

Rhode Island Early Learning Work Group Meeting

Thursday, March 3, 2011 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Location: Community College of Rhode Island – Knight Campus, Room 4090

Agenda

9:30-9:45	Welcome/Introduction	Kristin Lehoullier
9:45-10:30	Team Updates	Team Leaders
10:30-11:25	Access Team Report Out and Discussion: Priorities for Improving Access to High Quality Early Learning Programs	Access Team
11:25-11:30	Wrap-up/Next Steps	Kristin Lehoullier

CHILD CARE ACCESS RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority Area - Increase the eligibility limit for the Child Care Assistance Program.

- Increase the eligibility limit for the Child Care Assistance Program to 250% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Is this is not feasible, change policy so that currently enrolled families remain eligible for the program up to an exit income limit of 250% of FPL. (Child Care Commission)
- Increase the eligibility limit for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), preferable to 225% of the federal poverty level (FPL). (DHS Child Care Community)
- Increase the income eligibility for families that are requesting child care subsidy. (Rhode Island Child Care Directors Association)

Priority Area - Increase child subsidy reimbursement rates.

- Bringing the rate of reimbursement for DHS children up to where it should be for 2011 (Family Child Care Homes of Rhode Island)
- Increase Reimbursement Rates for approved CCAP Providers to 75% of the 2009 market rate survey. (DHS Child Care Community Exchange)
- Increase the child care subsidy reimbursement rate to center base programs. (Rhode Island Child Care Directors Association)
- Increase reimbursement rates to center based programs to support both high quality and inclusion of low income children. (RI Head Start Association)

Priority Area - Continue to support children in their pre-Kindergarten year with CCAP funds at high quality learning centers

- Continue to support children in their pre-Kindergarten year with CCAP funds at high quality learning centers.(RI Head Start Association)

Priority Area – Address barriers to accessing and retaining eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program

Direct the Department of Human Services to address barriers to accessing and retaining eligibility for the Child Care Assistance Program with the goal of simplifying enrollment and improving retention including:

- Eliminate/reduce the amount of time families have “pending” child care certificates by using pre-screening and reducing financial risks for providers. (Child Care Commission)
- Average income/hours over a longer period of time (currently only a four week time frame) (Child Care Commission)
- Reduce co-payments for families (Child Care Commission)
- Improve access for language-minority parents (Child Care Commission)
- Contracts for higher quality care serving low-income children statewide (Child Care Commission)
- Remove requirement to cooperate with the Office of Child Support Enforcement. (Child Care Commission)
- Minimum of 12 week child care vouchers (Child Care Commission)
- Remove \$10,000 asset test. (Child Care Commission)
- Research/change countable income (parent/grandparent versus household) (Child Care Commission)

- Change work requirement for number of hours working (allow less than 20) (Child Care Commission)
- Change recertification to a 12 month period. (Child Care Commission)
- Change the CCAP Recertification Period from a 6-month period to a 12-month period. (DHS Child Care Community Exchange)
- Re-certify families every 12 months. (RI Child Care Directors Association)
- Extend the amount of time families can keep child care after a layoff (currently only 21 days). (Child Care Commission)
- For families already working 20 hours, expand child care up to 40 hours for time parents are taking classes. (Child Care Commission)
- Provide information for providers to help families during eligibility determination process and at renewals. (Child Care Commission)
- Strategies to enforce co-payments and reduce change from provider to provider. (Child Care Commission)
- Adequate information from DHS to providers about case closures with 2 week payment. (Child Care Commission)
- Fix DHS Policies that create financial barriers to parents and providers. For example, the time it takes for an application to go from pending to approved. (Family Child Care Homes of Rhode Island)

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION SYSTEM (EI, and Pre-School Special Education)

Priority Areas

- **Ensure a seamless transition to appropriate Early Intervention resources (e.g. care coordination, parent support.)**
- **Ensure access to Early Intervention for children with behavioral concerns.**

- **Provide access to services such as HBTS, Respite, Kids Connect, Clinical therapies, etc for children without Medicaid**
- **Increase evidenced-based parenting trainings (e.g. Incredible years, PCIT, Triple P, Hannen, etc.)**

