

State Advisory Councils 18 Month Mid-Term Report

New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council

1. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES

Attach a description of relevant activities, services and outcomes. You may refer to the information you submitted in Item B-01 of the Performance Progress Reports (PPR) you have been submitting to ACF. In your description, be sure to connect how the activities, services and outcomes relate to the needs described in your periodic needs assessments and statewide strategic reports. If your periodic needs assessment is not complete, indicate this and refer to your statewide strategic report to make this connection.

This report that follows describes the many projects and accomplishments of the ECAC during the last 18 months. The report is organized according to the objectives listed in the ECAC Strategic Plan under the four component parts of the ECAC's framework: *Coordinated and Responsive Systems, Strong Families, Healthy Children, and Early Learning.*

A. Focus Area: Coordinated and Responsive Systems

Strategic Plan Goal: *Public and private sectors that serve young children and their families are committed to collecting and utilizing data to inform decisions; develop a sustainable infrastructure and a fully trained, properly compensated and well supported workforce; and establish policies for accountable approaches that promote healthy children, strong families, and early learning.*

Objective A1: *Establish and maintain a public-private body to provide strategic direction to the Governor and state agencies on early childhood issues and to assist public and private entities seeking to improve early childhood systems and services.*

In April 2009, New York State established a new body, the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC), to advise the Governor and state agencies on the development of a comprehensive system of supports and services for young children ages birth to eight and their families. The ECAC includes individuals with early childhood expertise who represent early care and education, health care, child welfare, and mental health programs, as well as state agencies, advocacy organizations, foundations, higher education, unions, and others involved in the provision of services to young children and their families. The ECAC is focusing its efforts on addressing the structural issues that have impeded the development of a system that provides comprehensive, high quality services and supports system to young children and their families.

The ECAC reports directly to the Governor. It also reports to the commissioners of state health, mental health, education, and human services agencies through the Council on Children and Families, which is a unit of state government that serves to coordinate the agencies to establish an effective and efficient service delivery system for children, youth, and families. The Council on Children and Families has been

designated by the Governor to lead the ECAC initiative and administer its funding. The Council also serves as the lead agency for the NYS Head Start Collaboration Project, Early Childhood Comprehensive Services Initiative and Project LAUNCH, which serves to facilitate integration of these projects.

Bob Frawley, Deputy Director of the NYS Council on Children and Families and Sherry Cleary, Executive Director of the NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, serve as co-chairs of the ECAC. A Steering Committee composed of work group co-chairs and representatives of key state agencies and private organizations oversees the work of the ECAC and helps to ensure cross work group coordination. At its first meeting in May 2009, the ECAC established six work groups including:

Data Development Work Group –The Data Development Work Group is working to identify the different service systems involved and the data needed for a cross early learning program longitudinal data system that helps state and local agencies and others identify trends in early learning programs, answer policy questions, and plan for program development, with the ultimate goal being a system that includes all health-related data of children from birth to age five.

Finance Work Group - The Finance Work Group is focused on developing a cost estimation model that will provide a consistent finance framework and model to apply across the ECAC’s four focus areas—*Healthy Children, Strong Families, Early Learning, and Coordinated and Responsive Systems*. Once the cost estimation model is fully developed, the Finance Work Group will work to identify new financing strategies including a mix of public and private resources to increase investments in a comprehensive system.

Promoting Healthy Development Work Group-The Promoting Healthy Development Work Group is building capacity among the many different providers in child-serving systems to improve the health and social-emotional development of young children. This includes identifying and responding to the social-emotional needs of young children and their families, promoting health and safety through the development of training and consultation, and identifying opportunities to collaborate with public health programs to achieve key health outcomes for young children.

Quality Improvement Work Group- The Quality Improvement Work Group provides critical support for promoting quality in programs and services for young children and their families, most importantly through the development of QUALITYstarsNY, a voluntary quality rating and improvement system for early care and education programs, including centers, schools, and family care homes in New York State. Regardless of setting, QUALITYstarsNY will provide a coherent, systematic way to support program improvement and ensure the best use of public dollars in all early childhood programs.

Strong Families Work Group - The Strong Families Work Group is advancing strategies to support families incorporating the principles of promoting resiliency and enhancing protective factors as a framework for all health, education, and human services to ensure that we provide appropriate services and supports to strengthen families. Those services/supports include developing and/or improving systems of parent education, comprehensive family risk assessments, and voluntary home visiting for all expectant and new families.

Workforce Development Work Group -The Workforce Development Work Group is organized to advance the components of an early learning career development system, now called *New York Works for Children: Early Childhood Career Development System*, and respond to related issues such as coordination of pre-service education in early childhood (i.e., articulation

agreements among institutions of higher education) and staff recruitment, retention, and compensation.

The timing of the establishment of the ECAC was fortunate in that New York State had just completed three extensive processes to assess the needs of young children and their families resulting in the development of related strategic plans. A few months prior to the establishment of the ECAC, the commissioners of the health, education, and human services agencies approved the Early Childhood Comprehensive Services Plan <http://www.ccf.ny.gov/Eccs/EccsResources/ECPlanComplete.pdf>. This planning document became the foundation for the development of the ECAC Strategic Plan. Also contributing to the development of the ECAC Strategic Plan was the Children's Plan which provided a framework for addressing the social-emotional development needs of children, youth and families, and the Winning Beginning NY Action Plan. The development of each of these planning documents included comprehensive needs assessments. As a result, rather than repeat these efforts, the ECAC relied on the information obtained through these processes and the data compiled in *The Early Childhood Data Report: the Health and Well-Being of New York's Youngest Children*, <http://www.ccf.ny.gov/Eccs/EccsResources/ECReportFullDoc.pdf> to ground the development of its strategic plan. This information was augmented in 2010 by the needs assessment conducted as part of the Project Launch Initiative.

The ECAC Strategic Plan (<http://www.ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/ECACResources/ECACStrategicPlanFinal.pdf>) was finalized in January 2010, following an ECAC retreat where the members requested the development of a brief document that linked the ECAC's goals, objectives and strategies to desired outcomes.

