the NC Pre-K PLAN. The designee must have the same decision-making authority for the NC Pre-K program as the school superintendent or local partnership board chair. **The designee must ensure information from the NC Pre-K Committee meetings is shared with the school superintendent or local partnership board chair.**

### **Responsibilities**

Committee co-chairs (or designees):

- Are named as Committee co-chairs in the NC Pre-K PLAN
- Facilitate Committee meetings
- Call to order and adjourn Committee meetings
- Establish the presence of a quorum
- Call for votes, motions, and/or discussion related to actions requiring Committee vote
- Vote
- Follow open meeting law

Committee co-chairs (or designees) **may not**:

- Make or second a motion
- Serve as the NC Pre-K Contract Administrator, NC Pre-K Fiscal Administrator, or the NC Pre-K Program Contact or be named as serving in one of those roles in the NC Pre-K PLAN
- Serve as other NC Pre-K Committee representatives or be named as other Committee representatives in NC Pre-K PLAN

**Example:** An individual is assigned as the designee for the LEA's Superintendent to serve as one of the co-chairs of the Committee. This individual is the local school system's Director of the Exceptional Children's Program. This individual **may only serve as the co-chair of the Committee** and another individual would need to be appointed to be the public school's exceptional children's preschool program representative on the Committee.

Co-chairs may designate another functioning early childhood committee or board (e.g., local Smart Start Board) in their county/region that has the appropriate membership to serve in the capacity of the NC Pre-K Committee. If an existing early childhood committee is designated to serve in this capacity, the existing early childhood committee must officially adjourn from its meeting and requirements, then officially reconvene as the NC Pre-K Committee operating under the NC Pre-K Requirements, with the required co-chairs and membership to perform NC Pre-K functions.

## **Committee Members**

The local NC Pre-K Committee must consist of the two required co-chairs and a minimum of 8 committee members. Members of the Committee should represent various stakeholders in the community as well as subject matter experts in the field of child development and early education. Committee membership must include enough non-conflicted members to ensure a quorum is established for every Committee meeting.

### **Membership**

Committee membership must be kept current in the NC Pre-K Plan and shall consist of at least one member from each of the following categories:

- 1) Licensed Child Care Center Representative: *(select at least one)*
  - a) For-profit child care center Administrator/Director
  - b) Non-profit child care center Administrator/Director
  - c) Head Start Site Administrator/Center Director/Manager
  - d) Public School Administrator/Principal
  - e) Faith based Administrator/Director
- 2) Public School Representative: *(select at least one)*
  - a) Public school exceptional children's preschool program representative
  - b) Title I Preschool representative
- 3) Parent Representative: *(select at least one)*
  - a) Parent or family member of preschool-age child(ren) representative (especially a child who is at-risk), either current or past NC Pre-K participants
  - b) Parent Advocacy member
  - c) Guardian Ad Litem
- 4) Head Start Program Representative: *(select at least one)*
  - a) Head Start Program Director/Assistant Program Director/Executive Director
- 5) Child Care Agency Representative: *(select at least one)*
  - a) Child care resource and referral agency
  - b) Member from a local child care association or group representing the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors
  - c) Other community agency serving children and families
- 6) County Representative: *(select at least one)*
  - a) Department of Social Services or another child care subsidy funding agency representative
  - b) County/regional departments of health and mental health representative(s)
- 7) Health and/or Medical Professional Representative: *(select at least one)*
  - a) Health care providers (e.g., nurse, pediatrician, family practitioner, oral health provider)
  - b) Child Care Health Consultant
  - c) Mental Health Professional

- 8) Other Representative: *(select at least one)*
- a) Early childhood professional organization representative(s)
  - b) Local business community representative(s)
  - c) Military representative
  - d) Faith-based representative
  - e) Early childhood representative from a university, community college/higher education
  - f) Homeless agency representative
  - g) Classroom teachers who are licensed in early childhood education
  - h) County Manager/commissioner
  - i) Chamber of Commerce
  - j) Bank Chair
  - k) County cooperative extension agency representative

In addition, the local NC Pre-K Committee may also consist of community members or volunteers who do not meet one of the required categories above. These members should be named in the NC Pre-K Plan and are required to review and sign Section I of the County/Region Plan as well as the local Conflict of Interest Statement.

### **Vacancies**

When there is a vacancy on the Committee, the Contracting Agency should work in collaboration with the Committee co-chairs to identify a replacement and present a recommendation to the full Committee. The Committee must vote to approve the new member and the results must be documented in the meeting minutes. Any changes to Committee membership must be entered in the NC Pre-K Plan.

