

Rhode Island Early Learning Council Meeting

Wednesday, September 26, 2018 9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

Save the Bay

Meeting Summary

AGENDA SUMMARY

The Early Learning Council's agenda addressed the following topics:

- Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Meeting Overview
- Overview and Discussion: Family Home Visiting Strategic Plan
- National Trends: Moving the Needle on Early Care Education Workforce Qualifications and Compensation
- Updates and Discussion: Early Care and Education Workforce
- Policy and Program Updates: Early Chronic Absence in Grades K-3 and BrightStars
- Overview and Discussion: New PDG Grant Opportunity
- Policy and Program Updates: Child Care Emergency Preparedness Plan and the Think Babies Campaign
- Public comment
- Upcoming events and meetings

KEY POINTS

Key discussion points from the meeting are summarized below:

WELCOME, OPENING REMARKS, AND MEETING OVERVIEW

Commissioner Ken Wagner and Elizabeth Burke Bryant welcomed the Early Learning Council and discussed recent updates. (See slides). The following comments and questions were made:

- ECEDS is moving forward with an identified funding source. The Children's Cabinet has made ECEDS a priority, but there is still work to do around scope and ownership in order to ensure its continued success. The new goals for ECEDS will have a large impact on early childhood education work.
- COMMENT: The state needs to view a data infrastructure as essential to its daily business. It should not be subject to reductions in funding. A clear and constant demand for ECEDS data is necessary to sustain it.
- The Governor has some ideas about the dramatic expansion of State Pre-K if she is reelected.

OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION: FAMILY HOME VISITING STRATEGIC PLAN

Kristine Campagna, Jennifer Kaufman and Kristin Lehoullier presented an overview of the Family Home Visiting Strategic Plan. (See slides). Key comments and questions included:

- Rhode Island has spent the last 5 to 8 years developing and implementing the family home visiting system. We now have to think about where we want it to be in 5 years.
- Family home visiting is a strategy that sits within the overall early childhood system. The Family Home Visiting Strategic Plan envisions how it all fits together.

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- Widespread stakeholder input on priorities and strategies is taking place, with the goal of completing the strategic plan by the end of the year.
- Family voices, gathered at statewide focus groups, helped shape the plan. Families also worked together to create the Vision Statement.
- By October, Kristine, Jennifer and Kristin will incorporate into the plan all the feedback gathered from families, family home visiting representatives and other stakeholders.
- Each Guiding Principle in the plan is followed by a narrative explanation.
- The data mentioned in Priority #3 refers to ECEDS.
- COMMENT: Recruitment efforts for family home visiting should inform college graduates that the early childhood education field is broad and includes opportunities to work outside of the classroom (e.g. in home visiting programs).
- Q: Did stakeholder feedback for this project include input from housing providers, such as public housing authorities, non-profit housing development communities, and for-profit asset management companies? And how were homeless families engaged in the process?
A: Stakeholders contacted for input on this project included local implementation teams and people involved in HEZ work, both of which included housing providers. The homeless population is a top priority for RIDOH and RIDOH has close relationships with several homeless agencies such as Crossroads that will be engaged in the next stage of feedback. Housing is one of family home visiting's biggest challenges.
- Q: How does the family home visiting system work with families that do not want people in their homes?
A: For families where the home is not a safe place or is otherwise not an option for meeting, home visiting can happen in doctors' offices, restaurants or other places. It does not have to occur in a family's actual home.
- Although not everyone wants family home visiting services, we want to ensure that everyone is aware of the array of services offered by the family home visiting system. Schools and early care and education programs can be instrumental in spreading that information. Discussing school readiness and enrollment in preschool and kindergarten with families engages them with the family home visiting system because families are interested in supporting their children in school/kindergarten readiness. Once families make the connection between family home visiting and school success, they are more likely to participate.
- Q: What is the goal for Early Intervention at a child's transition to Kindergarten?
A: The goal is to give the child whatever supports that child needs when they age out of Early Intervention.

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- Q: Are there specific strategies for working with immigrant families?
A: Immigrant families are not explicitly mentioned in the strategic plan, but Kristine, Jennifer and Kristin intentionally analyzed the barriers to participation with specific populations and have tried to address those barriers. The plan's strategies are broad and look to inform a system wide dialogue where questions and issues are shared collectively.
- Q: What is the Health Cabinet?
A: It is a group of directors from different health related state agencies that encourages alignment and coordination across those agencies. There is some overlap in membership with the Children's Cabinet, but the Health Cabinet includes agency leaders that are not involved in the early childhood system.
- COMMENT: We must reframe the early childhood system to normalize family supports and professionalize the workforce.
- COMMENT: A Guiding Principle for the strategic plan should be that all babies deserve an opportunity to grow, learn and develop to the best of their potential. This idea brings together the whole strategic plan.
- Q: Families are not always consistent in attending meetings and, as a result, children do not get the services they need to be supported educationally. Can family home visiting providers partner better with child care centers so the centers can fill that gap?
A: Strengthening partnerships with child care centers is part of the family home visiting strategic plan and we need a discussion on how to partner more thoughtfully. Collaboration and connectivity among different programs is essential to maintaining the focus on the child.
- Council members can email additional feedback to Kristine (Kristine.Campagna@health.ri.gov) or Kristin (klehoulrier@gmail.com).

