

New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council

Initiatives Update

June 4th 2012

BUILD Initiative – New York became a BUILD state in 2009. Since the beginning, BUILD funding and technical assistance has been used to support the ECAC. Prior to New York receiving federal funds, BUILD contributed financial assistance to ECAC for meeting costs and for staff contributed by the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy to support the ECAC and its work groups. BUILD technical assistance has focused on various aspects of system-building, including providing information about other states' experiences in developing statewide initiatives and strategic planning, as well as assistance in addressing more specific issues such as quality rating and improvement system development and developmental screening .

During this reporting period, BUILD has continued to provide technical assistance and financial support to the ECAC. Technical assistance has focused on supporting our efforts to implement QUALITYstarsNY, specifically ensuring culturally competent interpretation of standards, and the development of New York State's Early Learning Challenge grant proposal. Funding has been used to support meeting costs, meeting facilitation, staff support, and a shared services project.

NYS Shared Services Alliance Project – With support from the BUILD Initiative and the ECAC, a NYS Shared Services Alliance Project is being discussed as a vehicle to streamline and share costs and deliver services among small early learning and development businesses 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 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 learn about local shared services efforts currently happening around New York State. Several ECAC members are planning a presentation for the June ECAC meeting in order to gauge interest in and support for this project.

Communication Consultant - The ECAC has recently signed a contract with Advocates for Human Potential, a communication consultant firm, to develop and implement a communications plan for the ECAC. This contract will allow the ECAC to develop a consistent and professional logo and materials that will be used to increase support for early childhood and publicize QUALITYstarsNY and other projects. Target audiences include the Governor's Office, Legislature, businesses, and people working in early childhood services. The Advocates for Human Potential attended the December 2011 ECAC meeting to introduce themselves and begin to review the ECAC's core messages and goals for communication. They then led a full day meeting with the ECAC Steering Committee in April to explore these issues in depth. The Advocates for Human Potential team is currently in the process of interviewing all staff, work group and ECAC co-chairs to understand internal and external ECAC communications, both formal and informal, and examine how the communication flows, in order to develop a more effective process.

Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant –The ECAC initiated a Request for Proposals process in early February for a Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant to work with the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group on a variety of strategies to support young children’s social-emotional development. The ECAC received six proposals, and in early March selected Children’s Institute, Inc. of Rochester, NY. The role of the Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant is to:

- 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 evidenced-based curriculum 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.
- Investigate ways to sustain all of the above activities beyond the duration of the grant.

The contract with Children’s Institute is in process and is expected to be finalized within the next month.

Other consultants -In addition to the Communications Consultants and the Social-Emotional Development Support Consultants, other possible consultants are being considered based on needs of work groups for consultants to support work group efforts including developing financing strategies and implementing a universal screening initiative. The ECAC co-chairs have held conference call meetings with the co-chairs of each work group to discuss ways to increase opportunities for success, including needs for other supports and/or consultants. These conversations have helped work groups synthesize their ideas for possible use of consultants.

National Survey of Early Care and Education--New York State policymakers have observed that rural counties in the state seem to have an undersubscription 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. The ECAC is contracting 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. If the contract is approved, in addition to the one high need rural Primary Service Unit that will be surveyed as part of the National Survey of Early Care and Education, the ECAC will purchase 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 would help understand the obstacles to enrollment of families and providers in the subsidy program within rural areas of New York State. The contract has been signed by the National Opinion Resource Center and is awaiting approval by the NYS Comptroller’s Office and NYS Attorney General’s Office.

Children's Mental Health Awareness Week – In conjunction with the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's designation of May 7-11th as Children's Mental Health Awareness Week, the ECAC engaged in several activities: publicizing events occurring in communities throughout the state, and, at the state level, was a co-sponsor of several events in Albany under the heading, *What's Great In Our State: A Celebration of Children's Mental Health Awareness Week*. Other co-sponsors of the Albany event included the NYS Office of Mental Health, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy, the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill – New York, Families Together in New York State, the Early Care and Learning Council, and the Council on Children and Families. Events included a display of the national **Invest in Us** exhibit, a press conference with state legislators, and an evening reception that celebrated the importance of supporting children's mental health from the prenatal period to adulthood and ensuring a continuum of appropriate care and services to maximize children's opportunities for success in school and life. Reception speakers included Bob Frawley from the CCF/ECAC, who highlighted state-level initiatives to promote healthy social-emotional development as the foundation for healthy development. Over 100 persons attended the evening reception.

Early Childhood Mental Health Technical Assistance – New York is one of seven states that are participating in a three part series of technical assistance conference calls around building state systems on children's mental health. The technical assistance is sponsored by the National Center for Children in Poverty and ZEROTOTHREE National Policy Center. Technical assistance is focused on ways to expand early childhood mental health supports in early learning and development programs. The NY State Team has used the technical assistance to clarify opportunities provided by QUALITYstarsNY to support social-emotional development in young children, particularly those in programs in communities identified as having Persistently Lowest Achieving schools.