Other Recommendations

- There is a need to develop system capability to provide needed and recommended services to all eligible young children and their families, not just those in the Medicaid system. Many children whose families have third party coverage without Medicaid back-up are not able to avail themselves of services such as HBTS, Respite, Kids Connect, Clinical therapies, etc. This limited system as it stands now does not support early intervention as a means of prevention of later more serious disabilities, or as a means to minimize utilization of healthcare dollars when problems have not been able to be addressed at earlier ages. The system as it is now does not support all children’s rights to have supports that will help them grow and develop to their potential. (RI Interagency Coordinating Council on EI)
- Implement an additional system or best practice model/mandate for at least transitional home visits before dropping or exiting family/child to get them some type of safety net services.(RI Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Provide these parents with a person who can help them navigate the system successfully. .(RI Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Provide incentives for after school programs to include students with disabilities. Increase funding stream for integrated programs. .(RI Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Develop and implement a model for seamless service delivery from EI to school that would include a transition plan from EI to school and a person who would assist families in making that transition. .(RI Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Provide financial support and high quality training of staff to ensure that the children will have the necessary support to be successful in these inclusive environments. This training should be on-site and individualized for that child and should include a parent component to ensure consistency across settings. .(RI Special Education Advisory Committee)

- Educate pediatricians about the CEDAR center and how to access/apply for services through them. Have CEDAR center literature available at multiple venues that parents typically access. (RI Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Explore implications and expansion of Early Intervention to cover children up to age 5 (Early Intervention Directors)
- Simplify the process for gaining access to Kids Connect at child care centers so there are more programs state-wide that can serve these children. (Early Intervention Directors)
- Grant program training program staff to provide inclusive child care. (Early Intervention Directors)
- Identify what resources already exist in Rhode Island and make connections instead of creating more programs/resources to “fill the gaps”. (Early Intervention Directors)
- Better access to and relationship with DCYF when serving families with young children. (Early Intervention Directors)

HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START

Priority Areas

- Provide transportation to children enrolled in Head Start (between home and Head Start). (Early Childhood Network)
- Restore state funding to the original 500 Head Start slots (currently 156 slots) (RI Head Start Association)

STATE-FUNDED PRE-K

Priority Area

- Maintain the funding formula plan to expand the state Pre-K program to provide a high-quality learning environment with a mixed delivery system, to 3- and 4- year old children in the critical preschool years. (Rhode Island Kids Count, Rhode Island Department of Education, Pre-K Demonstration programs)

Other Recommendations

- Provide access to a pre-school or possibly an early childhood charter school for children of teenage parents. (RI Special Education Advisory Committee)
- Expand universal pre-kindergarten program (Early Intervention Directors)
- Provide more children with access to high-quality early learning programs to reduce need for later special education services to “catch up.” (Early Childhood Network)
- Provide more support so low- and middle-income families who do not qualify for subsidized programs can access quality child care and early learning opportunities. (Early Intervention Directors)

FULL DAY KINDERGARTEN

Priority Area

- Expand access to full-day kindergarten by offering differential reimbursement within the funding formula (e.g. half day funding for half day programming). (Rhode Island Department of Education)

ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Priority Area

- Increase the capacity of programs to provide high quality instruction to children who are learning English as a second language (this is both a capacity and training issue) (Early Childhood Network)

ITEMS TO BE REFERRED TO OTHER WORK TEAMS

HIGHER EDUCATION RECOMMENDATIONS

- Provide pathways and support for the early care and education workforce to attain credentials and degrees that are recognized in the field. (Rhode Island Kids Count)
- Ensure higher education programs are relevant, high-quality and articulated across institutions and departments. (Family Child Care Homes of Rhode Island)

