



**JRSN Advisory Board Meeting
March 20, 2026
Draft Meeting Minutes**

Charmaine called the meeting to order at 11:09 and asked for a roll call.

Members present were:

Ms. Charmaine Caccioppi, Chair
Ms. Donna Austin, Vice-Chair
Rabbi Yossi Chesney
Dr. Gina Easterly
Ms. Lillian Guilbault
Ms. Anita Kennedy
Mr. Larry Manshel
Mr. Chad Nugent
Dr. Paula Polito
Ms. Monique Rouege
Dr. Libbie Sonnier

Members absent were:

Ms. Jolena Broussard
Mr. Jim Garvey
Ms. Arielle Hughes
Ms. Ruth Lawson
Ms. Yolanda Motley
Mr. Scott Walker
Ms. Kate Wendel
Dr. Shondra Williams

Charmaine asked guests to introduce themselves and thanked them for attending. There being a quorum, Charmaine asked for a review and approval of the January meeting minutes. Donna moved to accept the minutes as presented. Rabbi Chesney seconded the motion. All were in favor, none were opposed.

Nominations Committee

Paula Polito reported that nominations had been made for the following new Board members: Michelle Aguirre (community organization), Rochelle Rabathaly (EHS/HS administrator), and Stephanie Rizzuto (parent with young children enrolled in child care in Jefferson Parish). Libbie made a motion to accept the nominations as presented. Rabbi Chesney seconded. All were approved by the board. None opposed. Paula concluded her report by encouraging board members to continue nominating board members, especially parent representatives.

Seats Committee

Monique reported that the seats committee reviewed the application process for local and match seats, discussing priorities including continuity for existing children, siblings, and greatest need based on desert location. She shared that the committee also discussed the need to identify neutral reviewers for applications, potentially including someone from United Way or Policy Institute. Next step, Monique and the committee will finalize the application process and timeline for local and state match seats, including review by a neutral group, and prepare for a quick announcement and webinar for applicants. The committee will release the application, the scoring rubric, and priority guidelines for seat applications (e.g., Jefferson Parish residency, siblings, greatest need) and communicate these clearly in application materials. The committee also will communicate to providers that initial seat payments may be delayed due to cash flow and reimbursement timing and clarify the payment/attendance process. Monique announced that the

next Seats Committee meeting will be held immediately after this board meeting to finalize the application and timeline. She asked all Board Members to please send her suggestions for additional neutral reviewers for seat applications.

Finance Committee

Rabbi Chesney reported on the work of the finance committee, noting approximately \$600,000 in expected funding for next year, including \$250,000 from council seats and potential state match funding. The committee will meet next month to begin developing a (1) short-term, mid-term, and long-term fundraising plan, (2) review budget to actual expenses through the 3rd quarter, and (3) draft an operating budget for the 2026-2017 fiscal year. Christine suggested that Sarintha reach out to potential funders (e.g., Shapiro Family Foundation) for operational/cash flow grants and prepare applications as appropriate.

Programs Committee

Sarintha and Michelle reported in Arielle's absence. The programs committee discussed plans to bring back the celebration of the Week of the Young Child in Jefferson, with a proclamation already drafted and sent to Scott Walker. The committee will coordinate with Scott Walker and his team to ensure awareness and support for the proclamation for the Week of the Young Child, and plan for board and provider attendance at the council presentation. They plan to organize (potentially small-scale) activities for the Week of the Young Child in Jefferson Parish, including inviting Early Head Start and Head Start representatives to participate.

Sarintha announced that the Programs Committee will lead efforts to develop a more comprehensive strategic planning session, potentially in May or June, with discussion about whether to use external facilitation and available funding. The committee will make recommendations to the board regarding the structure, timing, and facilitation needs for the upcoming strategic planning session (May/June), including exploring costs and potential facilitators. They asked all Board members to provide suggestions for potential facilitators or resources for the upcoming strategic planning session.

EEIC Project Update

Regarding the EEIC, Monique provided an update on their second-year grant progress, highlighting the formation of a 13-member provider-led Grass-Roots Advisory Committee (GAC). The GAC has an upcoming meeting on April 9th at 2:00 pm, during which Rochelle Wilcox will share insights about grassroots advocacy efforts in Orleans Parish.

Program Funding and Audit Updates

Sarintha reported that the program has secured \$250,000 from Jefferson Parish Council for a three-year commitment, with an additional \$250,000 state match pending approval at the April BESE meeting. The program received clean audit findings for eligibility verification of children enrolled in B3 local funded and state match programs. Sarintha also mentioned ongoing meetings with council members and NOEEN to learn about fund management processes and ensure continuity of care for children in the program.

Communications Team

April reported that JRSN Quarterly Advisory Board meetings and meeting announcements are now posted to the JRSN website. The board then discussed posting committee meeting minutes on the website as well. The group reached consensus to post the committee meeting minutes on the website when available, with participants citing benefits for public trust and accountability. The

discussion also covered recent website updates, including updated messaging and board information, as well as plans for provider spotlights on social media. April asked Board members to review the updated website and provide information for provider spotlights, as requested by the communications team.

Grant Application and Funding Updates

Sarintha provided an update on the grant application, mentioning that they have received a preliminary award letter for the Ready Start Network Continuation application from the State Department of Education, with an expected official final award letter by April. She discussed challenges with cash flow due to the reimbursement-based system and highlighted the need for unrestricted funds to address these issues. Sarintha suggested a target of \$50,000 in reserves and mentioned exploring potential funding opportunities with foundations.

Grant Updates and Initiatives

Sarintha provided updates on several grant applications and initiatives. The current United Way grant supporting economically disadvantaged families in Kenner will end June 30th, with a continuation application submitted that includes new care coordination requirements. The organization is collaborating with LaVoz for care coordination services and has advanced to the interview round for the United Way grant.

Sarintha also announced plans to distribute 250 libraries of infant-toddler and pre-K books to centers in Jefferson, with warehouse space needed for storage and distribution. Christine offered to assist in locating temporary warehouse space for 250 boxes of infant/toddler and pre-K libraries as a JCF Board Member may have potential space.

Announcements

Upcoming events include the Jefferson Delegation Luncheon at the Capitol on March 31st and the statewide Early Ed Day on May 9th, with registration required for the lunch event. Board Members should reach out to Sarintha if interested in attending the Jefferson Ready Start Network luncheon with the Jefferson delegation at the Capitol on March 31st, for headcount and space allocation. All Board Members were encouraged to register for and consider attending Early Ed Day at the Capitol on May 9th. Also announced: April 7th – Dads Day at the Capitol.

Legislative Early Education Initiatives

Libbie and Charmaine shared information about the recent "Evening with the Legislature" event hosted by the Jefferson Chamber, where several legislators spoke about the importance of early care and education. Libbie highlighted key legislative initiatives, including Senate Bill 135 sponsored by Senator Meisel, House Bill 648 by Ken Brass regarding public meeting laws, and upcoming legislation to codify the Early Childhood Education Fund. She also addressed an amendment regarding education funds, explaining that while it would eliminate funding for approximately 2,000 four-year-olds, an additional \$11-12 million fund would be established to cover rural seats.

Announcements ended with an announcement about a challenge match for Give Nola Day on May 5th, where donations to JRSN would be matched by JCF.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:25 pm.