Objective A2: *Increase the knowledge, skills, confidence, and support of staff and administrators of health, education, and human services so that they are able to promote the health, safety, and positive development of young children and their families.*

Several initiatives of the ECAC and its partners are aimed at increasing access to high quality professional development for all professionals that work with young children and their families. These include:

Social Emotional Development- The ECAC has hired a consultant who will develop an online data base that will provide information about children's social emotional development, resources that a broad range of professionals can access to promote children's healthy development, and strategies to embed social-emotional development into trainings of a wide array of professionals who serve children and families. (See page 11 of this report for more information.)

Parenting Education - Additional cross systems work has been taking place in the area of parenting education with partners from several state agencies (e.g., Department of Health, Office of Mental Health, State Education Department, Office of Children and Family Services, Council on Children and Families, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance) , advocacy organizations, and providers to promote professionalism in the field of parenting education and support. (See pages 7-9 of this report for more information.)

Cross System Coordination -Efforts to improve cross system coordination between early childhood specialists and mental health professionals are being promoted through the NY Project LAUNCH SAMHSA grant, which operates under the auspices of the ECAC. Events such as the annual awareness day for early childhood mental health, coordinated at the state level by representatives from the ECAC, Project LAUNCH, Winning Beginning NY, the Early Care and Learning Council (the state Child Care Resource and Referral membership agency), and other advocacy organizations (NAMI-NYS and Families Together), underscore that all adults who interact with children of all ages can make an important contribution to their healthy social-emotional development.

Infancy Leadership Circles serve to improve communication between state and local professionals from all of the disciplines that focus on children under the age of 3, including health care, education, family support, early intervention, child welfare and the judicial system. Circles operate in Erie, Niagara and Westchester Counties and a regional consortium is based in Central New York of early childhood professionals from Delaware, Otsego, Chenango, and Schoharie Counties. With minimal funding from the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Planning grant, these groups bring a unique approach to issues facing their community. The groups have identified and are working with the ECAC at the state level to rectify concerns that have emerged across the state:

- Lack of public awareness of the importance of the early years and specific issues such as breast feeding.
- Need for parenting education and readily available information on community resources for parents.
- Limited service provider focus on strengthening the parent-child relationship.
- Significant gaps in the continuum of services to families with infants and toddlers (within and across the rural counties of Delaware, Otsego, Chenango and Schoharie).
- Weaknesses in recruitment, retention, and promotion within the professions that serve infants and toddlers.
- Missed opportunities for inclusion of professionals in related fields and parents into planning for coordinated services for infants and toddlers.
- Administrative challenges for programs that make it difficult to provide services for families with young children such as: travel distances between clients, decline in reimbursement rates for service, cuts in funding, and difficulty in merging resources.

Objective A3: Increase public-private investments in early childhood and blend these investments with existing resources to maximize impact.

Finance - The Finance Work Group has engaged the firm of Augenblick, Palaich and Associates, Inc. (APA) to develop the New York State Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model. The model has been defined by domains (*Early Learning, Strong Families, Healthy Children, and Coordinated and Responsive Systems*) which are consistent with the ECAC focus areas. Cost elements have been identified for each focus area (e.g., early learning program, home visiting program) and are supported by program and service funding/data information. The cost estimation model will provide information and analysis for determining the costs of the service elements that together comprise a comprehensive system of supports and services for young children and their families. Once these estimates are developed the work group can then use this information to determine financing strategies.

For the past 18 months, ECAC staff has collected the information needed to populate the cost estimation model. Of the necessary data and funding information, 98 percent has been gathered and

sent to APA. There remain some minor programs that have yet to provide funding and population data, and the ECAC continues to work with state staff to gather the outstanding information. The APA representatives continue to analyze the data to put the information into a format that ensures usability and accuracy of the cost estimation model. The Finance Work Group also decided to add a return on investment component to the cost estimation model. The return on investment component, which is being developed now, will allow users to measure the social and service related value gained from every dollar invested into the state's early childhood system.

The Finance Work Group will continue their work by taking the following steps:

- **Cost estimation model Phase 1 Pilot:** The first phase of testing is scheduled to begin mid- July 2012. During this phase the usability of the cost estimation model will be tested.
- **Cost estimation model Phase 2 Pilot:** The second phase of the pilot will focus on testing the assumptions associated with the data that is included in the cost estimation model. Users will be assigned according to their program expertise to ensure the data and methodologies being used in the cost model are correct.
- **Return on Investment Component:** The contract to develop the return on investment has been moved into its final stage of approval. Once approved, APA staff will begin to work on the next phase of the cost estimation model.
- **Financing Strategies:** The Finance Work Group Co-chairs will begin to focus more on the types of financing strategies they would like to see produced and begin to develop a selection process to identify a consultant to complete the work.

***Objective A4:** Increase early childhood program accountability through program standards and tracking identified outcome indicators.*

Longitudinal Data System - The Data Development Work Group was established to design a statewide early learning longitudinal data system that helps state and local agencies and others identify trends, answer policy questions, and plan for program development. Given the scope of the initiative, current efforts have been focused on establishing an early learning portion of what is hoped to be a much larger data system. Plans are to extend this effort to other early childhood service systems and to link each of these data systems to the P-20 student tracking system being developed by the New York State Education Department. Staff members of the Data Development Work Group are actively participating on the Steering Committee and Project Team of NYS Education Department's P-20 Data System Project, and have been successfully working on the inclusion of available early childhood data in the P-20 Data System. When this data is combined and then connected to the New York State Education Department data, there will be a much fuller picture of the early childhood education system in New York State, including the program and providers, staff members and the children and families they serve.

Work completed within the last 18 months includes the following reports and publications:

- In January 2011, the Work Group published the report, *Putting the Pieces Together: New York Early Learning Data System*, authored by Lee Kreader and William Schneider of the National Center for Children in Poverty. This report provides baseline information on the state's early

childhood data across agencies and across six dimensions: program/provider supply; enrollment, participant demographics and demand; early childhood workforce; program quality; outcomes for children and families; and cost and financing. The report documents issues with early childhood data being siloed by agency and the level of variation there is across agency definitions, even when their systems hold similar data elements.

