INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON FAMILIES AND CHILDREN

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2026 Interim

October 21, 2026

Call to Order and Roll Call

The fifth meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children was held on October 21, 2026, at 1:00 PM ET/12:00 PM CT in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Danny Carroll, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Danny Carroll, Co-Chair; Representative Samara Heavrin, Co-Chair; Senators Matthew Deneen, Shelley Funke Frommeyer, Rick Girdler, Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Stephen Meredith, Reginald L. Thomas, Robin L. Webb, and Gex Williams; and Representatives Emily Callaway, Mike Clines, Stephanie Dietz, Steven Doan, Robert Duvall, Daniel Elliott, Kim Holloway, Kimberly Poore Moser, Michael Sarge Pollock, Felicia Rabourn, Steve Riley, Rachel Roarx, Sarah Stalker, and Nick Wilson.

Guests: Lynn Baker, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Early Childhood (GOEC); Rebecca Smith, Early Childhood Apprenticeship Director, GOEC; Judge William Fooks, Family Court Judge, 14th Judicial Circuit; Judge Brandi Rogers, Family Court Judge, 5th Judicial Circuit; Katia Diamond-Sagias, Policy Associate, National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL); Leslie Hoffman, Deputy Commissioner, Department for Medicaid Services (DMS), Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS); and Wesley Duke, General Counsel, CHFS.

LRC Staff: Chris Joffrion, Logan Bush, Ben Payne, Becky Lancaster, and Robert Wright.

Approval of Minutes of September 16, 2026 Meeting

A motion was made by Representative Pollock and seconded by Senator Meredith to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2026, meeting. Minutes were approved by voice vote without objection.

Governor's Office of Early Childhood Overview

Lynn Baker, Executive Director, GOEC, discussed the office's role in supporting the Early Childhood Advisory Council and coordinating state agencies, local partners, and workforce initiatives. She detailed efforts to align childhood priorities, identify gaps and duplication in services, and connect care, education, health, mental health, and family

support programs. She discussed 37 regional collaboratives involving 117 counties, made up of partnerships with child-care providers, schools, libraries, and local health organizations to address local priorities.

Rebecca Smith, Early Childhood Apprenticeship Director, GOEC, discussed the statewide early childhood registered apprenticeship program. She detailed that apprentices may pursue four occupational pathways and receive a nationally recognized credential upon completion. She also discussed cross-sectional professional development, early childhood institutes, and coaching and technical assistance provided in collaboration with other state agencies.

In response to Chair Carroll, Ms. Smith discussed efforts to increase employer participation in apprenticeships, including improvements to electronic tracking to reduce administrative burdens.

In response to Co-Chair Heavrin, Ms. Baker discussed the Preschool Development Grant application process, the federal emphasis on unified data infrastructure, and the anticipated shift from multi-year funding to one-year funding. She added the application due date is November 20, 2026.

In response to Senator Meredith, Ms. Smith detailed the four apprenticeship pathways. She discussed the pathways' respective focus on entry-level training, individualized student support, and program operations.

In response to Representative Stalker, Ms. Smith detailed apprenticeship compensation, stating apprentices are paid by their employers.

Medicaid Waiver, Section 1915(c)(11)

Leslie Hoffman, Deputy Commissioner, DMS, CHFS, and Wesley Duke, General Counsel, CHFS, discussed a new federal 1915(c)(11) home and community-based services waiver option. Deputy Commissioner Hoffman explained that the waiver would allow states to serve individuals who do not meet an institutional level of care. She compared the new waiver with existing waivers and state plan services. She discussed state flexibility to establish enrollment limits under the new waiver. She also discussed federal requirements involving cost neutrality, qualified providers, and safeguards against duplicated services.

In response to Chair Carroll, Deputy Commissioner Hoffman discussed uncertainties related to the program's cost, eligibility design, and implementation. She added that further federal guidance is not expected until 2028.

In response to Representative Stalker, Deputy Commissioner Hoffman discussed efforts under 26 RS HB 2 to obtain eligibility information from individuals on existing waiver waiting lists. She clarified that federal guidance had not yet addressed whether an individual could simultaneously join a new 1915(c)(11) waiting list and an existing waiver waiting list.

In response to Representative Roarx, Deputy Commissioner Hoffman reiterated the preliminary nature of waiver funding decisions.

Grandparent Visitation Rights

Senator Girdler, Judge William Fooks, Family Court Judge, 14th Judicial Circuit, Judge Brandi Rogers, Family Court Judge, 5th Judicial Circuit, and Katia Diamond-Sagias, Policy Associate, NCSL, discussed grandparent visitation rights and 26 RS SB 281.

Judge Fooks discussed the effects of *Troxel v. Granville* (2000) and Kentucky appellate court decisions on grandparent visitation petition considerations. He also discussed distinctions involving third-party custodians and provisions of existing statutes found unconstitutional or inconsistent with controlling case law. He examined 26 RS SB 281 and discussed its effort to codify judicial standards and identify factors courts may consider in determining the child's best interest. He suggested amending statutory language.

Judge Rogers emphasized the importance of evaluating each family's circumstances and protecting children from harmful contact. She also emphasized the need for judicial discretion.

Ms. Diamond-Sagias discussed grandparent visitation laws in other states and recent legislation in several states addressing access, enforcement, and existing visitation orders. She noted the overall absence of a uniform national approach to grandparent visitation rights.

In response to Chair Carroll, Judge Fooks and Judge Rogers discussed the relatively limited number of grandparent visitation petitions they encounter, the difficulty of satisfying legal standards, and emphasized the competing interests of parents, grandparents, and children.

In response to Co-Chair Heavrin, Judge Fooks and Judge Rogers discussed notices to grandparents in matters involving termination of parental rights and adoption.

In response to Representative Dietz, Judge Fooks discussed the relatively limited number of grandparent visitation petitions he has encountered within intact families.

In response to Senator Thomas, Judge Fooks and Judge Rogers clarified their support for grandparent visitation rights and 26 RS SB 281.

In response to Senator Williams, Judge Fooks and Judge Rogers discussed Kentucky's presumption in favor of a fit parent's decision and the burden on grandparents to establish that visitation is in the child's best interest.

Adjournment

With no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned.