

New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council

Initiatives Update

December 6th, 2011

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 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.

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. During this period, a summary of the stakeholders meeting was developed and disseminated to people who attended the meeting. 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. Completion of the report has been delayed due to the focus on the development of the Early Learning Challenge Grant over the last few months.

Communications Contract - A contract with a Communication Consultant firm, Advocates for Human Potential, is in the process of being finalized. The consultant will help to develop and implement a communication plan for the ECAC. This contract will allow the ECAC to develop a consistent and professional logo and materials that will be used to publicize QUALITYstarsNY and other projects.

Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant - A Request for Proposals has been developed for a Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant to work with the Promoting Healthy Development

Work Group in order to increase the awareness and understanding of social-emotional development among a wide range of adults who connect with children, including professionals who work with or assess young children, and parents and the general public; to increase access to social-emotional development trainings, supports and resources across the state; and to ensure that young children receive social-emotional developmental screening and follow up support.

Other consultants - In addition, 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.

Center for Women in Government Fellow – The ECAC has made a commitment to have a State University of New York at Albany Center for Women in Government Fellow for a six month period beginning January, 2012. The Fellow will be responsible for leading focus groups of parents and health professionals about the contents and dissemination of the proposed New York State New Parent Kit.

National Survey of Early Care and Education-- New York State policymakers have observed that rural counties in the state seem to have 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, we will purchase additional surveys of two high need rural Primary Service Units. The additional surveys will give us 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.

Work Group Updates

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 asked to sit 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. This proposal was accepted for inclusion into the final grant application.

The Early Learning Challenge Grant process provided the opportunity to more fully develop a written plan and budget for establishing the early learning data system and linking it to the P-20 Longitudinal Data System.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Continue planning for the development of the New York State 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 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 been working with representatives of state agencies and advocacy and service delivery organizations throughout the state to collect the information needed to populate the cost model. Of the necessary information, 90 percent of the data and funding information has been gathered and sent to APA. The APA representatives are in the process of analyzing the data to put the information into a format that is conducive to developing the cost estimation model. 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.

During the months of September and October, webinars were scheduled in which participants discussed:

- **Model Usability** - Is it best for the user to develop scenarios? How should the program and services be identified in the model? Should some of the programs and services be bundled or all left separate?
- **Screen Design** - Should there be drop down, slide bars, and/or buttons to identify data variables.
- **Reports and Graphs** - How should the model display the information on the screen? Should the funding information for each program show separately or should the funding information be bundled based on the scenario?

Each webinar highlighted one of the four domains (Early Learning, Strong Families, Healthy Children, and Coordinated and Responsive Systems) in the system. This schedule was designed to encourage ECAC work group members to participate and share information that coincides with the perspective of their work group as part of system development and usability. Two of the webinars were recorded, and the link is listed next to the webinar title. The topics were:

- Model Overview and Organization (September 22nd, 2011)
<https://apaconsulting.webex.com/apaconsulting/ldr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=57522217&rKey=ab1ac3936b5532c9>
- Early Learning and the Cost of Quality (October 6th, 2011)
- Healthy Children (Health and Mental Health): (October 13th, 2011)
- Strong Families (Family Support): (October 20th, 2011)
<https://apaconsulting.webex.com/apaconsulting/ldr.php?AT=pb&SP=MC&rID=58469677&rKey=e08e566a4129be96>

Following the webinars, the co-chairs decided to add two sections to the cost estimation model: local investments in early learning for both New York City and upstate districts and return on investments.

- **Local Investment** – To determine the feasibility and method for collecting the necessary data to add a local investment component, the co-chairs decided to meet with New York City and Upstate officials on the degree to which they allocate local tax levies for early learning programs. This would require several meetings within the officials in the upstate area of the state and a series of meetings in New York City with officials from the New York City Independent Budget Office, New York City Child Care and Head Start, New York City Department of Education, and New York City Office of Budget Management.
 - **Return on Investment** - The co-chairs also decided to explore how to incorporate return on investment for the programs and services included in the cost estimation model . Currently, APA is in the process of developing a return on investment component for the state of Colorado’s early childhood cost estimation system. This component will calculate and identify the return on investment for programs and services administered within the state of Colorado. 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 those characteristics chosen. The model will also be able to generate a report on several benefit categories such as income, savings, and graduation rate.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Complete the New York State Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model, including information on “Return on Investment”.
- Test the New York State Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model, make final adjustments, present final version to ECAC members.
- Share New York State Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model user guide with the ECAC membership and relevant agencies.

Promoting Healthy Development Work Group

During this reporting period, the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group has been engaged in a variety of projects that continue to incorporate health and social-emotional development into the overall work of the ECAC. The work group has met by phone monthly to discuss and receive reports about on-going projects as well as receive updates and hear about outside reports, projects and events that can impact the work of the group.