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- Training programs for child care staff working with children with disabilities. (Early Intervention Directors)
- There appears to be a significant need in RI for specific training at the higher education level with respect to Early Intervention. Although we have professionals trained in different disciplines (ex. SLP, PT, OT, Educators, etc.), they come into the EI system without a strong background in the Early Intervention model. Many states are offering coursework at the graduate level in Early Intervention (ex. Florida State). (RI Interagency Coordinating Council on EI)
- Teacher training programs placing an increased emphasis on family engagement and parenting education; development of early childhood educators' leadership skills especially for special educators who are required to organize large instructional teams. (Early Childhood Network)
- Need for ongoing, sustained, high quality professional development across all of early childhood and early childhood special education spanning birth through age eight. Emphasis on integration of training across all programs (e.g. common standards, curriculum, assessment, etc.). (Early Childhood Network)
- Develop and provide ongoing, sustained, high quality professional development across all of early childhood and early childhood special education spanning birth through age eight. Emphasis on integration of training across all programs (e.g. common standards, curriculum, assessment, etc.). (Rhode Island Kids Count)

INCENTIVES AND SUPPORTS FOR QUALITY IMPROVEMENT TEAM RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement a tiered Reimbursement Rates for approved CCAP Providers, based on BrightStars Rating. (DHS Child Care Community Exchange)
- Increase provider reimbursement rates in such a way that they are tied to quality standards –such as creating a tiered reimbursement system or implementing bonuses tied to quality. (Child Care Commission)

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES – REFER TO RIAEYC

- Accessible up to date directory of child care centers including those who accept DHS subsidies. (Early Intervention Directors)
- Improve current state-wide communication with families regarding options for early childhood care and education (Early Intervention Directors)
- Coordinate, centralize, translate and expand the reach of information about access to quality programs, focusing on web-based information delivery systems, existing information networks (UWRI's 211, e.g.), and face-to-face points of contact with families (DHS, DCYF, schools, college and school district registration centers, hospitals, EI programs, churches, laundromats, stores, libraries) (RIEAYC)
- Reach out to and train individuals at those points of contact in those organizations and systems (EI staff, pediatricians, school registration staff, DHS case workers) in the importance of quality programs and in assisting families to access to those programs. Require one point of contact in all relevant organizations and/or divisions for coordination of these activities. (RIEAYC)
- Conduct annual, brief, culturally and linguistically appropriate trainings for families about the importance of quality care and the information they need to access that care, in partnership with appropriate agencies and state departments. (RIEAYC)

- Integrate information on quality child care into the R&R system by, e.g., highlighting programs that are BrightStars, Accredited, and/or RIDE approved, collecting information from families for follow-up email/mail contact on selecting quality care. (RIEAYC)
- There is a continuing need to consolidate resource and parenting information for both families and professionals that is easily accessible and organized. This would impact information (but not limited to) regarding parenting classes, educational programs, therapies, counseling services, etc. (RI Interagency Coordinating Council on EI)

The Team

Team Leaders: Elizabeth Burke Bryant and Larry Pucciarelli

Team Members: Khadija Lewis Khan (Beautiful Beginnings), Leslie Gell (R2LP), Karen Ennis (Connecting for Children and Families), Ann Turrell and Michele Palermo (RIDE), Karen Beese (DHS), Chris Amirault (RIAAYC), Cindy Larson (LISC), Pam High (DCYF), Lee-Ann Beaupre (EI Directors’ Association), Lynda Dickenson and Aimee Mitchell (RI Head Start Association), Kathy Keenan (Warwick Public Schools), Rachel Flum (The Poverty Institute), Kim Maine (Sunshine Child Development Center), MaryAnn Finamore (Westbay Children’s Center), Pam High (Hasbro Children’s Hospital), Colleen Dorian (Family Childcare Homes of Rhode Island),

Scope of Work

- ❖ Work to expand access for more children (particularly from low income and vulnerable families) to participate in high-quality early learning programs, including high-quality child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, Pre-K, Full Day Kindergarten and Early Childhood Special Education programs (including Early Intervention and preschool special education).
- ❖ Conduct periodic needs assessments on the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs (access, quality and workforce).
- ❖ Identify opportunities and barriers for collaboration and cooperation.
- ❖ Develop recommendations on increasing participation in high-quality child care, Head Start and Early Head Start, Pre-K, Full Day Kindergarten and Early Childhood Special Education programs (including Early Intervention and preschool special education).

