



**NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
Membership Meeting
June 4, 2015**

Members:

Patti Banghart	Dana Friedman	Dina Lieser	Patty Persell
Evelyn Blank	Doris Fromberg	Kim McCann	Carol Saginaw
Grace Bonilla	Sheri Gruber	Karen McGraw	Mary Shaheen
Sherry Cleary*	Timothy Hathaway	Jim McGuirk	Monica Short
Rachel de Long	Jeremy Hoffman	Mary McHugh	Ellen Sullivan
Denise Dowell	Liz Hood	Janice Molnar	David Voegele
Andrea Eaton	Ira Katzenstein	Donna Noyes	
Maggie Evans	Nancy Kolben	Jenn O'Connor	
Robert Frawley*	Patti Lieberman	Lynnette Pannucci	

* Co-chair

Guests:

Sue Atwell	Michelle Bianchi	Ariel Davis	Doris Maduka
Bonnie Beukema	Jessica Collier	Cindy Gallagher	

Staff:

Renee Nasadoski	Susan Perkins	Stephanie Woodard
Rebekah Widrick		

Welcome, Introductions, Review of Agenda

Bob Frawley, Co-chair of the ECAC provided:

- **Introductions and Welcome:** Bob welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized Grace Bonilla, President and CEO of the Committee for Hispanic Children and Families, Inc. as one of the newest ECAC Members.
- **Transition Plan:** The Council on Children and Families is in the process of hiring a Director of Early Childhood Initiatives, who is expected to be nominated to replace Bob as ECAC Co-chair. Interviews have been conducted, but no one has been selected, as yet, for this position.
- **News and Announcements:** Bob announced there will be a webinar on June 24th to launch the ECAC's Fiscal Analysis Model for Early Childhood Services (Fiscal Model). He encouraged members to submit names of individuals that would be interested in using the Fiscal Model. More specifically, he asked members to provide names of people who are fiscal or policy analysts, and people who are involved in early childhood systems building and strategic planning.

Early Intervention Program

Donna Noyes, Director of the Bureau of Early Intervention Program at the New York State Department of Health provided a presentation on the Early Intervention Program. Below are links to:

- [Early Intervention Program](#) (PowerPoint)

- [NYS Part C Early Intervention Program State Systemic Improvement Plan Executive Summary](#)
- [DRAFT Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities Early Childhood Programs-Executive Summary](#)
- [DRAFT Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs](#)

Donna's presentation provided information on the following:

- Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) which provides the regulatory requirements for the Early Intervention Program (EIP);
- Sixteen components as they relate the Federal requirements for Early Intervention Program (EIP);
- Department of Health's (DOH) and local government responsibilities for administering EIP;
- Early Intervention services that are provided, payment information as it relates to Medicaid and private insurance, and payments to providers;
- Ages and demographic information as it relates to the children who are eligible and receiving the Early Intervention services, and the top diagnosed disabilities or delays;
- Federal reporting requirements and plans that DOH is required to submit to the federal Departments of Health and Human Services and Education (DHHS-DOE); and a brief overview of the new federal requirements as it relates to the state's systemic improvement plan (see [NYS Part C Early Intervention Program State Systemic Improvement Plan Executive Summary](#));
- Other state level early childhood initiatives; and
- Outcomes for children receiving services and the supports that families received while their child(ren) are receiving the services.

After Donna's presentation, there was time for question and answers, and a discussion regarding the Early Intervention Program. Discussion points are as follows:

- Appropriate Evaluation and Assessments: Members expressed a need for a non-discriminating assessment to ensure children are classified correctly and receive appropriate services. Members felt that culturally sensitive questions can help with the assessment and service delivery process. Members from New York City provided input regarding their experiences as it relates to children and their families where English is the second language. They found children were mis-diagnosed for services because of a language barrier during the assessment process. Some of the members expressed language and cultural differences as a systemic issue as it relates to assessing children.
- Data: In response to questions, Donna provided information on the type of data collected as it relates to children who are currently receiving Early Intervention services. Members felt children of a certain race/ethnicity may be underrepresented because the family refuses services, the family did not follow through with receiving the services or language was a barrier. Currently, no data sharing agreements exist amongst state agencies. Consequently, the Bureau of Early Intervention does not provide data to any state agencies. However, once the children enter school, there are capabilities to match the children who were receiving Early Intervention services prior to entering school with State Education Department enrollment information.
- Payment for Services: Approximately 70 percent of the children who receive Early Intervention services in New York City are paid for by Medicaid.
- Annual Performance Report: The federal DHHS-DOE requires an annual performance report to be submitted in February. In the report, DOH must provide compliance indicators which calculate the percent of children who received timely assessment and enrollment. Other compliance indicators include the date of initial service and the transition into other services. The report must include information on the Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) and performance indicators including child and family outcomes and other factors. As a result of the performance report, federal DHHS-DOE will issue their determination as to whether the state: meets requirements, needs assistance, or needs intervention.