The Promoting Healthy Development Work Group is working to populate an Early Childhood Mental Health tool that was developed by the National Center on Children in Poverty. The work group views this tool as an excellent opportunity to have a cross-systems planning framework in which to view work being done at both the state and local level. The tool was distributed widely to the ECAC, and several work sessions have been organized over three months to develop the information and discuss how the work group can continue to engage the ECAC and state agencies in effectively using the tool for planning and engagement around early childhood social-emotional development. A co-chair of Promoting Healthy Development will present on a national webinar on the tool in November. This work has been beneficial in coalescing the work group’s efforts to engage the state further on social-emotional development planning.

Promoting Healthy Development is also beginning to work closely with efforts to strengthen Child Care Health Consultation. In addition, the work group continues to incorporate the work of the Centers for Disease Control’s Healthy Child Care project of the New York State Department of Health. The project is working on reducing screen time in child care settings, creating a breast-feeding friendly child care center designation and promoting nutrition and physical activity initiatives. The Promoting Healthy Development co-chairs have also engaged with the Children, Youth and Families Task Force of Health Care for All New Yorkers that is working to ensure that the Affordable Care Act is implemented in New York in a manner that benefits children. This work will inform the work group’s upcoming efforts to connect early care and education to health care and medical homes.

Six Month Work Plan

- Prepare and organize tasks for, and select, a Social-Emotional Development Support Consultant and begin working on gathering resources for training professionals in social-emotional development, including researching screening tools for children and parents.
- Continue obesity prevention activities, and expand activities within early care and learning programs in the state.
- Establish a Promoting Healthy Development subgroup 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. The subgroup will also develop mechanisms for cross-systems use of the tool to assess activities and to drive planning. 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.
- Develop a plan to work with existing efforts to expand and promote the use of Child Care Health Consultants. Consider new ways to work with early care and learning programs to integrate health promotion into settings.

Quality Improvement Work Group

During this reporting period, the Standards Revision subgroup worked via a series of conference calls to make the necessary revisions to the existing draft QUALITYstarsNY program standards (center-based and family-based) subsequent to the feedback provided by the field test results. An additional subgroup began work to draft standards for programs which serve school-age children in before and after school programs. This latter subgroup includes volunteers from various membership organizations which represent this segment of the field. It is expected that a set of draft standards for school-age child care programs will be available for the Quality Improvement Work Group to review by December 31st, 2011.

A crosswalk has been done between the federal Head Start Program Performance Standards and the QUALITYstarsNY standards. This crosswalk will allow Head Start programs within the state to determine how and where their standards match with the QUALITYstarsNY standards. A similar crosswalk is being done between the QUALITYstarsNY program standards and the National Association for the Education of Young Children accreditation standards.

Significant efforts have been made to lay the groundwork for an unprecedented partnership that will result in the State Education Department providing funding for the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. With funding made available by the New York State Education Department’s Race to the Top grant, planning is underway to expand QUALITYstarsNY to early care and learning programs located in geographic areas with school districts/buildings that have been identified as Persistently Low Achieving.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Revise point distribution of QUALITYstarsNY standards, based on recommendations from the evaluator who reviewed the field test of QUALITYstarsNY standards that was done in 2010. The original field test sites will be asked to participate in a series of conference calls and/or focus groups to ascertain their critical feedback on the revised standards and the modified point/percentage system of scoring.

- Review a draft set of standards for school-age child care programs for inclusion in QUALITYstarsNY.
- During the early months of 2012, recruit early learning and development programs that are located in areas with Persistently Low Achieving schools to participate in QUALITYstarsNY. This work will be funded by the New York State Education Department’s Race to the Top initiative.
- Beginning in January, 2012, the Early Care and Learning Council will offer training and professional development opportunities that have been classified as “QUALITYstarsNY Readiness Activities.” This work will be carried out under the auspices of the New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute and the Quality Improvement Work Group. It will begin with a two day “train-the-trainer” session on January 5 and 6, 2012.
- Complete a general purpose brochure on QUALITYstarsNY in December, 2011. The brochure will be posted on the QUALITYstarsNY website, and copies will be made available to all work groups and Early Childhood Advisory Council members and provided as a handout at various conferences and informational sessions.