Timeline

Major Milestone	Comments/Status	Planned Due Date
Request ideas from the field to improve children’s access to high-quality early learning programs	Complete	November 2010
Team meeting to review recommendations from the field and legislative/budget opportunities	Complete	March 2, 2011
Discuss priorities for improving access at Early Learning Council Work Group		March 3, 2011
Present recommendations to Early Learning Council		March 24, 2011

Details**Process**

- Sent memo to formal and informal associations from the early learning field asking each group to identify 3-5 ideas to improve children's access to high-quality early learning programs.
- Shared recommendations with Early Learning Council
- Formed small work team to review access issues and discuss priorities. Team included both ELC Council and Work Group members as well as other community leaders.
- Further discussion at Work Group Meeting

Next Steps

- Review Governor's proposed FY12 budget scheduled to be released on March 10, 2011
- Present recommendations to Early Learning Council

Plans for Community Input/Engagement

- Sent memo to formal and informal associations from the early learning field asking each group to identify 3-5 ideas to improve children's access to high-quality early learning programs.
- Send thank you and update to those who sent letters with ideas to improve access

The Team

Team Leaders: Brenda Almeida and Leanne Barrett

Team Members: TBD (the following Council/Work Group members have expressed interest: Maryann Finamore, Cindy Larson, Karen Beese, Tammy Camillo, and Michele Palermo)

Scope of Work

- ❖ Update DCYF child care center licensing regulations (last updated in 1993), monitoring procedures, and licensing data system to incorporate best practices from other states.
- ❖ Conduct a review of all elements of the various standards and identify any inconsistencies. Discuss possible modifications that improve alignment. Share findings with providers and develop educational materials to explain alignment.
- ❖ Ensure alignment of quality standards and monitoring across program settings, including local Rhode Island systems of child care licensing, BrightStars Quality Rating and Improvement System, the Department of Education preschool approval and the national quality systems of accreditation (NAEYC and NAFCC) and Head Start.

Timeline

Major Milestone	Comments/Status	Planned Due Date
Hire consultants from the National Association of Regulatory Administrators to facilitate process to update DCYF center licensing regulations	Contracting in process	March 2011
NARA to develop recommendations for update of DCYF regulations and monitoring systems		April 2011
Small team review/discussion of proposed updates		June 2011
Finalize recommendations for DCYF licensing updates		September 2011

Details

Process

- Draft scope of work completed. Brenda and Leanne had a conference call with Judy Collins, of NARA, on February 4.
- NARA work will include a review of national best practices, review of RI school-age child care recommendations, and review alignment with other standards (BrightStars, RIDE approval, etc.)

Next Steps

- Complete project planning and contract with NARA.

Plans for Community Input/Engagement

- Proposed changes to DCYF regulations and systems will be reviewed by small team of stakeholders
- Summary of recommended changes will be presented to ELC Work Group and ELC
- DCYF will hold public hearings on updated licensing regulations
- Alignment team will gather input from stakeholders re: how to improve alignment of program standards.

The Team

Team Leaders: Leanne Barrett

Team Members: Cathie Walsh, Rhode Island KIDS COUNT; Leslie Gell/Katie Murray/Rebecca Lee, R2LP/Providence Plan; Blythe Berger/Kristine Campagna/Ellen Amore, HEALTH; Larry Pucciarelli, Head Start; Brenda DuHamel, Karen Beese, DHS; Michele Palermo/Ann Turrell/James Wiley, RIDE; Brenda Almeida, DCYF; Tammy Camillo, BrightStars; Ron Seifer, Brown University

Scope of Work

- ❖ Using technical assistance from the National Governors Association's Ready States Initiative, **plan and build a coordinated birth to age 8 data infrastructure** to collect essential information so we can track young children's participation in early learning programs (including child care, Head Start, special education, and Pre-K) and understand the quality of programs that serve them. This system needs to include information on children, programs and workforce characteristics, begin at birth and be linked to the K-12 data system through a unique student identifier.
- ❖ Develop and implement recommendations for data system enhancements and linkages.

Timeline

Major Milestone	Comments/Status	Planned Due Date
Participate in NGA Ready States technical assistance initiative.	Completed	April – December 2010
Complete draft action plan for RI Early Learning data system	Initial draft completed. In review by team members	March 2011
Present to draft action plan to RI Early Learning Council		March 2011

Details

Process

- State Action Plan drafted and under review.