<http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/ECACResources/PuttingPiecesTogether.pdf>

- Program and Policy Questions were developed that work group members would like to have answered by a cross-program early learning longitudinal data system.
<http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/DataDev/Resources/ScoredListQuestions.pdf>
- A list of necessary core data elements was produced and a *Crosswalk* was created which describes what data elements each early learning data system contains.
http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/DataDev/Resources/ECAC_DataElementsCrosswalk.pdf
- The *Data Elements Analysis Report* was created, which further analyzed the type and quality of data elements located in NYS/NYC early learning data systems.
<http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/DataDev/Resources/DataElementsAnalysis.pdf>.
- The document, *Additional Data Elements Needed*, was developed, which makes recommendations of what other data are needed to have a global view of early childhood education in New York State. <http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/DataDev/Resources/DataElementsNeeded.pdf>
- With this information collected in the reports listed above, the *Program and Policy Questions* have been scored on three scales: the quality/quantity of current data; the level of difficulty to answer each question; and the length of time needed for completion.
<http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/WG/DataDev/Resources/ScoredListQuestions.pdf>

The Data Work Group also formed two new subgroups to accomplish specific tasks:

- A Data and Research Subgroup will investigate early childhood data that is currently available to help answer our Policy and Program Questions.
- An Early Childhood Technology Subgroup will examine the status and quality of child care providers' access to the internet from their program location. We are also interested in the workforce access to the internet, whether from work or on personal time.

National Survey of Early Care and Education – The ECAC has contracted with the National Opinion Resource Center to oversample high-need rural areas in New York State as part of the nationwide *National Survey of Early Care and Education* they are conducting. New York State policymakers have observed that rural counties in the state seem to have an under-subscription of families in the Child Care Development Fund subsidy program. Specifically, these counties can have significant unspent subsidy dollars at the close of a fiscal period. In addition to the one high need rural Primary Service Unit that has been surveyed as part of the National Survey of Early Care and Education, the ECAC has purchased additional surveys of two high need rural Primary Service Units. The additional surveys will give a larger and more statistically significant sample size to further analyze the needs of the parents and caregivers

in these areas and will help understand the obstacles to enrollment of families and providers in the subsidy program within rural areas of New York State.

Objective A5: Increase support among civic and business leaders for early childhood initiatives at the state and local level.

The ECAC Co-chairs have been working with their membership and the BUILD initiative to develop strategies for engaging civic and business leaders throughout the state to encourage and build support for early childhood initiatives. BUILD funding has been secured to support business engagement efforts and other funders have expressed a willingness to provide additional financial resources for this purpose. To proceed further, the ECAC will require Governor's Office support and steps are being taken now to obtain that support.

B. Focus Area: Strong Families

Strategic Plan Goal: All families of young children are supported in their parenting and have the knowledge, skills, confidence, and resources they need to raise their children in healthy and nurturing environments.

Objective B1: Increase opportunities for all families to gain the knowledge, skills, confidence, and social supports needed to nurture the health, safety, and positive development of children.

Promoting Evidenced Based Parenting Education - The ECAC Strong Families Work Group, through collaborative efforts with the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP), has supported several initiatives aimed at providing a framework of professional development for parenting educators and increasing the availability and accessibility of parenting education resources for families. As an innovative public private partnership between the Office of Mental Health, the Office of Children and Family Services, the Council on Children and Families, and Prevent Child Abuse New York, NYSPEP serves as a membership organization of parenting educators and state policy makers that work together to promote evidence based parenting education practices and programs. Within the last 18 months, NYSPEP has carried out the following activities:

- Held four regional Strong Roots full day professional development workshops for parenting educators. Topics include Social Emotional Development; Parenting Styles; Communication Skills; and Group Facilitation. Online webinars were also held on topics including Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- Redesigned its website, www.nyspep.org, and made changes to its data base of parenting education programs and professional development event calendar to make them easier to use
- Completed efforts to define the core competencies of parenting educators and began work to establish a four tiered Parenting Education Credential. Completed and pilot tested the first two tiers. To date, 35 credentials have been issued to parenting educators throughout New York.

- Allocated funds to 13 communities to increase local access to evidence-based parenting education programs. These grants were awarded on a competitive basis and will be used over the next nine months to increase the number and location of parenting education classes and reimburse families for child care or transportation.

New Parent Kit/Parenting Education Campaign – The Strong Families Work Group and NYSPEP have made significant progress to develop a comprehensive Parent Kit that will offer families information on parenting and the resources they need to provide their new baby with a nurturing environment and promote their child’s healthy development. Stakeholders met in the spring of 2012 to develop the concept and key goals for a Parent Guide, which will be the core component of the Parent Kit. A professional writer and parenting education expert have been hired to develop the Parent Guide. Sample chapters have been drafted and will be reviewed by a panel of experts and key stakeholders before being presented to parent focus groups for feedback.

Community Cafés - In addition to parenting education efforts, the ECAC Strong Families Work Group and NYSPEP have been working on a project aimed at strengthening families and engaging communities through the Community Café approach of building parent leadership and community capacity. With the support of the National Alliance of Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds, NYSPEP will build on past efforts to bring the Café approach to New York State. To carry out its work to support Community Café, NYSPEP has:

- Secured funds from the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems grant and the New York State Children’s Trust and Prevention Funds to support four regional Community Café trainings and to provide seed grants to Community Teams to support costs associated with hosting Cafés in their Communities.
- Issued a request for proposals asking community organizations to form Community Teams comprised of community partners and parent leaders. A total of 16 Community Teams will be selected to participate in regional Community Café trainings that will be held across the state in September.

Objective B2: Increase the proportion of vulnerable/at-risk families that are identified and provided with needed supports and services.

Home Visiting - The ECAC’s Strong Families Work Group continues to work with the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, the Department of Health, which is the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Grantee (MIECHV) for New York State, and other stakeholders as members of the New York State Home Visiting Coalition.

Current Coalition activities aimed at identifying families in need of services and expanding home visiting services for these families include:

- Supporting the development of the NYS Department of Health’s Healthy Mom-Healthy Baby Prenatal and Postpartum Home Visiting (HMHB) program, a pilot program in 6 high-risk counties that is designed to develop organized community systems of maternal and infant health and home visiting services. HMHB programs are promoting use of the Department’s Medicaid Prenatal Care Coordination form to facilitate identification of high-risk pregnant,

Medicaid eligible women early in pregnancy; assess their risks and healthcare needs; and make referrals to appropriate services including home visiting services.

- Working with the Department of Health to expand home visiting services through the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting grant program.
- Developing a proposal to amend home visiting legislation to broaden the scope of programs that are offered and funded by the State
- Supporting the Department of Health’s inclusion of home visiting in its Medicaid waiver application.
- Releasing a policy brief on financing options for a comprehensive, state-wide home visiting system.