Upon joining the Committee, new members should receive an orientation training to review the purpose of the NC Pre-K Committee, the NC Pre-K Program Requirements, local NC Pre-K policies and procedures, as well as an overview of the funding and slot allocations across the county/region. New members will also be required to review and sign Section I of the County/Region Plan as well as the local Conflict of Interest Statement.

### **Proxies**

When a proxy attends a Committee meeting on behalf of a Committee member during a one-time absence the proxy must abstain from participating in any votes or decision-making activities. The proxy may be allowed to give a report to share any information or updates provided to them by the absent Committee member.

**The proxy must ensure information from the NC Pre-K Committee meeting is shared with the Committee member.**

### **Questions about Committee Membership? (NEW)**

Counties who are facing unusual challenges filling these positions are encouraged to contact their NC Pre-K Program Policy Consultant for additional guidance.

## **Committee Meetings**

### **Laws Informing the Committee's Responsibilities**

The NC Pre-K Committee is a public body subject to the [NC Open Meetings Law](#) (G.S. Chapter 143, Article 33C) and [NC Public Records Law](#) (G.S. Chapter 132). The local NC Pre-K Committee **is required** to operate in accordance with their obligations under those General Statutes (G.S.) when conducting all Committee meetings, including closed sessions.

### **Meeting Schedule**

The NC Pre-K Committee, under the direction of the co-chairs, should set a meeting schedule and establish protocols that allow the Committee to fulfill its functions.

Meeting schedules (including changes and cancellations) should be made public in accordance with NC Open Meetings Law.

Meeting schedules may be publicized in many ways including but not limited to:

- Agency websites
- Social Media
- Community E-blasts
- Community Bulletin Boards
- Flyers
- Other public forums

### **Conflict of Interest Policy**

The local NC Pre-K Committee serves as the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K program and determines all final site approvals, slot placements, funding allocations, and provider reimbursement rates. Therefore, it is critical to avoid any conflict of interest as well as a perception of conflict of interest within the committee.

The local NC Pre-K Committee must adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy to ensure that, at a minimum, all committee members understand the following:

- It is the duty of every NC Pre-K Committee member to disclose and avoid both conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict of interest.
- Individuals who may benefit directly or indirectly from decisions made by the NC Pre-K Committee may participate in discussions and offer input but must abstain from voting.
- Individuals with any employment, contractual or professional interest in any business, firm or corporation that may attempt to secure funding or a contract from the NC Pre-K Committee may participate in discussions and offer input but must abstain from voting.
  - This includes **ANY** employee of a public school system, Head Start program, or private child care center that receives or is applying to receive NC Pre-K funding regardless of that individual's level of involvement with the NC Pre-K program.

All NC Pre-K Committee co-chairs and members are required to review and sign a Conflict of Interest Statement upon their appointment to the NC Pre-K Committee. Conflict of Interest Statements must be reviewed and signed annually and should be updated as needed throughout the year to reflect changes to an individual's interests. Signed Conflict of Interest Statements must be maintained onsite by the Contracting Agency.

See [Appendix 1](#) for sample Conflict of Interest Statements.

### **Minutes**

The NC Pre-K Committee must maintain minutes of all meetings that document the following:

1. Meeting attendees to include members who are present/absent, staff and guests
2. Items discussed that are not voted upon
3. Items discussed that are voted upon to include:
  - a) The motion
  - b) Who made the motion
  - c) Who seconded the motion
  - d) Who abstained from voting
  - e) Results of the vote
4. Actions taken or decisions made by the committee

See [Appendix 5](#) for sample Committee Meeting Minutes.

### **Agendas**

The NC Pre-K Committee must meet **at least two (2) times per school year** as detailed below.

The local NC Pre-K Committee must meet prior to the beginning of the new school year in July/August to:

- **Review Contract including revisions based on changes to NC Pre-K due to legislation:**
  - Overview of Contract requirements including contracted slot numbers
  - Review and approve the provider reimbursement strategy (rates)
  - Approve by vote the Contract and budget allocations for the new school year
- **Adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy:**
  - Committee members approve by vote the Conflict of Interest Policy
  - Committee members must sign the Conflict of Interest Statement annually
- **Set a regular meeting schedule:**
  - Approve by vote a committee meeting schedule for the new school year

- **Review the Assurances and Requirements detailed in Section I of the County/Region Plan**
  - The Section I document can be found in the NC Pre-K Plan as part of the NC Pre-K County/Region Plan Document.
  - All committee members must sign Section I of the County/Region Plan.
    - Signatures validate that each member has read and agreed to the Assurances and Requirements.
    - All signatures must be collected by September 15<sup>th</sup>
    - The completed/signed Section I document must be maintained onsite by the Contracting Agency.