Next Steps

- Engage new state department leaders. Finalize State Action Plan and identify priorities for next steps.

Plans for Community Input/Engagement

- Team meetings were held in June, July, and November 2010 to identify critical policy questions, review existing data systems in Rhode Island and identify priorities for improvements and linkages. Team members also participated in two national conferences (Seattle in July and New Orleans in December 2010).
- Improving coordination and capacity of early learning data systems was discussed at September 2010 Early Learning Council meeting and October and November 2010 Early Learning Council Work Group meetings.

The Team

Team Leader: Leslie Gell

Team Members: Leanne Barrett, Karen Beese, Blythe Burger, Tammy Camillo, Jerry Hatfield, Doreen LePage, Khadija Lewis-Kahn, Joseph Morra, Michele Palermo, Maura Pearce, Josefina Recio, Barbara Schermack, Alexander Sidorkin, Katheryn Tavares

Scope of Work

- ❖ Establish and implement the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood workforce scholarship model and secure public and private funding for scholarships.
- ❖ Expand access to higher education and ensure institutions have the capacity to effectively support the development of early childhood educators.
- ❖ Map the capacity of institutes of higher education in the development of early educators and assess effectiveness in meeting needs of the early childhood workforce.

Timeline

Major Milestone	Comments/Status	Planned Due Date
\$175,000 in funding secured, year 1	Rhode Island Foundation, Early Learning Council, Child Care Services of North Carolina	
T.E.A.C.H. officially launched		November 2010
Orientation sessions for Jan. semester. All BrightStars rated programs contacted directly.		December 2010
Nine T.E.A.C.H. scholarships awarded		January 2011
First meeting of the Advisory Council		January 2011
Informational flyers mailed to all DCYF licensed child care center and family home care providers in Core Cities of Providence, Pawtucket, Central Falls, Woonsocket, West Warwick, and Newport. Direct outreach to providers will supplement informational flyer.		February, 2011
Second meeting of Advisory Council		March, 2011
Program training through Project Coordinator's attendance at CCSA annual symposium.		May, 2011
T.E.A.C.H. participants will begin to take advantage of discount book program offered through Cengage and CCSA		June, 2011
Monthly or bi-monthly orientation sessions for summer and fall semesters will be conducted		August, 2011
T.E.A.C.H. scholar recipients will be surveyed for satisfaction at the conclusion of each rolling contract cycle.		January 2012, and at the conclusion of every semester thereafter.

Details

Process

- Leslie Gell, Maura Pearce and Jerry Hatfield met with President of CCRI, Ray Di Pasquale, to discuss T.E.A.C.H. He was enthusiastic and pledged his ongoing support

- Leslie Gell and Jerry Hatfield met with Alexander Sidorkin, Dean of Education at Rhode Island College. He agreed to join the T.E.A.C.H. advisory council, and committed to organizing a retreat among the institutions of higher education to begin a conversation about articulation.
- Ready to Learn Providence submitted a proposal (\$50,000) to the Jessie Cox Foundation in support of T.E.A.C.H.
- Advisory Council will meet a minimum of (6) times in the launch year.
- All applicants to T.E.A.C.H. will apply for federal, state, and institutional financial aid through the submission of a FAFSA form (Free Application for Financial Student Aid).
- One hundred percent of the initially enrolled participants will be surveyed regarding satisfaction with T.E.A.C.H, and the impact that ECE coursework has on individual teaching practice.

Results/Outcomes

- 9 Early Childhood Educators (8 from centers, 1 family child care provider) are currently enrolled at CCRI on T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. They are collectively taking 16 courses, or 48 credit hours.
- Forty (40) Early Childhood Educators will be enrolled in coursework at CCRI by fall, 2011. A minimum of 324 course credits will be completed by December 30, 2011.

Next Steps

- T.E.A.C.H. orientation sessions for the summer and fall semesters at CCRI will be ongoing throughout the spring and summer. BrightStars rated programs and programs in the core cities will be given priority status, although recruitment efforts will be statewide.

Plans for Community Input/Engagement

- Advisory Council
- Statewide orientation sessions
- Site visits to participating sites