C. Focus Area: Healthy Children

Strategic Plan Goal: *All young children are healthy and thriving, and have access to comprehensive health care services.*

Objective C1: *Expand the practice of healthy behaviors in the preconception, prenatal, and postpartum periods, including use of early and comprehensive prenatal care.*

Under the Strong Families section of this report many initiatives to promote pre-conceptual, prenatal and postpartum health are described, including efforts of the Home Visiting Coalition and the New Parent Kit. In addition, the ECAC has supported the following initiatives:

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders - The ECAC has been promoting the work of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Interagency Work Group by distributing its educational booklet <http://ccf.ny.gov/FASD/Resources/FASDDisorders.pdf> and integrating the work of the Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Interagency Work Group into the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group.

Breastfeeding - The ECAC’s Promoting Healthy Development Work Group has formed a Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Subgroup to encourage and support providers and programs to earn the New York State Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) designation of “Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Center,” or “Breastfeeding Friendly Child Care Home”. Currently there are approximately 330 designated centers and 200 Child Care Homes in the state that have received this designation. The ECAC is currently working with the Department of Health to expand enrollment in CACFP through outreach efforts by distributing information about the importance of supporting breastfeeding mothers and the distinction of the “Breastfeeding Friendly” designation.

Objective C2: *Promote optimal health and development in all domains, including social-emotional development, for young children.*

Developmental Screening - The ECAC Promoting Healthy Development Subgroup on Developmental Screening has been working to promote and expand the use of developmental and other screenings both within primary care and early care and education programs. Work continues with the NYS Department of Health, the Medicaid Redesign Team, and with communities throughout the state to make developmental screening a routine, expected part of health care practice for pediatricians and other health providers who work with young children, and to educate and inform early care and education professionals on how to administer and interpret developmental and other screenings within classroom and home based venues. Activities and products include:

- The subgroup presented a proposal last fall to the Governor’s Medicaid Redesign Team, which, though it was not successful at the time, will be resubmitted at a future date.
- In November 2011, the ECAC and Project LAUNCH sponsored an event featuring Dr. Neal Halfon from the Center for Healthier Children and Families at UCLA. Also featured were representatives from “prototype communities” that have advanced innovative screening initiatives around the State, many of which are doing social-emotional screening and maternal depression screening. ECAC staff developed a resource, *Prototype Communities across New York State with Innovative Developmental Screening Systems*, describing the achievements of the communities highlighted at that event which was distributed to the ECAC and posted on the website. (http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/ECACResources/ECAC_PrototypeChart.pdf) The document has become the basis for additional follow-up, including a revision that will include program evaluations and other findings.
- The Promoting Healthy Development Work Group hosted a webinar with Dr. Barbara Howard at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine on CHADIS (Child Health and Development Interactive System), an online screening, diagnosis, and management tool being used in community clinic systems around the country. That webinar generated much discussion among the participants and with the Department of Health staff, who are interested in streamlining access to the additional information that screenings provide. Additional follow up is planned.
- ECAC staff developed a resource guide for parents on developmental screening and a white paper on developmental screening for policy makers and other stakeholders, both of which will be finalized and disseminated in the next few months.
- The Developmental Screening Subgroup Co-chairs have held several meetings with staff at the New York State Department of Health about the Department’s work on developmental and autism screenings to find a common strategy for promotion and execution of a plan to expand screening in New York, especially to the most vulnerable children.
- In conjunction with Project LAUNCH, several steps are being taken to integrate screening protocols into primary care settings, home visiting programs, and parenting support centers, and introducing methods for improving coordinated responses to the detection of social emotional issues early in life. Evaluation of several designs is currently being carried out in Westchester County (three LAUNCH sites) and in New York City (two LAUNCH sites) under two separately funded Project LAUNCH grants.

Objective C3: *Provide children with safe and healthy environments in which to grow and develop.*

QUALITYstarsNY Standards - QUALITYstarsNY, New York's quality rating and improvement system, provides an opportunity to promote safe and healthy environments for children across the state. A web-based Resource Guide is being developed that will provide programs with resources that will help them meet each standard. The Promoting Healthy Development Work Group's Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Subgroup is working on compiling, and in some cases is creating, resources that would be used to help early care and education programs meet the QUALITYstarsNY health standards, including standards on developmental screening, screen time, physical activity (including tummy time for infants), participation in Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), and promotion of breastfeeding friendly centers. The Social-Emotional Development Subgroup is compiling, with the support of the Children's Institute (the ECAC's Social-Emotional Consultant), resources on social-emotional development of children for programs to use for meeting QUALITYstarsNY standards on social-emotional development.

Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant - In addition to their role in providing resources to meet the QUALITYstarsNY standards regarding children's social-emotional development, the ECAC Social-Emotional Development Consultant will:

- Work with state agencies, provider associations, training organizations and others to ensure that social-emotional development knowledge is infused into the training of professionals who work with young children and their families.
- Develop strategies for integrating evidence-based curricula and other program supports (e.g., social-emotional development consultation) into early care and education settings.
- Support the establishment of a screening system that is built upon routine developmental screening of all young children in New York State and includes but is not limited to social-emotional development screening and maternal depression screening.
- Provide content for a web-based clearinghouse that provides information to early childhood professionals on social-emotional development training and professional development opportunities, program supports, and best practice research.

Early Childhood Mental Health Technical Assistance – In November 2011, New York was chosen as one of three states to participate in a webinar on state efforts to promote early childhood mental health that was sponsored by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), the BUILD Initiative, and the ZERO TO THREE Policy Center and featured a discussion about a new tool produced by the National Center for Children in Poverty to aid state planning on young children's mental health. The webinar had the largest audience of any Zero to Three sponsored webinars. As a result of the webinar, NCCP has initiated a multi-state Technical Assistance Project to promote state system-building on early childhood mental health, with an emphasis on embedding mental health and social-emotional supports into early care and education programs. New York is one of seven states chosen to participate in this series of technical assistance calls, which the ECAC is using to create benchmarks around mental health strategies and resources to support QUALITYstarsNY. The November 2011 webinar is available at: <http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/webinars-conference-calls/building-strong-systems-of-support-for-young-childrens-mental-health.html>

Expansion of Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) Participation - The ECAC is working closely with staff of the Department of Health to expand the number of early care and education programs and providers who participate in CACFP. This outreach effort will begin by targeting the approximately 400 programs and providers around the state participating in QUALITYstarsNY and all programs and providers within Monroe County, Capital District, and Oneida and Herkimer Counties. The effort will include individual outreach, Public Service Announcements, and direct mail information.