Updates and Reports

- **Child Care Development Fund:** Janice Molnar, Deputy Commissioner of NYS Office of Children and Families Services, Division of Child Care provided the members with an update regarding the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). Janice explained, since very little instruction has been provided to the states regarding plan development, it has been very difficult to proceed with finalizing the plan. States are reluctant to move forward with their interpretation of the new regulations as they would be liable for any misinterpretations. Janice provided an example as it relates to background checks and access to other state sex and child abuse registries. Currently, New York does not have a data sharing agreement with other states for data from sex and child abuse registries, therefore making it difficult to administer the background check as required in the new regulations. Consequently, states are waiting for more information and direction. She emphasized there are no new resources for implementing the new federal regulations.

Janice will meet with the ECAC Promoting Healthy Development, Quality Improvement and Workforce Work Groups to discuss and gain input into the completion of the state's plan.

- **Prekindergarten Expansion:** Sherry, Co-chair of the ECAC, provided the following updates:
 - Prekindergarten Expansion for Three Year Olds: A few ECAC members with classroom experience of teaching three year olds met with Elana Sigall, Deputy Secretary for Education to provide guidance regarding the prekindergarten expansion for three year olds. The group outlined a number of concepts that should be included as part of the planning process such as the length of the day and teaching experience for three year olds.
 - Federal Preschool Expansion Grant: Since the Indian River school district will not be participating in the expansion grant, the Watertown school district was selected as the fifth school district to participate. Progress related to implementing the grant is as follows:
 - Meetings have occurred with the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies from the respective school districts to provide information regarding: QUALITYstarsNY requirements, QUALITYstarsNY technical assistance, and new services to the preschool programs. Discussions included identifying credential trainers at the CCR&R, and the design professional development for teachers and principals.
 - Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between State Education Department (SED) and Professional Development Institute (PDI) at CUNY is in the process of being signed.
- **QUALITYstarsNY Expansion:** The Quality Improvement Work Group established an ad hoc group to develop a plan for the additional \$3.0 million to support QUALITYstarsNY. The groups' recommendations included:
 - Expand the number of QUALITYstarsNY participants by adding more programs, in additional communities such as the City of Newburg or in communities where QUALITYstarsNY currently exist; and
 - Provide more technical assistance, mentoring, and consultation, and less support to staff for going to workshops and other outside professional development.

Sherry also provided an overview of the visit to Newburg with Bob and Ariel Davis, the QUALITYstarsNY Coordinator, to learn more about the CORE initiatives currently being implemented in the city.

Finally, Members representing SED reminded the membership that the new SED commissioner will start on July 6th and hopes that the co-chairs will have the opportunity to meet with her and explain the relationship between SED and ECAC.

Members suggested that consideration be given to establishing learning collaboratives in QUALITYstarsNY communities. Sherry agreed with the suggestion and pointed out that there was a learning community established in Buffalo as part of QUALITYstarsNY implementation.

Report on QUALITYstarsNY

Ariel Davis, QUALITYstarsNY Program Coordinator, provided the members with a preliminary report on 2014-15 QUALITYstarsNY rating cycle. Ariel stress the information provided in the presentation is very preliminary, but will provide members with enough information to understand the rating cycle. To access a copy of her PowerPoint [click here](#).

During her presentation, Ariel provided:

- Preliminary snap shot of data that shows increased points across standard areas and growth in the 4 to 5 star rating;
- Qualitative data from Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs), highlights and program progress supported by the QIPs, and feedback from Quality Improvement Specialist and program providers;
- Ongoing challenges related to the early childhood education workforce;
- Information as it relates to investment in of using Quality Improvement and Quality Scholars funds; and
- Next steps to complete the 2014-2015 rating cycle.

