



WNC EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION NON-PROFIT ANNOUNCES NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Southwestern Child Development Commission Inc. (SWCDC), a non-profit leader in early care and education in Western NC since 1972, and nestled in the heart of Jackson County, NC proudly announces and welcomes Polly Amanda Mills, “Mandy” as the Executive Director, beginning May 26, 2025. Mandy is a graduate of Western Carolina with a Bachelor's Degree in Child Development and Family Relations with a Minor in Special Education. Mandy is a life-long learner and has focused on continuing her own educational knowledge in adult learning theory, early childhood education environmental design, NC child care regulations and quality indicators, inclusive practices supporting successful teacher/child experiences, whole family engagement, child care business management, and state and national quality early childhood initiatives and standards. She currently holds a Level 11 NC Early Education Certification with Professional Development and Technical Assistance Endorsements from the NC Institute for Child Development Professionals.

Since 1995, Mandy’s extensive work experience has included the following roles: Teacher Assistant, Lead Teacher, Child Care Center Administrator, Case Manager for Children and Adults with disabilities, Child Care Health Consultant, Technical Assistance Coach, Professional Development Instructor, and Child Care Resource and Referral Program Director.

Although Mandy has enjoyed every facet of her career, her heart always belonged to the early education non-profit work that focused on local, regional and statewide focused initiatives. As Program Director for Southwestern’s Child Care Resource and Referral program, Mandy led a

strong team while maintaining her ‘boots on the ground’ approach. She loves developing relationships with those ‘doing’ the work. It’s this approach that grounds her love for early care and education (ECE) and will keep her voice strong on behalf of the ECE field in WNC, statewide and nationally. Mandy looks forward to expanding her service to local, regional and statewide committees to support next generation endeavors for children and families. Her ability to build strong relationships, exude passion and energize others across NC are her superpowers! She looks forward to many years of serving the ECE field.

Mandy will lead Southwestern Child Development Commission, Inc.’s (SWCDCs) core work that currently includes the following activities directly impacting children, families and early education programs: 1) Provides WNC Child Care Resource & Referral consumer education services, technical assistance, professional development and workforce development activities to early education programs serving children ages birth-12 to increase the accessibility, availability and quality of early learning opportunities for the region's future workforce and community leaders. 2) Administers the Child Care Subsidy program for 14 WNC counties that supports low/median income families to be able to work and/or attend school. Additionally, the subsidy program eligibility staff work with local Departments of Social Services and Smart Start Partnerships to ensure that the most vulnerable families/children are prioritized for child care according to each county's local policies that align with state subsidy guidelines. Vulnerable populations include homeless, child protective services, foster care, child welfare services, etc. 3) Facilitates the Circle of Parents and Incredible Years family engagement programs for at-risk families to provide positive parenting support and strategies. These programs are currently available to families in Haywood, Jackson, and Macon counties. These programs foster greater communication between family members, identifies community resources to tap into and strengthens familial connections. 4) Conducts home visits through the Nurse Family Partnership with first time at-risk moms pre-birth through age 2. The NFP program is currently available in Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Jackson, Macon, Swain and the Qualla Boundary. Nurses follow the moms during their pregnancies supporting prenatal care and healthy choices. Upon birth, the nurses also support the children’s health and wellness journeys to include good nutrition practices, providing resources for breastfeeding, charting individual growth and wellness visits and documenting developmental milestones. 5) Leads statewide CCR&R special initiatives for school age programs and family child care programs, 6) provides early learning and development IACET approved trainings for WNC, NC and national early educators through its Early Learning Instruction For Teachers (ELIFT) training platform, 7) acts as a NC Child Care Resource & Referral Council managing agency supporting other CCR&R regions across NC, and 7) represents WNC and NC on regional, statewide, and national ECE committees, meetings and task forces. SWCDC is known statewide and nationally as an organization that brings the rural perspectives of early care and education to the table. As early care and education continues to evolve, SWCDC commits to staying grounded and true to the agency’s mission...Partnering with families, communities and early educators through service and advocacy so all children have access to high quality and affordable early education...inspiring families to succeed in their life journey. For more information on SWCDC services, please visit the agency website at www.swcdcinc.org or email questions to: info@swcdcinc.org.