Health Care Consultants - To promote the ECAC goal of infusing health promotion into early care and education settings, the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group is working with the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) Project Coordinator to expand the use of health care consultants. That work includes:

- Conducting a survey of the health care consultants and holding a meeting with health care consultants, relevant state agencies, and other stakeholders involved in the work of health care consultants.
- Holding a webinar with Dr. Abbie Alkon at the University of California Berkley on her work to define and promote the expansion of health care consultants.
- Developing a white paper on health care consultants examining how they are used in New York and other states, and analyzing the potential costs for expanding their services.

D. Focus Area: Early Learning

Strategic Plan Goal: *All young children will be successful in school and life.*

Objective D1: *Align the current diverse set of early care and education programs and services to become a unified and integrated system.*

QUALITYstarsNY - The ECAC has made significant progress in the development and implementation of QUALITYstarsNY, New York State's quality rating and improvement system. Through the leadership provided by the ECAC, the design of QUALITYstarsNY was completed to be inclusive of all licensed and regulated early care and education programs with comprehensive standards defining program quality. A field test was conducted to verify the standards and to assure that the items represented in them accurately reflected a program's quality.

Major accomplishments achieved during the field test include:

- Recruiting over 500 programs representing all modalities of licensed and regulated early care and education settings (family child care, group family child care, nursery schools, Universal PreKindergarten programs located in public schools as well as their community-based partners, Head Start, Early Head Start, and programs primarily designed to serve young children with special needs.) to participate in the field test.
- Establishing a model for supporting programs in continuous quality improvement by establishing the role and responsibilities of Quality Improvement Specialists. Building on a foundation of self-assessment, the Quality Improvement Specialists work with center-based

and family-based programs and providers to create a mutually agreeable Program Improvement Plan and offered links to relevant professional development and technical assistance opportunities.

- Incorporating the results of the field test into revisions to the QUALITYstarsNY standards that were necessary and responsive to the feedback from programs and providers.
- Establishing Quality Scholars to provide financial assistance to staff and providers from participating programs enabling them to obtain the education and training they need to meet the objectives of their professional development plans. The NYS Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) provided funding for this program as part of their commitment to the new quality rating and improvement system so that programs can implement their Quality Improvement Plans. Quality Scholars allocations have continued annually.

More information about QUALITYstarsNY field test, including the executive summary and full report, can be found at www.qualitystarsny.org.

Upon completion of the field test, work began to make the necessary revisions to the program standards. The QUALITYstarsNY program standards are the foundation for defining, communicating, and improving quality. They offer a universal set of program expectations for all early care and education settings. Collaborative work between ECAC work groups resulted in the inclusion of indicators in the area of health, nutrition (obesity prevention), minimum expectations for physical activity, and social-emotional development.

- Standards for Center-based programs can be found at: http://qualitystarsny.org/pdf/QUALITYstarsNY_Center-School-Based-Standards_2012.pdf
- Standards for Family and Group Family Child Care programs can be found at: http://qualitystarsny.org/pdf/QUALITYstarsNY_Family-Based-Standards_2012.pdf
- Standards for School Age Child Care and other after-school programs are in draft form at this time. They use the general format of the center-based standards and incorporate New York State's pre-existing quality assurance effort for programs serving school-age children. Representatives of membership organizations for this sector of the workforce are members of the Quality Improvement Work Group and participate fully in decision-making for the system.

Standards for programs in New York State are aligned with standards for children's learning (see below for descriptions of the *Early Learning Guidelines*, *Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core* and the *Head Start Early Learning Framework*), and standards for the adults who care for young children (the *Core Body of Knowledge*). Incentives are available to all programs and providers within the QUALITYstarsNY rating framework for their participation in training and professional development regarding each of these content areas.

Once the field test was completed and revisions to the standards and the process were made, the ECAC began implementation efforts. Progress to date includes:

- The State Education Department has provided \$4 million of their federal Race to the Top (RttT) funding to support implementation. The focus of this funding is on supporting the participation of early care and education programs (both center-based and family-based)

located in the geographic neighborhoods of public schools that have been identified as low-achieving via standardized test results. The funding will support full participation in QUALITYstarsNY including independent Environment Rating Scale assessments, training, professional development and the guidance of a Quality Improvement Specialist for approximately 300 programs and providers.

- Two foundations have agreed to support implementation of additional programs in two Long Island communities and in the city of Buffalo.
- QUALITYstarsNY Readiness activities were conducted in all ten regions of the state to prepare the field for full implementation. Workshops were developed in three content areas. Programs and providers gained a deeper understanding of the use and application of a self-assessment process that informs a Quality Improvement Plan and can lead to thoughtful and long-lasting program improvements. These ECAC-sponsored activities were offered free of charge to any interested early care and education professional. For more information about the Readiness Workshops, follow this link: <http://www.earlycareandlearning.org/index.cfm>
- The ECAC is funding full participation of programs that participated in the field test, bringing to over 400 the total number of programs and providers participating in this phase of QUALITYstarsNY implementation.
- A strategic partnership has been developed with Winning Beginning NY, other statewide early childhood advocacy organizations, private foundation leaders and the Quality Improvement Work Group of the ECAC to disseminate information about QUALITYstarsNY and the importance of a quality early learning experience for all young New Yorkers. The ECAC published a multi-purpose brochure delineating the goals and objectives of QUALITYstarsNY, including the important opportunity it creates for parents of young children to make fully-informed decisions in the care their children receive. (The brochure is available in English and Spanish. To see the English version, go to : http://qualitystarsny.org/pdf/QSNY_general-brochure_ENG.pdf)
- Completed the development of the QUALITYstarsNY data system (WELS), including changes made necessary to accommodate the revised standards. A Provider Portal is under development which will allow programs and providers to enter information directly, an improvement from the field test when Quality Improvement Specialists were responsible for much of the data management. The data system will be linked to the system of record for child care licensing and to the newly-created workforce registry. The data will be available to raters of QUALITYstarsNY programs and also to licensors and registrars so that all decisions about programs will be based on a common set of data elements.