**NOTE:** New members must sign the Section I document upon appointment to the committee
- **Review and approve annually by vote all required written plans for the following: (Send plans out in advance to allow committee members to review prior to the meeting)**
  - Prevention of suspension/expulsion of children with challenging behaviors
  - Transportation
  - Transition
  - Family Engagement
  - Working with children/families with Limited English Proficiency
- **Approve by vote any fees charged for transportation and/or meals**
- **Approve by vote (if applicable) to grant authority to the contracting agency to reallocate slots across NC Pre-K sites without NC Pre-K Committee approval (See Section C: Committee Authority and Responsibilities)**
- **Review any updates/changes made to the NC Pre-K Program Requirements**
- **Review information from regional meetings**

The local NC Pre-K Committee must meet midway through the school year in January/February to:

- **Conduct annual planning for NC Pre-K and approve an implementation plan:**
  - Review NC Pre-K County/Region Plan to include slot allocations at NC Pre-K sites
- **Select a contracting agency:**
  - Approve by vote the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency for the **next** program year
- **Provide financial update**
  - Review program budget (FSR expenditures, monthly reimbursements, etc.)
  - Overview of spending plan for direct services, administrative, and CCDF funds
  - Anticipated expansion or reversion of funds
- **Provide contract compliance update**
  - Review service data (children enrolled, number of sites/classrooms, etc.)
  - Update on progress towards meeting scope of work
- **Prepare for kindergarten transition**
- **Discuss Standardized Site Selection process (if applicable)**



- **Review NC Pre-K Site Monitoring results**
  - Overview of process followed, number of visits completed, action plans resulting from non-compliance, etc.
  
- **Share any other relevant NC Pre-K updates regarding:**
  - Site/classroom staff changes or vacancies
  - Technical assistance data
  - Training and professional development
  - Mentor and evaluation services
  - Child assessments
  - NC Pre-K committee membership
  - Updates/changes made to the NC Pre-K Program Requirements
  - Information from regional meetings or other state meetings

See [Appendix 4](#) for sample Committee Agenda.

## C. Committee Authority and Responsibilities

### Actions Requiring Committee Approval

The County/Region NC Pre-K Committee is the decision-making body for the local NC Pre-K Program and is required to do the following:

1. Conduct annual planning for NC Pre-K and approve an implementation plan.
2. Select or change the NC Pre-K Contracting Agency.
3. Approve distribution of funding.
4. Review and approve the provider reimbursement strategy (i.e., payment rates to providers and other related costs).
5. Approve provider transportation charges to/from the NC Pre-K Program.
6. Approve costs that may be charged to cover the full/partial costs of meals when children do not qualify for free/reduced priced lunch.
7. Approve adding new sites or non-voluntary termination of sites in the County/Region Plan.
8. Approve the reallocation of slots across NC Pre-K sites
  - a. This refers to an adjustment to slot allocations that takes place **after** the NC Pre-K Committee has approved the initial distribution of funding.
  - b. Slots may only be allocated to facilities that are **currently approved** to serve as NC Pre-K sites.

**The minutes of all NC Pre-K Committee meetings shall be kept on file and shall indicate members present/absent, discussions/questions, decisions made and the results of all votes. The minutes must also document that enough non-conflicted members were in attendance to establish a quorum prior to any votes.**

**Guidance**

The NC Pre-K Committee has the option to discuss and vote to allow the Contracting Agency to reallocate slots across NC Pre-K sites without committee approval. The co-chairs and the Committee may agree to transfer this decision-making authority to the Contracting Agency. The decision to transfer the authority to the Contracting Agency for this action must be presented, discussed and voted on during a public Committee meeting and be consistent with NC's open meetings law. Please consult your attorney if you have any questions related to this law.

**D. Additional Functions – Committee and Contracting Agency**

The NC Pre-K Committee serves in an advisory role to the Contracting Agency in the development, implementation and **annual review and approval** of the following written plans:

