

New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council

Initiatives Update

September 19th, 2011

Data Development Work Group

The Data Development Work Group has been working to determine 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. Plans are to extend this effort to other early childhood service systems and to link data systems to the P-20 student tracking system being developed by the State Education Department.

A Work Group meeting was held on July 18, where the following documents were approved and reviewed:

- Data Element Analysis
- Data Elements Needed
- ECAC data elements crosswalk
- Scored List of Program and Policy Questions

Staff to the Work Group, Jeff Luks, has been asked to sit on the Steering Committee and Project Team of NYS Education Department's P-20 Data System Project, where he has been working on the inclusion of available early childhood data in the P-20 Data System.

There also has been a great deal of work recently on the creation of a NYS Early Learning Data System proposal for the Early Learning Challenge Grant.

Six-month Work Plan

- Continue planning for the development of the NYS Early Learning Data System, either through the Early Learning Challenge Grant and/or the P-20 Data System Project
- 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)

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 Model System. The system will be defined by

domains (Early Learning, Strong Families, Healthy Children, and Coordinated and Responsive Systems) which are consistent with the ECAC focus areas, and cost elements supported by program and service funding/data information. The cost model will provide information and analysis for determining alternative financing strategies for early childhood services; allow for maximizing existing resources to support the goals of a coordinated and comprehensive service system; and identify barriers associated with early childhood services.

Since receiving the recommended changes to the cost model matrix from the Finance Work Group members and members of the other work groups, ECAC staff has met with state staff to identify funding source and related population; and conducted regular monthly conference calls with the Finance Work Group Co-Chairs. The Finance Work Group has also had an in-person meeting with APA and several NYS and NYC agencies to further develop aspects of the system that are specific to New York

Six-month Work Plan

- Continue data/funding collection process by working closely with the Data Development Work Group, and NYS budget staff
- APA representatives will begin analyzing and preparing the data and funding information in a format that is conducive to the development of the cost model system
- Begin the development of web-based cost model
- Discuss the reports that will be produced by the cost model system.
- Schedule an in person meeting in New York City for data collection
- Finish data/funding collection process and review the results with APA
- Final adjustments to model
- Present final version of model
- APA will deliver final report and user guide
- APA will provide technical support
- Develop New York City model and incorporate it into main model
- Schedule a series of four webinars, one for each of the domains of the Cost Model, for September/October.

Promoting Healthy Development Work Group

The purpose of the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group is to build the capacity of professionals working with young children to identify and address the social emotional development needs of young children and their families; strengthen and expand health and safety in early care and education settings, and promote healthy behaviors. To achieve these objectives they have focused on the following:

Social emotional development – The Work Group has been gathering information for an RFP that proposes to hire a consultant who will help identify and infuse training modules on social-emotional development and other topics into existing professional development systems.

The Work Group has been monitoring the development of Project LAUNCH in Westchester and New York City in order to encourage, support and publicize these efforts to integrate mental health into primary care. They have also been monitoring the Social-Emotional Development Consultation Demonstration Project. Findings are being synthesized and the Work Group will integrate those findings into their ongoing work to support mental health.

Health and safety in early care and education settings - Work Group members have been participating with the American Academy of Pediatrics to integrate best practices in health into early education and care settings. Members of the Work Group have been learning more about the QUALITYstarsNY initiative with the Quality Improvement Work Group in order to inform the efforts to revise standards around social-emotional development, nutrition and physical activity.

Promoting healthy behaviors - The Obesity Prevention sub-group continued to work on efforts to promote healthy eating, physical activity, and breastfeeding support in child care settings in New York State. The work of this team, including its relationship with the ECAC, was recently highlighted in the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Division of Physical Activity, Nutrition and Obesity's website page devoted to innovative state practices in childcare settings: http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/downloads/obesity_program_highlights.pdf .

Early Childhood Mental Health Tool – The Work Group is spearheading an effort to use Early Childhood Mental Health Tool designed by NCCP to determine existing services/supports and to identify gaps in services/supports . The Tool will help inform the work of both PHD and SF groups going forward.

Six-month Work Plan

- Collaborating with the NYS Department of Health Division of Nutrition on obesity prevention in early childhood. The Department of Health is working with the CDC on a project to reduce obesity in young children so the two groups merged to develop a common agenda and work plan moving forward. Initial initiatives will focus on reducing screen time, eliminating sugar sweetened beverages and increasing breast feeding.
- Moving forward with the development of a web-based tool to deliver information on social – emotional development to providers, parents and professionals working with young children. More work is needed to determine the final direction of the website, but the initial project will gather information and look for gaps in information already available.

- Working with ongoing efforts to see what synergy can be developed with ECAC activities. In addition to the CDC obesity initiative, the group is reaching out to Project Launch for similar discussions. There has also been work done to incorporate health, (including social-emotional development)and safety standard revisions and resources into QUALITYstarsNY.
- The Work Group will be collecting information for the Early Childhood Mental Health Tool designed by NCCP to determine existing services/supports and to identify gaps in services/supports. The Work Group will participate in a webinar in November to discuss the tool and its use to help plan early childhood mental health efforts moving forward in the coming months.

Quality Improvement Work Group

The Quality Improvement Work Group (QIWG) revised its work plan, organizing tasks into the five key elements of a quality rating and improvement system (Standards, Data, Professional Development, Finance and Communication) and an over-arching category of System Building.