Members asked the following questions:

- Question: Data shows that some programs closed or dropped out of participating in QUALITYstarsNY. And if so, why are programs closing?
 - Answer: There is a possibility that a few QUALITYstarsNY programs may close. There is enough data to see trends amongst the QUALITYstarsNY programs to answer questions such as why the programs are closing or opting out of being a QUALITYstarsNY participant. Members suggested looking at case studies as an attempt to answer these questions.

Other members reflected on their experience relating to program closures. The Early Care and Learning Council collected data on this issue and found that a few upstate programs had closed as a direct result of school districts increasing prekindergarten enrollment in school district operated programs.

There was a recommendation to seek more data to answer these questions.

- Question: How many programs are participating?
- Answer: Currently, there are 330 programs and approximately 300 programs will be re-rated. Of the 330 programs participating, six have a star rating of 5.
- Question: Could the Evaluation Sub Group of the ECAC Quality Improvement Work Group help with data analysis and evaluation?
- Answer: Yes, the work group co-chairs can make the request to use the expertise of the sub group for evaluation input and data analysis. In year two, the budget will include funds for an evaluation. It makes the most sense to finish the re-ratings prior to the evaluation. This could happen this fall.

Advocacy Report

Jenn O’Conner, New York State Director for Council for a Strong America provided the advocacy report from Winning Beginning New York. To access a copy of her PowerPoint [click here](#).

During her presentation, Jenn provided:

- A list of the immediate priorities in which Winning Beginning New York will focus on now until the end of session includes legislation to:
 - Support the need for child care for people working evening shifts;
 - Provide paid absences for child care providers;
 - Change School Age Child Care (SACC) regulations to allow this program to operating in school buildings to follow the health and safety regulations of schools;
 - Establish an Early Learning Investment Commission; and
 - Reinstate funds to New York City to support their after school program.
- State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2016-2017 Budget/Policy Priorities
 - Prekindergarten: Recommendation to revise the Request for Proposal (RFP) process for school districts to access the prekindergarten funds. It is a financial burden for school districts to upfront the funds and seeks reimbursement from SED. The prekindergarten programs who received the first round of funds indicate there is a significant lag in the reimbursement process.
 - Child Care: Expand access to quality child care.
 - Home Visiting: Adequate funding for **all** home visiting programs.
 - Early Intervention: Restore the reimbursement rates from previous cuts.
 - Afterschool: Increase funding.
 - Quality: Expand QUALITYstarsNY. As a result of today’s presentation from Ariel, Jenn recommended using the data from the re-rating to show change in quality.
 - Workforce: Address compensation disparities and start with schools and community-based organizations with prekindergarten programs.
- Long-term Priorities:

During Jenn’s presentation she outlined some long-term priorities Winning Beginning New York has identified:

 - Systemic change that addresses the needs of the child;
 - Look across funding silos to support early childhood;
 - Partner/collaborate with key players including the business community; and
 - Think outside the box (i.e. early learning as an economic development strategy).
- Immediate efforts:

During the coming year, Winning Beginning New York will focus on methods to tackle low-hanging fruit such as:

 - Consolidate prekindergarten funding;
 - Streamline the prekindergarten application process; and
 - Push for more funding to support all home-visiting programs.
- Relationship with the ECAC:

Jenn expressed the need for ECAC members to:

 - Sign up for e-advocacy updates;

- Take action on important legislation; and
- Develop relationships with business leaders.

Steering Committee: Three Year Stretch

Members received a brief overview of the ECAC Steering Committee retreat that occurred April 29th and 30th. Maggie McGlynn facilitated the retreat. During the retreat many things were accomplished and discussed. During the two days, the members:

- Re-affirmed their commitment to continue to be leaders for the ECAC; and
- Identified the ECAC's peak experiences and recognized the cross system of approach of the ECAC and work group members working together for a common goal.

The members agreed to:

- Help work groups to align their efforts; and
- Commit to support the work groups by identifying a list of short goals.

The Steering Committee members were all in agreement that a racial equity conversation that is deep and long is needed. The ECAC should:

- Develop and implement strategies to increase the numbers of racially diverse early childhood leaders;
- Use a racial equity lens when developing policies and programs;
- Consider ways to ensure racial equity is imbedded in the work that we do;
- Examine how other state address racial equity (i.e. Washington had good questions to ensure they are imbedding racial equity in all their work.); and
- Request BUILD resources to provide support.