Finally, with technical assistance provided by BUILD, a subgroup of the Quality Improvement Work Group is developing a strategic plan to implement the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Pathways to Cultural Competence Toolkit within QUALITYstarsNY. The plan addresses the need for broader cultural competence supports for early childhood programs. A survey is currently in the process of being completed by a large array of New York State early childhood stakeholders to inform the subgroup about how the issue of cultural competence is understood and interpreted within their organizations. Survey results will form the basis for a discussion at the September ECAC

Membership meeting that will help lay the foundation for how sensitivity to culture can be assured in QUALITYstarsNY implementation.

Alignment of Early Learning Guidelines and Standards - In New York State there are three resources to guide early care and education professionals in understanding children’s development and crafting meaningful experiences. These documents are based on the same research and are aligned in their vision of how children develop and what children should know and be able to do from birth to age five. All three are aligned and can inform teachers’ practice to help provide the most meaningful experiences and activities for the children in their care. They include:

- ***The New York State Early Learning Guidelines*** – Developed by the Early Childhood Advisory Council, the Early learning Guidelines describe a developmental progression of typical child development. They are not standards, but are meant to inform teachers and parents about how children typically develop from birth to age five and offer strategies for adults to help support the child’s full development in all domains. The Guidelines apply to dual language learners and children with special needs. The Early Learning Guidelines have the potential to positively impact the early development of all children under five in New York State (1.25 million children as of 2012).
- ***The New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core*** - Released by the New York State Department of Education Office of Early Learning in October 2011, the *New York State Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core* were developed with partnership with a number of stakeholders including several representatives of the ECAC. This document identifies a set of skills that children in Prekindergarten should know and be able to do by the end of preschool. Currently, there are 99,000 children enrolled in Universal Prekindergarten in New York State.
- ***The Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework*** was revised by the Federal Office of Head Start in 2011, and provides a description of the building blocks for children ages 3 to 5 that Head Start researchers determined as most important for a child’s school and long-term success. There are approximately 55,000 children enrolled in Head Start each year in New York State. Head Start program leaders have the responsibility of aligning their curriculum and child assessment tools to the expected outcomes for all 3 to 5 year old children. Most commercial curricula provide information on the alignment between their curricula and the *Child Development and Early Learning Framework* on their websites.
- To support implementation of these standards and guidelines the ECAC has done a lot of work to demonstrate their alignment. Please see the ***New York State Early Learning Alignment Crosswalk*** for a side-by-side comparison of these three documents and guidance on how they can be used in harmony to best meet the needs of the children in care and education programs. <http://ccf.ny.gov/HS/hsResources/Crosswalk.pdf> Head Start leaders also need to articulate how their chosen curricula align with the New York State Early Learning Guidelines and local school readiness goals.¹ This crosswalk can help programs get started on this analysis.

¹Head Start Act 2007, SEC. 642A. HEAD START TRANSITION AND ALIGNMENT WITH K-12 EDUCATION. [42 U.S.C. 9837a]

Objective D2: Increase the knowledge and competencies of the early care and education workforce.

The ECAC Workforce Development Work Group coordinates several professional development initiatives that support a system of recruitment, preparation, retention and continuing education for early childhood professionals. Members include representatives from higher education, unions, professional associations, early care and education providers, and advocates as well as of state agencies including the State Education Department Office of Early Learning and the Training Bureau of the Office of Children and Family Services. The overall goal of this work is to develop a unified competency-based career development system for the early care and education workforce, known as *New York Works for Children*. Accomplishments to date focus on infrastructure development and include:

- Creation of a trainer’s credential and registry (approximately 425 trainers are now listed on this searchable database).
- Completion of New York State’s *Early Learning Guidelines* with a *Teacher’s Guide* to support successful implementation of the Guidelines in all early care and learning settings.
- Completion of a third revision of the *Core Body of Knowledge* to make it more competency based.
- Dissemination of the documents listed above to the field (5,000 copies of each document have been distributed to practitioners, program managers and trainers since April 2012 when they were shared with participants of the 2012 New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC) Conference as the topic of the opening plenary session).
- Completion of the first Trainers’ Institute (60 trainers and faculty attended the day long institute planned to coincide with the release of the revised *Core Body of Knowledge* and the *Early Learning Guidelines* during the 2012 NYSAEYC pre-conference session); and,
- Construction of a workforce registry for early care and education professionals (the data system, called ASPIRE, was introduced in the late spring 2012). This career registry will provide valuable information for policy and decision makers but most importantly becomes a professional planning and career development tool for practitioners and their supervisors in early childhood settings.

Currently under development are in person and online learning opportunities for early childhood professionals designed to encourage use of the *Core Body of Knowledge* and the *Early Learning Guidelines* in everyday practice in classrooms. Plans include an online video library with resources to demonstrate effective practice in early care and education settings. The work group will also identify recommended trainers and events at which to conduct trainings on implementation of the Core Body of Knowledge and the Early Learning Guidelines. Plans are also underway to expand the training opportunities for all providers through financial assistance and aid, i.e., Educational Incentive Program and Quality Scholars initiative; and to articulate a training approval system.

Objective D3: Increase the ability of communities to effectively respond to the needs of young children and their families.

There are several projects and initiatives described throughout this report, as well as other efforts that are in the planning stage, that aim to increase community awareness of the importance of early learning opportunities and to engage parents and caregivers in practicing positive parenting practices, including QUALITYstarsNY and Expanding Opportunities Interagency Inclusion Initiative. Additional projects include:

- Community Cafés that provide parent leaders and community members a forum to explore and develop action plans to address the needs of families of young children, including how communities can promote the protective factors that build strong families including parental resilience, knowledge of parenting and child development, social connection, concrete support in times of need and the healthy social emotional development of children.
- The New Parent Kit and parenting education campaign will deliver aligned and concise messages to parents about the importance of being their child’s first teacher. The Kit and related materials will be distributed through obstetric and pediatric offices as well as home visiting programs and other community sites that serve young children and their families, including libraries and social service program. Though this distribution the campaign will raise awareness of not only the importance of early learning opportunities, it will also inform families and service providers about services and supports that are available to support families in raising healthy children.
- **Expanding Opportunities Interagency Inclusion Initiative** - The New York State Expanding Opportunities initiative, which is led by the ECAC and includes representatives of the state Part B and Part C lead agencies, state child care administrator, Head Start Collaboration Project and parents is developing strategies to promote the inclusion of young children with disabilities in high quality early care and education programs. One of the core strategies of the initiative is to ensure that all staff working in or in collaboration with early care and education programs have a full understanding of high quality practices and are supported in their efforts to include children with disabilities in learning experiences with their typically developing peers.