Center for Women in Government Fellow – The ECAC has 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 has worked on several projects related to the Strong Families Work Groups initiatives and is developing a policy paper, *Is New York State Maximizing its EPSDT Benefits?*, that compares and contrasts the screening practices of various states for children who are covered under Medicaid.

Expanding Opportunities for Inclusion -During the spring of 2010, a proposal was submitted to the **Expanding Opportunities for Inclusion Initiative**, a federal project to provide technical assistance on inclusion of children with disabilities in mainstream early learning programs and other settings. A team coordinated by Council on Children and Families and comprised of representatives of the State Education Department, Office of Children and Family Services, the Department of Health, and others submitted the proposal. The team has been working together in the last year and a half on a series of steps leading to the development of a plan for increasing the effective inclusion of children with disabilities in early learning programs and settings. In April, a full-day stakeholders meeting was held to assess New York's current policies and practices related to inclusion and to develop recommendations for how we can include children with disabilities in programs and services for young children. Work has progressed on the development of a white paper with recommendations for steps that can be taken at the state and local level to increase inclusion. Currently, the NYS Expanding Opportunities Leadership

Team is working to finalize strategies for the white paper and will use those strategies to formulate an action plan.

Work Group Activities and Accomplishments

Data Development Work Group

The Data Development Work Group was established to design a cross-early childhood program 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. 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.

Staff to the work group has been sitting on the Steering Committee and Project Team of New York State Education Department's P-20 Data System Project, where he has been successfully working on the inclusion of available early childhood data in the P-20 Data System.

A Data and Research Subgroup has been created, which will investigate early childhood data that is currently available to help answer our Policy and Program Questions which were created by the Data Development Work Group in Spring 2011. The Sub Group has selected three Program and Policy Questions and will attempt to follow the questions through the analysis phase, thinking through the process and scoping out the possible barriers and threats to the validity and reliability of findings. The subgroup will be considering issues such as source differences, coding issues, missing variables and covariates, and issues concerning external validity.

An Early Childhood Technology Subgroup has been created, which will examine the status and quality of child care providers' access to the internet from their program location. As more provider activities are web-based such as the Child Care Time and Attendance, New York Works for Children workforce registry and QUALITYstarsNY Data systems, online training, and reporting activities, New York State needs to effectively plan for and deploy new web-based tools. In order to do this, New York State needs good information about the technological capacity of its providers and workforce.

The purpose of this project is to gather data on New York State's licensed and legally exempt child care facilities' access and connectivity to technology and basic information about employees' technology use. The results will be used to inform New York State's Early Childhood Advisory Council as they move toward developing and deploying web-based technologies to the field.

The project will address the following research questions:

- What is the technological capacity (meaning type of devices used, connectivity type, speed, and quality) of child care providers and exempt providers across the state?
- What types of activities (administrative and training) are done online?
- How frequently do administrative staff and child care employees engage in these activities online?
- Where do administrative staff and child care employees' access online activities?
- What alternative methods are used to accomplish activities (administrative and training) when technology or connectivity are not available?

The Early Childhood Technology Subgroup is working with an outside organization to develop and conduct a survey of Early Childhood providers.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Continue planning for the development of the New York State Early Learning Data System
- Investigate the legal ramifications of such a project.
- Investigate what type of infrastructure is needed for the system
 - Where it could be hosted
 - How much it will cost (initially and long-term)
- Determine what research and policy questions can be answered with existing data.
- Begin work on an Early Childhood Providers technology survey.

Finance Work Group

The Finance Work Group continues to work with 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 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.

During this reporting period, ECAC staff has collected the information needed to populate the cost model. Of the necessary data and funding information, 95 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 is conducive to developing the cost estimation model.

The Finance Work Group had a meeting on December 16, 2011 with APA representatives and representatives from state agencies and advocacy groups to demonstrate a prototype of the cost model and discuss the development of the cost model; and on January 31, 2012 the Finance Work Group Members had a conference call to make decisions on important topics identified at the December 16th meeting.