In order to change the strategic plan, it is important to identify what the ECAC should focus on. Sherry led a discussion on the next three years and the challenges and opportunities that they bring to the ECAC. Sherry posed four themes in two separate exercises.

The first exercise allowed the members to work at their respective tables as a group. They were to respond to one out of three themes. To access a copy of the full content of the question and the themes [click here](#).

The question associated with the four themes: *What is our next three year stretch, challenge or innovation as leaders for authentic and reliable direction of our work groups and Steering Committee?*

Below are the responses:

- *Theme 1: Establish a bigger role in influencing funding designs/continuum:*
 - The ECAC has the expertise to influence funding resources as it relates to health homes, Medicaid Redesign, home and community based support services, and other programs that are designed to serve the prenatal to five populations.
 - It is difficult for the work groups to increase access for primary care to children and their families because there are minimal dedicated funds for primary care for children.

- *Theme 2: Generate strategies to deal with systemic change; what would it look like?*
 - Defining, Redefining and Goal Setting:
 - Describe what we mean by integrate systems; and
 - Determine what would a true early childhood system look like if there was an integrated system?
 - Communication:
 - Regular press releases and publications about the ECAC;
 - Use the ECAC email blast and target chambers of commerce, and others so they can learn about the ECAC and what we do;
 - Products developed by the ECAC should be shared more frequently;
 - Use fiscal and data information as a way to inform people;
 - ECAC can develop reports on system changes, coordination and communication;
 - Regular communication with Governor's Office in addition to attending the ECAC meetings;
 - Have we underutilized the Governor's Office? Structure a part of the ECAC agenda around "What would the Governor's Office representatives need to know"; and
 - Meet with the Legislature to encourage them to seek the ECAC expertise.
 - ECAC and Work Group Membership:
 - Need to train/orientate new members about the ECAC;
 - Create a list of experts/speakers from the ECAC membership and arrange the list by topics;
 - Promote research with the work groups;
 - Conduct a symposium for the work groups that is topic centered to generate specific ideas. We may want to frame the symposium as it relates to opportunities. Once the information is generated it can be presented to the legislature; and
 - ECAC should provide the expertise and support on states initiatives.
 - Collaboration:
 - Get lots of people at the table with the same message; however they have to own the message. The message could focus on: economic development, education or health care; Or develop a common statement for the purpose of advocacy;
 - Eliminate silos; and
 - Use collective wisdom to define systemic change. Create a road map or visual of a system. Illustrate ways we are helping the Governor. Try and capture short-, mid- and long-term change. Invert the argument.
 - Existing Opportunities:
 - The state has assets (paid for) that are well used by some and not by others. How do we get low income families to access programs and services? There is a difference between availability and access.

Note: None of the tables selected to respond to the third theme: *Address our governance practices to promote long-term sustainability. Support the transitioning of leadership, build the base of emerging leaders and address issues of diversity.*

The second exercise allowed the members to focus on one theme and the members responded in an open forum. The theme was:

Realign the workgroups to generate more sustainable efforts given fewer staff resources. For example, choose 2-4 items in next year and develop the needed structure to energize the work and produce more successful outcomes and system level changes.

Below are the member's responses:

- A better understanding of what we mean by "system";
- Identify policies that can be eliminated as a result of duplication, and identify competing or complementary efforts as it relates to social and emotional health;
- Develop a cost savings map;
- Select two cross-cutting issues for example, developmental screening and social-emotional health, Medicaid Redesign, or Child Care Development Block Grant to focus on and then require cross-work group collaboration;
- Align with Winning Beginning New York on political possibilities to affect change. It might be best for both organizations to work together. Can a large group with the same interest and comparable agendas work together?; and
- Review the need for work groups to be time limited and not long-term; periodically review work group work plans with a focus on accomplishments.

Next Steps

- Janice will attend the following work group meetings or participate on a conference call seeking support for the CCDF plan: Promoting Healthy Development, Quality Improvement, and Workforce Development.
- Send Stephanie contact information for anyone you think would benefit from using the ECAC Fiscal Model so they can participate in the webinar.
- Don't forget to sign up for the e-advocacy alerts and participate in coalition calls/meetings

The next meeting is scheduled for September 24, 2015 at the Empire State Plaza, Albany NY - Meeting Room 2 and 3 from 10:30 am – 3:30 pm