NATIONAL TRENDS: MOVING THE NEEDLE ON EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE QUALIFICATIONS AND COMPENSATION

Sue Russell from the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood National Center discussed the national trends in early care and education workforce qualifications and compensation. (See slides). Comments and questions included the following:

- T.E.A.C.H. employs two models to encourage a well-educated and well compensated workforce.
 - The first model provides child care workers with a debt free college education that utilizes the state's higher education infrastructure and strengthens that infrastructure with additional dollars.
 - This model results in great outcomes.
 - T.E.A.C.H. partners with 530 institutions of higher education leveraging scholarship dollars to meet the needs of the workforce.

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- The T.E.A.C.H. model includes compensation rewards (bonus or raise) as coursework is completed
- Since inception, 150,000 early educators have received scholarships.
- The second model is Child Care WAGE\$, which provides on-going, direct, graduated supplements right into the hands of the workforce.
 - More education results in higher supplements.
 - Required retention in a job counterbalances the likelihood that better educated workers will leave to seek higher paying positions.
 - This model is operating in New Mexico, Delaware, Florida, North Carolina and Iowa. Iowa also has T.E.A.C.H. for family home visiting.
- The 2018 national [Transforming the Financing of Early Care and Education Report](#) determined that it will take a lot of money to improve the workforce.
- Q: Is there any other government agency that raises wages or provides subsidies to drive quality or quantity?
A: Yes, farmers are subsidized by the federal government to support food policies. Additionally, elderly home care workers are subsidized to support elder care policies. Highlighting other industries that have successfully increased wages to influence policy supports our position that increased wages are necessary to improve the early childhood education system.
- Rhode Island's early childhood work is stalled with respect to compensation and work environments, but Rhode Island has made headway on workforce data and is edging forward on qualifications and financial resources.
- Federally, the questions have shifted away from why child care funding and quality is needed to how much can we afford and how can we better target resources.
- Articles about the early childhood workforce have helped make a stronger case for investments.
- Public Awareness of the importance of early childhood education has increased. The results of a national poll of 16,057 registered voters and a parent sub population of 484 parents demonstrate the public support for investing in early childhood education.
- With robust economic support for the workforce, workforce education can increase while maintaining workforce diversity.
- Rhode Island T.E.A.C.H. is a small but successful program with 10 graduates this year and 36 current scholarship recipients. The turnover rate is low and the wage gain is significant.
- Workforce data should be updated every 3 or 4 years to identify trends.

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- The T.E.A.C.H. National Center is partnering with RI to explore compensation strategies in Moving the Needle on Compensation.

UPDATES AND DISCUSSION: EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION WORKFORCE

Rhode Island Infant/Toddler Credential Work Group

Sheila Orphanides provided updates on the Rhode Island Infant/Toddler credential work group. (See slides.) Comments and questions included:

- Thirty-five states have Infant/Toddler credentials, with 7 states adopting them since 2014.
- In response to the Early Learning Council's recommendation to improve infant toddler policies, stakeholders convened to form a taskforce, called the Integrated Career Pathways Work Group. Stakeholders included representatives from higher education, professional development, Early Head Start, state agencies, and infant mental health. Over the last 18 months, the work group developed recommendations for a state Infant/Toddler Credential.
- The infant toddler workforce is the least formally educated and least paid in the early childhood education system.
- The proposed Infant/Toddler Credential recognizes practice based components and is not limited to just formal education. It considers the competencies and skills needed to direct work with children.
- Rhode Island has a lot of options for 3 credit infant toddler courses. To fulfill the proposed credential requirements, those courses must include a social emotional component.
- The hope is that the Infant/Toddler Credential recommendation becomes part of Rhode Island's overall early childhood workforce conversation, especially the conversation around increasing wages for the early childhood workforce. If workers can show demonstrated skills and knowledge then it will be easier to advocate for higher wages.
- Q: Why do we need an Infant/Toddler Credential if the state already provides for a CDA, has the Center for Early Learning Professionals and offers multiple classes and degree programs at state institutions of higher education?
A: The credential is a way of formally recognizing the early childhood workforce. It also recognizes all of the early childhood offerings in the state. Infant toddler teachers are the least educated in the workforce even if they work in a 5 star program and this credential will provide a pathway for them to receive the training they want and need to move forward.
- Out of state coursework and work experience can meet the requirements of the proposed Infant/Toddler Credential. Additionally, some workers might already satisfy the requirements of the proposed Infant/Toddler Credential with their existing education and experience.

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- The recommended credential aligns with the BrightStars framework so, if approved by the state, this credential could allow qualified infant toddler teachers to satisfy BrightStars requirements. Furthermore, credentialed infant toddler teachers would satisfy the Head Start CDA/state credential requirement.
- Q: Was there any discussion of requiring experience working in programs at a certain quality level?
A: That is too difficult to require at this point.
- Q: What is the expected role of DHS?
A: Ideally, the proposed credential would be incorporated into teacher career pathways and would be administered, in some fashion, by the state. In other states, the CCDF head agency, which is DHS in Rhode Island, oversees the credential requirements, but contracts out the actual awarding of the credential to the professional development or higher education systems. Potentially, therefore, DHS could recognize the credential and identify a specific entity or group of entities that would award it.
- COMMENT: If this is to be a meaningful credential for expanding the workforce and increasing compensation, then it needs to be jointly owned by different state agencies. There must also be a pilot program that demonstrates an increase in quality.
- COMMENT: Head Start is struggling to find properly credentialed staff for classrooms that are already funded. As a result, eligible children are not receiving services. This proposed credential could help increase the workforce so Head Start can open those classrooms and serve those eligible children.
- COMMENT: We can learn from other states who not only have an Infant/Toddler Credential, but also have a Director Credential and a Multilevel Infant/Toddler Credential for AA and BA degrees.

Roger Williams University Infant/Toddler Certificate

Kelly Donnell discussed the Roger Williams University (RWU) Infant/Toddler Certificate. (See slides.)

The following comments were made:

- In January, RWU launched the Infant/Toddler Certificate Program. It takes research based practice and theory and translates that into an actual daily practice with infants and toddlers.
- The program is dedicated to addressing barriers. For example, flexible modalities are offered.
- The certificate courses were developed in partnership with Children's Friend and with support from Zero to 3. The courses are aligned with NAEYC, Zero to 3, RI WKC and the RI Infant Mental Health Standards.
- The certificate program is comprised of 6 courses equaling 16 credits that can eventually stack into a AA or BA degree.

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- RWU hopes to collaborate with other institutions of higher education to ensure the transferability of the RWU credits.
- The first 2 courses in the certificate program can be taken separately to increase competencies without receiving a certificate. The other 4 courses taken together provide a spiral curriculum.
- The RWU Early Childhood Associates Degree consists of 11 courses and 31 credits that are also research and practice based.
- Contact Maura Pearce (mpearce@rwu.edu) for more information.

CCRI Infant/Toddler CDA and Coursework

Carol Patnaude and Lori Ryan updated the Council on the CCRI Infant/Toddler CDA and Coursework. (See slides.) Key comments included:

- A year ago, CCRI was asked to do a CDA pilot with a focus on the infant toddler population. Additionally, DHS asked CCRI to concentrate on 1 and 2 star level programs. The pilot began on the Newport campus. This semester there is also 1 cohort on the Liston Campus and 2 cohorts on the Knight Campus. Students come early and leave late because it is such a rich opportunity to connect, share and learn.
- Courses and materials are offered in Spanish.
- There is a large waiting list for the program.

RI College Infant/Toddler Coursework/Degree

Leslie Sevey discussed the RI College Infant/Toddler coursework and degree. (See slides.) The following comments and questions were made:

- RIC is recruiting for its BA Infant/Toddler degree starting in the fall of 2019. All of the courses align with the proposed Infant/Toddler Credential.
- RIC is also offering a Certificate of Undergraduate Studies which requires some but not all of the courses required for the BA. The certificate program can be done as a cohort for individual programs. The certificate will not meet the Head Start CDA/credential requirement because it is not a state recognized credential.
- Q: When are the BA courses offered?
A: They will be offered during the day, but they could be offered in a hybrid model or at night if needed. ECED 310 will be offered to Spanish speaking family childcare providers.

POLICY AND PROGRAM UPDATES

Early Chronic Absence in Grades K-3

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Stephanie Geller updated the Council on early chronic absences in grades K-3. (See slides.) Key comments included:

- Chronic absence is connected to low 3rd grade reading levels and low high school graduation rates.
- Chronic absence patterns can be identified even at the beginning of the year. Missing two days a month is a predictor of chronic absence.
- Kindergarten attendance is important because it ensures children receive a foundation in numeracy, literacy and social emotional skills. It also sets the pattern for attendance in later grades.
- Higher chronic absence is connected to poverty.
- We need to nurture a culture of attendance, engagement and welcome for families.