As a result of the December 16th meeting and the January 31st conference call, the Finance Work Group determined the following:

- Cost Model User Ability: Users of the cost model will be able to:
 - Focus on individual programs and expand, contract, or eliminate programs as the user sees fit (many levels of options can be exercised);
 - Select programs across domains and within domains; and
 - Select programs and domains based on the “proven effectiveness” of programs. Programming options will be driven by the degree of evidence behind the initiative.
- Cost Model Domains: Eliminate the domains as part of the selection criteria, but have the cost model be able to identify the programs and services as part of a domain when reporting the funding information.
- Categories and Eligibility Requirements for Home Visiting Programs: Create categories to identify home visiting programs. The categories are as follows:
 - Targeted Category: Support families with issues such as mental illness, substance abuse, speech and language or physical disability.
 - Intensive Category: Support families and children at high-risk for issues such as abuse and neglect, homelessness, and poverty.
- Policy Development: The cost model will support policymakers who need to develop policies to resolve a problem and/or support a specific outcome. The cost model will identify funding source to support policy no matter what agency administers the funding. The cost model will include data on families who are not eligible for current program services under the existing eligibility requirement.
- Regional Costs: APA representatives acknowledged they will use the *New York State Board of Regents Proposal on State Aid to School Districts for School Year 2011-12* as a way to identify regional costs.
- Quality of the Program: There will be a separate screen to identify the level of quality for child care programs.

A meeting is scheduled for May 22, 2012 in which APA representatives will demonstrate a prototype of the cost model. The decisions that were made at the December 16th meeting and during the January 31st conference call will be re-visited at that May 22nd meeting to determine if there are any necessary changes to be made. Once the changes have been made a subgroup is ready to test the cost model. Testing will last for approximately two weeks.

In addition to the decisions that were made specific to the cost model, the Finance Work Group decided to expand the initial scope of the project by including the following:

- Local Investment: The cost model will have some local investment information associated with New York City. ECAC staff has identified data and funding associated with New York City. This information will be included in the cost model demonstration scheduled for May 22nd. ECAC staff will continue to work with:
 - New York City Independent Budget Office
 - New York City Administration for Children's Services Division of Child Care and Head Start
 - New York City Department of Education

ECAC staff will contact the New York City Office of Budget Management to ensure budget information is consistent with the information provided from the offices listed above.

- Return on Investment: Currently ECAC staff is working with APA representatives on a return on investment proposal that will link the results of scenarios generated by the cost model with estimates of the economic impact of the identified system of services. The option will expand the current cost model to report the economic and non-economic benefits of specific investments. This component will calculate and identify the return on investment for programs and services administered within New York State. It is expected once the component is fully operational, the user will be able to adjust program or service characteristics and the model will calculate the return on investment based on the chosen characteristics. The model will also be able to generate a report on several benefit categories such as income, savings, and graduation rate.

Currently, the state of Colorado is in the process of implementing a return on investment component in their cost model. New York State ECAC hopes to collaborate with them by pulling together resources to strengthen this initiative. A conference call is being scheduled with representatives from the Colorado Early Childhood Leadership Commission and several experts who developed the Colorado return on investment component in order to assist in developing a version for New York State.

As a result of adding the return on investment component, the Finance Work Group approved the amendments to the initial Finance Work Group work plan. However, the work plan was not

amended to support the local investment piece as this work was included early on as part of the data collection.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Review a prototype of the cost model and analyze/revise data to ensure the cost model is functioning correctly. ECAC staff will work with APA representatives to prepare the cost model for the testing phase.
- Begin to test the cost model. Testing will be conducted for two weeks in which recommended changes will be sent to APA. Develop a plan to maintain the information in the cost model
- Establish interagency protocols for requesting analysis of and recommending changes to the cost model in order to ensure integration and improved access and quality.
- Review the collected data and create a technical document that provides definitions of the program and services included in the cost model and an explanation of the methodologies used to identify per unit costs and funding.
- Finalize the cost model and make preparations for the cost model to go live on the ECAC web site.
- Identify and retain a consultant to develop strategies for maximizing funding and developing new financing strategies which would include a mix of public and private resources to increase investments in a comprehensive system.
- Develop recommendations for implementing new financing strategies.
- Prepare an analysis of the barriers to and opportunities for maximizing use of existing resources to support the goals of a coordinated and comprehensive system of services that meet agreed-upon standards.

Promoting Healthy Development Work Group

Six Month Work Plan

- Continue obesity prevention activities, and expand activities within early care and learning programs in the state through the Ad Hoc Subgroup on Nutrition and Obesity.
- Advance work on expanding the role of health consultants in early care and learning programs.
- Prepare and organize tasks for the Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant.
- Use the Ad Hoc Subgroup on Social Emotional Development to continue work on the Early Childhood Mental Health tool to continue work with state agencies and the ECAC to populate the tool and continue discussion on its use. It will also seek to develop a permanent “home” for the tool so it can become a living document and can continue to inform state planning.
- Advance work on developmental screening around the areas of practice support, parent engagement and policy change.

Strong Families Work Group

The purpose of the Strong Families Work Group is to incorporate the principles of strengthening families, promoting resiliency, and enhancing protective factors into a framework for all health, education, and human services. That framework informs the efforts of the work group to ensure that appropriate services and supports are provided to families. Those services/supports include parent education, screening and assessment of children and families, and voluntary home visiting for all expectant and new families.