2. USE OF ARRA FUNDS TO DATE

*Attach a description of how the state/territory has spent State Advisory Council funds to meet SAC goals. You may refer to your state/territory’s federally approved plan (submitted in your application to ACF) as a basis to discuss how funds have been spent. If you have revised a portion of your project after the start date of your grant **and it has been federally approved**, you may use this information instead, since this represents your most current body of work. (This last sentence does not apply to those who have proposed revisions but have not obtained federal approval.)*

Information about how the State used such funds to meet the goals of this subsection through activities to develop or enhance high-quality systems of early childhood education and care, increase effectiveness of delivery systems and use of funds, and enhance existing programs and services.

New York State’s procurement requirements and the Federal internal controls have caused some work to proceed more slowly than originally anticipated. As of July 31, 2012 New York State’s ECAC spent \$1,094,608 and has obligated \$4,021,001 of the \$5,588,550 Federal Grant award. New York State ECAC

will fully obligate the remaining \$472,941 prior to July 31, 2013. Below is an explanation of funds that are obligated for the remaining grant period:

Personnel Services: Filled six positions to support the implementation of the ECAC strategic plan. Included in the budget are salary, fringe, indirect costs and state administrative fee (\$623,866).

Non Personnel Services:

- **Travel:** Expenses associated with attending meetings and trainings for ECAC staff, ECAC members and ECAC Work Group members (\$25,860).
- **Equipment:** Since all the laptops were purchased in the beginning of year two of the grant period, no funds are obligated to purchase any additional equipment for ECAC staff (\$0).
- **Supplies:** Expenses are associated with general office supplies for ECAC staff. In addition to the more routine office supplies, procurements included subscription to Adobe Connect Pro for webinar software to support the overall work of the ECAC (\$7,412).
- **Contractual:** There are many active contracts that support the ECAC strategic plan. These contracts include (\$3,245,603):
 - Schuyler Center for Analysis & Advocacy supports three additional staff at 30% time (\$145,050).
 - McGlynn Associates provides strategic long-range planning to help implement and move the ECAC Strategic Plan toward fruition. In addition, McGlynn Associates provides facilitation services for the general ECAC quarterly membership meetings which include up to 100 participants for a full day (\$32,542).
 - Augenblick, Palaich, and Associates have entered into two contracts with the ECAC which support the following projects:
 - ✓ ECAC Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model contract will develop a cost estimation model that will help identify funding and population served as it relates to the program and services that support early learning, healthy children, family supports, and the coordination of governance of New York State’s early childhood system. In addition the cost estimation model will support the ECAC strategic plan to “increase public-private investments in early childhood and blend existing investments to maximize impact” (\$54,129).
 - ✓ Return on Investments Cost Estimation Model Component contract that will expand the scope of the Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model by allowing users to determine the return on investment for early care and education programs (\$50,000).
 - New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (NYCECPDI) has entered into two contracts with the ECAC to support the following projects:

- ✓ Early Learning Workforce Professional Development System contract with NYCEPDI will develop a system that will respond to issues such as coordination of pre-service education in early childhood (i.e., articulation agreements among institutions of higher education), recruitment, staff retention, continuing education and compensation (\$1,006,000).
 - ✓ QUALITYstarsNY contract with NYCEPDI will establish New York State's QUALITYstarsNY rating system. QUALITYstarsNY will provide a coherent, systematic way to support program improvement, ensure the best use of public dollars in all early childhood settings, and inform parents in their search for quality care. (\$1,285,000).
 - Advocates for Human Potential will develop and implement a communication plan for the ECAC to increase the support of governmental decision makers, business leaders, and people working in or interested in the field of early childhood services (\$199,752).
 - Children's Institute will develop and implement a plan for the ECAC to advance children's social-emotional development. See description in Section 1 of this document (\$157,630).
 - National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago will gather and analyze data on households and child care providers in high need rural areas of New York State as part of the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) study. See further description in Section 1 of this document (\$150,000).
 - SUNY Center for Women in Government to support a fellow for six months. See description in Section 4 of this document (\$15,500).
 - Shared Services Alliance is a concept by which organizations can reduce costs and improve the strength of management and the quality of services by sharing administrative functions. A one year membership to the Shared Services Alliance web site will offer early care and education providers access to many services that can be shared among them. See further description in Section 4 of this document (\$50,000).
 - Financing Strategy consultant will outline financing strategies that can be used to support early care and education programs within New York State (approximately and no more than \$50,000).
 - Technology Survey contractor will conduct a survey of early care and education programs and providers on their access as well as their staffs' access to internet technology. In addition to questions about access to internet technology, the survey will gather information on the extent to which providers, program directors, and their staff uses this technology as a way to provide program reports, access program information, and participate in on-line professional development opportunities (approximately and no more than \$50,000).
- **Other:** Expenditures associated with the following (\$117,515):

- Design, printing, and postage of assorted materials and reports related to the overall work of the ECAC, as well as deliverables produced by work groups and the communication campaign (\$57,347);
- Space rental – ECAC membership meetings to accommodate approximately 100 people in Albany, NY; and ECAC work group meetings that could occur within New York (\$10,716).
- Common Metric – A tool being designed by New York University and based on the three most commonly used assessments in the state to enable programs to compare and contrast assessment results using consistent measures. See description in Section 4. (\$48,000).
- New York State staff administration fee (\$1,452).

3. REMAINING NEEDS

Attach a description of the remaining needs described in your periodic statewide needs assessment and statewide strategic report that have not yet been addressed by the State. If your periodic needs assessment is not complete, indicate this and provide an explanation.