The QUALITYstarsNY standards for center-based and family-based settings are being revised based on the results of the field test, and to include significant aspects of the Early Learning Challenge Grant application. Several sub-groups meet regularly via conference call to edit, add and delete elements of the standards. Work has also begun on the development of a set of program quality standards for programs which serve school-age children. The Quality Improvement Work Group will review the revised standards and recommendations for changes at the September 27 meeting in Rensselaer.

The QUALITYstarsNY e-newsletter was published in August. Highlights included an announcement of the Governor’s intention to compete for the Early Learning Challenge Grant, news about ongoing work with the continuing field test locations, and information about the “Buffalo Bridge Project”, which will pair experienced QUALITYstarsNY sites with newly-chosen programs to test the efficacy of a peer coaching model of professional development and technical assistance. The QUALITYstarsNY website now includes updated information and will have a new look soon, with the expert advice from an outside consultant.

In August, the QIWG participated via webinar in the review and revision of a 5-Year Implementation Plan for QUALITYstarsNY. Several policy options were discussed to determine estimations of the cost for a gradual “ramp-up” with an increasing number of centers, schools and homes participating each of the five years. These timelines will be adjusted as needed once the ELCG announcements have been made.

Six-Month Work Plan:

- ★ Continue implementation of QUALITYstarsNY in the field test communities. Quality Improvement Specialists are coordinating activities at the field test sites to operationalize the Quality Improvement Plans.
- ★ Continue periodic publication of QUALITYstarsNY electronic newsletter and explore additional ways to maintain interest in the program.

- ★ Develop a system that utilizes QUALITY Scholars program to support professional development opportunities that prepare the field for the statewide implementation of QUALITYstarsNY.
- ★ Continue efforts to link New York’s implementation of the early learning priority Race to the Top to ECAC workforce development projects and activities and implementation of QUALITYstarsNY.
- ★ Identify, adapt or develop replicable professional development activities that will help professionals in early care and education programs ‘get ready’ for QUALITYstarsNY.
- ★ Develop tools and resources that partners and others can use to promote QUALITYstarsNY

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.

Major activities for the past three months included consulting with the NYS Parenting Education Partnership on the development of a New Parent Kit. Members met with NYSPEP to review materials and offer their thoughts on content. The Work Group has also begun the development of a universal screening initiative beginning with developmental screening. A sub group participated in conversations with Neal Halfon (UCLA) and Marian Earls (Commonwealth Fund, ABCD) that helped frame their thinking. They then met with the State Medicaid Director and members of the Medicaid Redesign Team (MRT) to secure support for the initiative. Staff is currently in the process of collecting data from “prototype communities” that already have screening initiatives underway, and is drafting language that would include screening in the MRT benefits plan. In addition, members of the Work Group are working with the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group on completing an Early Childhood Mental Health Tool designed by NCCP to determine existing services/supports and to identify gaps in services/supports. The Tool will help inform the work of both groups going forward. The Work Group also has been serving in an advisory capacity to the NYS Home Visiting Coalition, and is awaiting word from the federal government requiring the Department of Health’s application for funding.

Six-month Work Plan

- Continue to work with the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group on an Early Childhood Mental Health Tool.

- Continue to collaborate with NYSPEP by providing input into prototype New Parent Kit, examining possible funding opportunities and options, and exploring dissemination plans.
- Continue with plans for a designing a developmental screening system, working with Medicaid Redesign Team.
- Determine next steps in supporting a sustainable system of home visiting for the state.

Workforce Development Work Group

The ECAC Workforce Development Work Group is organized to advance the components of an “Early Learning 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 are working to create and implement a competency-based professional development system through a variety of related activities. Following an evaluation of the status of current efforts in the field, subgroups were organized to focus on the following areas:

- Revise the Core Body of Knowledge;
- Produce the NYS Early Learning Guidelines: Birth to Age Five
- Develop a Career Lattice and Registry; and
Study the issues of transition between two and four year colleges.

Progress continues in finalizing the Core Body of Knowledge (CBK) into a clearer format; competencies are described in easy to understand language with corresponding examples of expectations in behavior. A consultant has been retained to lead the development of the statewide career development system. Work on the development of the Registry and the Career Ladder continue. The Work Group has also taken responsibility for the final stages of developing the Early Learning Guidelines (ELG), a project intended to provide educators, policy makers and parents, with a set of expectations about what infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers should know and be able to do during specified developmental stages. Members of the Two and Four Year Transitions Study Groups convened during the NYS AEYC conference in April 2011, to address issues faced by early childhood students advancing from community to four year college programs.

Six-month Work Plan

- A goal for the next six months will be to vet the Core Body of Knowledge with the wider early care and learning community through listservs and regional meetings conducted by local representatives of the Work Group. The CBK is aligned with the Early Learning Guidelines.
- Continue steps in the development of a Professional Registry including:

- Costing out the development of the Registry (process has begun);
 - Finalize a process to approve professional development opportunities and trainers;
 - Begin to develop a search feature to assist professionals in accessing approved professional development.
- Two and Four Year Transitions Study Groups will continue work to address issues faced by early childhood students advancing from community to four year college programs such as identify exemplary models of practice as well as challenges within the system of higher education that prevent students from completing their educational goals.
- The Early Learning Guidelines (ELG) and teacher guide will be produced and then be distributed to Early Childhood professionals and those who teach teacher preparation in the state.