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 this period include:

- **Early Childhood Screening Initiative** – The Early Childhood Screening Initiative has expanded from a Developmental Screening Initiative to include the promotion of other health and mental health-related screenings for children (social-emotional, autism, fetal alcohol spectrum, etc.) and parents (maternal depression screening). A subgroup was established to work on what is now called the Early Childhood Screening Initiative. The subgroup has been involved in several projects, two of which are highlighted here: the Prototype Communities and the Medicaid Redesign Team projects.
 - **The Prototype Communities Project** was developed with the support of Dr. Neal Halfon MD of University of California at Los Angeles who, in a conference call this past summer with members of the Early Childhood Screening Initiative, coined the phrase “prototype communities” to describe several communities in New York State that have advanced systems of screenings. Dr. Halfon joined several of these Prototype Community Projects, Project LAUNCH and the New York State ECAC on November 10th in a program facilitated by Sheila Smith of the National Center for Children in Poverty to explore the Prototype Communities’ successes and challenges and engage them in dialogue with state policymakers to discuss how to sustain, expand and/or bring to scale the screening

projects they have implemented. Follow up activities include a survey to determine if those communities want to participate in a Learning Collaborative, and a written document that will compare and contrast the projects and determine what are the lessons learned for expansion to other communities and for moving forward in enacting state policy.

- **Submission of a Proposal to the Medicaid Redesign Team** was made regarding developmental screening. The subgroup drafted a recommendation that the ECAC submitted to the Payment Reform and Quality Measurement Work Group of the Medicaid Redesign Team. The proposal stated that: *New York State should adopt the National Quality Forum's measure on early childhood developmental screening within the state's established Quality Assurance and Reporting Requirements for public and commercial managed care plans.*

A specific measure on developmental screening in the Quality Assurance and Reporting Requirements would:

- Make developmental screening a routine, expected part of health care practice for providers treating children.
- Complement other efforts to be undertaken by state agencies and professional organizations for provider training, practice development and parental education.
- Provide better data on developmental screenings done in New York.
- Raise awareness of the importance of developmental screening among health care providers and health plans and parents.
- Move New York toward a more comprehensive set of child-specific quality measures.

Final recommendations for that work group have yet to be released but should be available prior to the final meeting of the Medicaid Redesign Team on December 13th.

- **New Parent Kit** - The work group co-chairs and staff met with New York State Parenting Education Partnership to review options for infant development books/guides to be included in the Kit. After thoughtful discussion, the group agreed to move forward and pursue the creation of a book specific to New York State by the author of one of the options presented. The Strong Families Work Group will continue to advise on content.
- **New York State Home Visiting Coalition** – Through its relationship to the NYS Home Visiting Coalition, the work group played a supporting role to the New York State Department of Health in its application for federal home visiting funding. All involved were disappointed to learn that New York State did not receive competitive funding. The Strong Families Work Group will continue to support and promote the work of the Coalition, which is now focused on maintaining existing state funding while expanding funding to be inclusive of more programs. The work group also supports the Nurse-

Family Partnership's submission to the Medicaid Redesign Team to allow Medicaid to cover services provided by that program.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Continue efforts to expand the work of the Early Childhood Screening Initiative, including developing a Learning Collaborative of innovative communities, and efforts around Medicaid Redesign and the Affordable Care Act.
- Continue to work on refining contents and determining distribution of the New Parent Kit.

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. Following an evaluation of the status of current efforts in the field, three initial subgroups were organized to focus on the following areas:

- Revision of the Core Body of Knowledge;
- Development of a Career Lattice and Registry; and
- Issues of transition between two and four year colleges.

Progress has been made in revising the Core Body of Knowledge into a clearer format. The final draft was released for public comment by the New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute during this period and modest changes will be made to the document before it will be formally released in 2012.

The work group, in partnership with the New York State Head Start Collaboration Project, has taken steps to complete the first edition of New York State's Early Learning Guidelines. During this period, a guide, written in the voice of the classroom teacher, was developed to introduce the Guidelines and how to use them. A graphic designer and printer were engaged to insure publication of the document in December 2011. The Guidelines will provide educators, policymakers and parents with a comprehensive document that describes typical development of young children from birth through age five.

Development of the Career Ladder and Registry continues. Recent work has focused on defining acceptable educational alternatives to early childhood coursework/majors, referred to as 'related fields.'

A Trainer's Institute is being organized for the pre-conference day at the Spring 2012 New York State Association for the Education of Young Children conference. This Institute will provide a continuing professional development opportunity for credentialed trainers and for those working to obtain this credential. Participants will be introduced to the revised Core Body of Knowledge and the new

Guidelines. In addition, during the opening plenary session of the conference, all conference attendees will be introduced to and receive a copy of the Core Body of Knowledge and the Guidelines.

Six-Month Work Plan

- Publish the revised Core Body of Knowledge and the Early Learning Guidelines, both of which will be distributed to the early childhood field through a variety of forums, including at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children conference in April, 2012, and used as core elements of a framework for the training and education of the early childhood workforce.
- Refine the elements in the New York State Early Learning Professional Development Registry.
- Continue to customize the QUALITYstarsNY database and prepare for linking to the Registry.
- Hold a Trainer's Institute at the Spring New York State Association for the Education of Young Children pre-conference. This Institute will provide a continuing professional development opportunity for credentialed trainers and for those working to obtain this credential.