The ECAC is actively implementing the most important strategies contained in its strategic plan. Several strategies remain that have yet to be addressed. These include:

- Develop recommendations for policy and program changes to promote adequate and equitable income for all families with young children.
- Increase efforts to ensure that children with specific vulnerabilities-including children in foster care, children in homeless families, and children whose parents are struggling with addiction, mental illness, and/or domestic violence, are screened for developmental and social-emotional issues and given needed supports and services.
- Develop a more coherent statewide structure for the child care subsidy system that promotes greater efficiency, accessibility, and quality.
- Develop a coordinated system of screening, referral, and provision of health, social-emotional, disability, and family support services for children in early learning programs.
- Develop recommendations for a new governance structure for services for young children and their families.
- Develop an interagency resource to disseminate information on and encourage public investment at the federal, state, and local level in evidence-based strategies for addressing the needs of families with young children.
- Support local efforts to coordinate services to young children and their families.
- Develop recommendations for shaping the standards of care delivery in all child-serving initiatives through the development of standards of practice to be incorporated into existing contracts, RFPs, trainings, and other opportunities.
- Increase awareness of all child-serving professionals on the array of community resources available for children and families.
- Develop strategies aimed at decreasing disparities in access and utilization across all child-serving systems.

- Develop a series of data reports on a limited set of early childhood health and development key indicators to track progress toward accomplishing plan objectives and strategies.

Efforts to implement these strategies will commence upon completion of current activities and when resources allow.

4. OTHER INFORMATION

Attach a description of any significant findings and events that have been relevant to the implementation of the SAC grant in your state/territory. You may refer to Item B-03 of the PPRs you have been submitting to ACF.

Other Significant Events:

Sustainability – Recognizing the need to sustain the ECAC and its work beyond the federal funding period, the ECAC Co-chairs have appointed several members of the ECAC to an ad hoc group to develop sustainability strategies and an action plan. The group met in a retreat setting in July to begin the development of this plan, and will meet again in the fall to further refine targeted approaches to sustainability.

ECAC Membership meetings – Since ARRA funds began on August 1st, 2010, the ECAC has held seven membership meetings. Minutes for these meetings are available at: <http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/ecacWGMinutes.cfm>. Meetings provide opportunities for networking among members, discussions on innovative strategies, and decisions on important initiatives.

NYS Shared Services Alliance Project –The ECAC is developing a Shared Services initiative as an incentive for programs to participate in QUALITYstarsNY. As New York’s quality rating and improvement system becomes functional throughout the state, a Shared Services system provides additional support for quality. Sponsored by the ECAC and with support from the BUILD Initiative, a New York State Shared Services Alliance Project is a vehicle to streamline administration of programs, share costs and deliver services among small early care and education programs across the state in order to create financially sound organizations that are better equipped to offer affordable, high-quality programming. To that end, a group of stakeholders met in April 2012 to hear John Weiser from Brody Weiser Burns, a national leader in working with early childhood and business services, present on shared services in other states, and explain the range of services New York might consider. Partners throughout the state currently experimenting with Shared Services on the local level shared their experiences. A presentation on Shared Services was held at the June ECAC meeting which garnered significant interest in and support for this project. The ECAC will be contributing funds to a New York State website on Shared Services for programs and providers around the state to share information, business plans, manuals, cost saving strategies (bulk buying), and resources.

Early Learning Challenge Grant - the ECAC played a pivotal role in the development of New York’s Early Learning Challenge Grant (ELCG) application. While New York’s application was not funded, the work of the ECAC to that point provided the basis for the application. Since that time, the ECAC has followed through with many of the ideas that were presented within the ELCG application.

ECAC Newsletter - Starting in January 2011 the ECAC produced a regular internal newsletter,

Updates, which has focused on late-breaking and significant developments and activities within, or of interest to, the ECAC. The newsletter's distribution was limited to ECAC and work group members, as well as a small number of other professionals connected through the Council on Children and Families.

Distribution of the newsletter increased substantially due to the ECACs involvement in the Early Learning Challenge grant application process. Last fall, the ECAC solicited and received over 200 letters of support for New York's application from a wide array of early childhood stakeholders throughout the state. To take advantage of this outpouring of support for and interest in the work of the ECAC, staff invited letter writers to subscribe to the newsletter and over 90 percent of them did. The ECAC has been continuing to invite additional early childhood stakeholders to the subscriber list. As of July 2012 the ECAC newsletter has added over 300 subscribers, enabling continued visibility of ECAC projects and activities among this larger group of stakeholders. The newsletter is now posted via Facebook and Twitter. The decision to expand the list of subscribers has coincided with the unfolding of major ECAC developments that benefited from this wider circulation: publication of the *Core Body of Knowledge* and *Early Learning Guidelines*, and the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. As QUALITYstarsNY and other projects develop, the expanded newsletter subscription list will continue to provide more visibility to the ECAC around the state. Newsletters can be found at <http://archive.constantcontact.com/fs082/1104293819043/archive/1104826822769.html>

ECAC Website –The ECAC has had a website since its inception in 2009. This past winter, to maintain the momentum and the increased visibility gained during the Early Learning Challenge Grant application process, and to publicize new products and developments, the ECAC updated and increased the features and products on its website. Additions include:

- A comment/question box to allow the public to ask questions of or provide feedback on ECAC and early childhood-related issues, activities, and services.
- Each Work Group page now features work group publications, membership lists, and work plans.
- An updated and expanded Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) feature about QUALITYstarsNY.
- Expanded information about the ECAC, including an organizational chart, and a description of the ECAC's integration of, and links to, the Head Start Collaboration Project, Project LAUNCH, and the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Initiative.
- Copies of all quarterly ECAC Membership Meeting minutes.
- Design features to enhance website attractiveness and accessibility, including pictures and more color.

In addition, the ECAC's communication consultants, Advocates for Human Potential, have recently completed an analysis of the ECAC website, which will form the basis for additional design and content changes to optimize accessibility to, and strengthen branding of, the ECAC and its work.

The link to the ECAC website is: <http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/index.cfm>.

Center for Women in Government Fellow – The ECAC hosted a State University of New York at

Albany Center for Women in Government Fellow for a six month period beginning January, 2012. The Fellow worked on several projects related to the Strong Families Work Group's initiatives and developed a policy paper, *Is New York State Maximizing its EPSDT Benefits?*, comparing and contrasting the screening practices in various states for children who are covered under Medicaid services.

Common Metric: The Common Metric is a tool that is currently being developed by New York University for the purpose of being able to translate the results of the three most commonly used early childhood assessments -Teaching Strategies GOLD, Child Observation Record (COR), Work Sampling System (WSS) - into a single metric that will allow early care and education programs to compare and contrast the assessment of children in their care and make those results available to school districts. We will be piloting the tool in New York City and other areas of the state.