The Work Group is interested in supporting other Groups, but also in finding a unique initiative of its own. To that end, the Group will meet in-person on June 25 to discuss priority areas and formulate a workplan for the next 12 months.

Major activities this period include:

QUALITYstarsNY: The Quality Improvement Work Group has asked for assistance developing strategies for family engagement. The Work Group is examining how best to proceed.

New York State Home Visiting Coalition: The Work Group will become more active in home visiting through its relationship to the NYS Home Visiting Coalition. Conversations will occur regarding the development of a standardized needs assessment.

NYS Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) - The Strong Families Work Group continues to support the work of the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) to empower parents and caregiver to support positive parenting practices through the following activities:

New Parent Kit –NYSPEP continues work to develop the Parent Guide, which is the core component of the New Parent Kit. The Parent Guide will support parents in being confident and competent as they decide what to say and do to help their child thrive. The Parent Guide will offer developmentally appropriate guidance to parents based on evidence based parenting behaviors and will help parents effectively use service systems and resources to build stronger parent-child relationships.

The goal of the Parent Guide is to help parents:

- **Gain Knowledge** of their child’s developmental behaviors and evidence based parenting behaviors that promote development;
- **Build Skills in** effectively observing and recognizing indicators of their child’s development, implementing evidence based parenting behaviors based on observations, and accessing appropriate resources, and supports as needed; and
- **Practice Parent Reflection** by recording parenting memories and child developmental milestones.

Community Cafés – In partnership with the NYS Children and Family Trust Fund, NYSPEP will hold 4 regional Community Café trainings in Rochester, Ithaca, Albany, and New York City. This

project seeks to use Community Cafés as a parent leadership and community engagement tool that facilitates conversations based on the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Framework that contribute to community and family strengths and leadership. (Visit [Center for the Study of Social Policies' Strengthening Families website](#) website for more information about the Protective Factors Framework). The goal of the Community Café initiative is to encourage family engagement and community level, cross-systems communication with the hope of increasing reciprocity within these relationships and to infuse cross-systems learning with parent's perspective.

Parenting Education Credential – This year, NYSPEP introduced a Parenting Education Credential to New York State. The Parenting Education Credential defines consistent criteria for the knowledge, skills, and experience needed by all parenting educators. The 4 Tiers accommodate novice, intermediate and master parent educators, and each requires the parenting educator to demonstrate increasing levels of competence. The Credential is for all those who support families and facilitate the growth and development of parents through support and education, regardless of work setting or job title. NYSPEP has held several free 2-hour Parenting Education Credential Orientations across the state.

Workforce Development Work Group

The Workforce Development Work Group is organized to advance the components of an Early Learning Workforce Professional 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); recruitment, staff retention, continuing education and compensation. Work group members have been working to create and implement a competency-based professional development system through a variety of related activities, including these three priorities:

- Revision of the Core Body of Knowledge;
- Development of a Career Lattice and Registry; and
- Promotion of high quality learning opportunities for active professionals and students entering the early care and learning professions.

During this period, the revised Core Body of Knowledge (CBK) and the first edition of New York State's Early Learning Guidelines were published and formally released to the early childhood community at the 2012 New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC) conference in April.

Workforce Development Work Group members organized two events during the conference to highlight these documents.

- One event was a pre-conference Trainers' Institute, which included an opening session of 120 trainers and educators from institutions of higher education to introduce the CBK and ELGs and how they can be used to strengthen preparation of new professionals and practice in the classroom. A smaller session followed in which credentialed trainers and those working to obtain a credential met to begin developing training modules that embed the principles of the CBK and the ELGs into classroom planning.
- A second event was the Conference's opening plenary session, in which all 1,100 conference attendees were introduced to and received a copy of the Core Body of Knowledge and the Guidelines, and heard a panel presentation by one of the authors of the Guidelines, an early childhood teacher, and a director of an early learning program, who shared ways that the documents support teachers in their practice.

Since the conference, the work group has met to continue developing training and dissemination plans. Plans are underway to develop training modules and continuing professional development opportunities for trainers and practitioners. Funds have been secured to develop two in-person trainings, an interactive distance learning module as well as an on-line resource library of videos demonstrating best practice.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Refine the elements in the New York State Early Learning Professional Development Registry, including linking with the QUALITYstarsNY database.
- Continue development of the Career Ladder and Registry, especially focusing on defining acceptable educational alternatives to early childhood coursework/majors, referred to as 'related fields.'
- Develop a training plan to ensure the use of the Early Learning Guidelines and Core Body of Knowledge as core elements of a framework for the training and education of the early childhood workforce. Plans are underway to develop training modules and continuing professional development opportunities for trainers and practitioners. Funds have been secured to develop two in-person trainings, an interactive distance learning module as well as an on-line resource library of videos demonstrating best practice.