BrightStars

Lisa Hildebrand updated the Council on BrightStars. (See slides.) The following key comments were made:

- Participation and star ratings have leveled off since the end of Race to the Top grant, but there has not been a lot of movement forward.
- The overall number of licensed family childcare homes decreased, which affects the number of family childcare homes participating in BrightStars.
- BrightStars will reevaluate its numbers once tiered reimbursement is implemented. Hopefully, more money will drive an increase in quality.
- Other changes are coming soon to the BrightStars standards that should affect star ratings as well.

OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION: NEW PDG GRANT OPPORTUNITY

Cara Harrison and Kayla Rosen discussed a new PDG opportunity. (See slides). Comments and questions included:

- This new grant is for 1 year, running from December 2018 to December 2019. Thirty to forty states will be funded. The grant amounts awarded will range between \$500,000 to \$15,000,000 with a required 30% match from the state. All of the grant funds must be spent within the year.
- The Children's Cabinet is leading the grant effort in collaboration with community and state agency partners. The grant proposal is closely aligned with the governor's 3rd Grade Reading Plan.
- The grant's strategic plan will build off of the Early Learning Council's Strategic Plan.
- Before Activity 5 (Improving Quality) can commence, Activity 1 (Needs Assessment) and Activity 2 (Strategic Plan) must be completed. Because of the strict time limit for this grant, the Children's

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Cabinet will prioritize Activities 1 and 2 to ensure we get to Activity 5 within the year. The other activities can be completed simultaneously.

- States that did not win a Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge or PDG Development or Expansion grant get plus 10 points in the system, which puts us at a slight disadvantage since Rhode Island received both of these grants.
- Q: How much are we applying for?
A: We do not know yet. We are still determining how much we can ask for with the 30% match. The funding spreads across 2 fiscal years so half of the funding will have to come from amounts already allocated. The funding can be in kind or from third parties and can include donations. The Children’s Cabinet is still trying to understand the scale of what can be asked.
- COMMENT: We need to focus on specific questions because, although there are so many exciting ideas we could pursue, we only have a year to accomplish the activities.
- COMMENT: The mental health needs of young children and families should be prioritized.
- COMMENT: To strengthen Rhode Island’s grant proposal, we should mention all of our significant early childhood achievements such as being a first round Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant winner, having an engaged Children’s Cabinet and an active Early Learning Council, participating in the Think Babies Campaign, maintaining a facilities fund and establishing an infant mental health association. These accomplishments distinguish us from other states and form the basis of our strong national reputation.
- There will be public meetings on drafts of the grant proposal in mid-October.
- COMMENT: We should learn from our Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge grant proposal and make the plan ambitious yet achievable. However, to be a competitive application we might have to be slightly over ambitious.

POLICY AND PROGRAM UPDATES

Child Care Emergency Preparedness Plan

Caitlin Molina updated the Council on the Child Care Emergency Preparedness Plan. (See slides.) The following comments were made:

- The Child Care Emergency Preparedness Plan, a required part of the state’s CCDF plan, was developed in collaboration with DCYF, HEALTH, and LISC. It was submitted to and approved by the federal government.
- The next step is to support licensed child care facilities in creating their own emergency plans utilizing the template in the state’s plan.
- The Child Care Emergency Preparedness Plan is on the DHS and BrightStars websites.

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- Soon, the state will create a simpler template to help family child care homes prepare for emergencies.

Think Babies Campaign

Leanne Barrett presented an update on the Think Babies Campaign. (See slides.) Comments and questions included:

- The early childhood workforce wage strategy group will meet monthly until May or June to develop a cross sector approach that includes family home visiting.
- There is a national movement to use Medicaid to promote healthy infant toddler development and enhance health and development services for infants and toddlers.
- NAEYC and RIAEYC are also partnering with Think Babies and Child Care Aware. There will be a fall reading event called Supers Read where Rhode Island superintendents will read at infant toddler programs in their respective districts.
- COMMENT: There will be a screening of Zero Weeks, a documentary about FMLI legislation, at Brown University on October 15th from 5:30 p.m. to 8 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no additional comments from the public.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND MEETINGS

- KIDS COUNT released its legislative wrap up.
- The Rhode Island Association of Infant Mental Health is presenting a series of 6 free discussions on diversity and culturally informed practice. More information is available on the website: <https://riaimh.org/event-3042461> .
- There is a Rhode Island Reads partner meeting on December 10th.
- The next Early Learning Council meeting is December 12th from 9 to 12 at Save the Bay.