- **A written plan to prevent the suspension and/or expulsion of children with unique needs/challenging behaviors** and to ensure their families have access to appropriate resources and supports to maintain their child's placement in NC Pre-K. The written plan for children with unique needs/challenging behaviors should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency and should include the components found in [Section 3: The NC Pre-K Child – Subsection F. Children with Unique Needs/Challenging Behaviors](#) of this document;
- **A written transportation plan** showing how the transportation services for all children will be implemented to and from the NC Pre-K sites. In developing the written plan, the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency should identify community resources that are available and work with the school system, as feasible. Legislation allows for transportation of any NC Pre-K child to any NC Pre-K site on public school buses. If, after careful review, it is determined that transportation cannot be provided without creating a participation barrier the Contracting Agency must maintain a written record of what was decided through the committee process;
- **A written transition plan** showing how the needs of participating children will be implemented as they transition into Pre-Kindergarten and then into Kindergarten. The written plan for transition activities should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency and should include these components:
  - Specify how children will transition into the NC Pre-K classroom
  - Specify how children will transition into Kindergarten
  - Reflect the diversity and uniqueness of children, families and communities
  - Be revised as ongoing transition efforts are expanded;
- **A written family engagement plan** to implement strategies designed to develop partnerships with families and build reciprocal relationships that promote shared decision-making. The written plan for family engagement activities should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency and should include the components found in [Section 5: The NC Pre-K Classroom – Subsection I. Family Engagement](#) of this document;

- **A written plan for working with children and families with limited English proficiency** to include resources in the community to support children and families with limited English proficiency. The written plan for limited English proficiency services should be developed by the NC Pre-K Committee and Contracting Agency to implement strategies for working with children and families with limited English proficiency. The written plan should support the children and families in the NC Pre-K classrooms to be engaged and informed throughout the school year;

The following action items are considered **best practices** but are not required:

- Developing and implementing a coordinated process for recruiting, identifying and placing four-year-old children who are at-risk, including but not limited to Health Check Coordinators, local Pediatricians/Health Care Providers (County Health Department) and other local agencies and organizations such as programs addressing homelessness;
- Participating in public/private collaborative efforts to offer professional development services to early childhood programs in the community
- Documenting agreements with other community agencies regarding the provision of services to young children with disabilities;
- Providing all families of participating children with information about access to health insurance such as NC Health Check (Medicaid for Children) and the importance of a medical and dental home for their children;
- Identifying and using community resources to develop a plan for obtaining child health assessments within the required timeframe;
- Developing a plan for consultation services from a qualified health consultant for all sites;
- Implementing policies for ensuring that qualified eligible teachers and teacher assistants are compensated at the appropriate levels; and
- Implementing inclement weather policies in collaboration with local providers that include options to extend the NC Pre-K instructional day past 6.5 hours or have children attend on a day that was originally scheduled as a teacher workday, vacation day or weekend day. All sites should follow the same make-up schedule unless there are clear barriers that prevent this for a certain site(s).

## E. Reporting Program Progress

The Contracting Agency must report to the County/Region NC Pre-K Committee throughout the year on the implementation of the County/Region Plan including:

1. Program progress (recruiting, child identification and eligibility, enrollment and attendance);
2. Site updates (child placement, compliance history, NC Pre-K compliance);

3. Site staff education levels, staff salaries and progress toward goals (administrators, teachers, assistants);
4. Professional development activities including working with Limited English Proficiency learners;
5. Efforts to collaborate with other agencies (i.e., referrals for families with children with special needs and/or other behavioral, social, emotional and challenging needs);
6. Strengths and barriers to service delivery;
7. Efforts to implement plans related to the prevention of suspension/expulsion, transportation, transition, family engagement, limited English proficiency, helping families access health insurance, a medical and dental home, helping ensure child health assessments are completed and consultation from qualified health professionals; and
8. Fiscal and budget reports, including funds received and funds paid to subcontracting agencies.

## F. NC Pre-K Standardized Site Selection Process

### Session Law 2012-142 SECTION 10.1.(f)

The Division of Child Development and Early Education shall establish a standard decision-making process to be used by local NC Pre-K committees in awarding NC Pre-K classroom slots and student selection.

### Session Law 2013-360 SECTION 12B.1.(b)

Multiyear Contracts. – The Division of Child Development and Early Education shall require the NC Pre-K contractor to issue multiyear contracts for licensed private child care centers providing NC Pre-K classrooms.

*See also Budget Bill [SESSION LAW 2012-142](#); [SESSION LAW 2013-360](#) [SENATE BILL 402](#)  
History Note: Authority [GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA SESSION 2011](#)*

1. The **local NC Pre-K Committee** determines a multi-year funding cycle and oversees the process to ensure the Site Selection Sub-Committee follows the standardized site selection process as outlined in the [NC Pre-K Site Selection Roles and Responsibilities](#).

The Site Selection process must be opened and all steps completed prior to the start of a new funding cycle or every three years, whichever is less, but can be opened annually.

**(NEW)**

**NOTE:** The local NC Pre-K Committee is responsible for determining if existing NC Pre-K sites must re-apply during the site selection process. The Committee may decide that existing NC Pre-K sites that are maintaining all NC Pre-K standards do not have to reapply. **(NEW)**