

## Parent Involvement in the ECAC

### Background

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Since the inception of the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) leadership, members, and other external stakeholders have expressed a need for parent involvement in the policy decisions and system level activities of the ECAC. A focus on parent involvement and empowerment can be seen in the vision and mission statements of many ECAC member organizations and is well defined as an integral aspect of federal Head Start legislation that spurred states' development of early childhood advisory councils. Parents and caregivers represent their families as users of early learning programs and services, and, as their children's first teachers, are critical to their children's success. Therefore, if the work of the ECAC is to be grounded in a strength-based perspective and comprehensive, parent and caregiver involvement in the ECAC's work is essential.

On May 10<sup>th</sup> the Steering Committee discussed developing parent representation on the ECAC during their monthly conference call and decided to form an ad hoc group to develop recommendations for meaningful parent representation in the ECAC within a relatively short period of time.

The ad hoc group, consisting of steering committee members Evelyn Blanck, Mary McHugh, Marsha Basloe, and ECAC staff members Regina Canuso, Susan Perkins, and Liz Belsito met via conference call on May 24<sup>th</sup> and further developed some ideas and questions regarding structure, composition and process that formed the basis for a discussion at the June ECAC meeting.

### Recent Activity

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From those discussions a survey was sent out to members to further refine member input. From the survey and further discussions among members of the ad hoc group over the summer, the following recommended proposal on structure has been developed for approval by the ECAC Steering Committee and membership:

**The ECAC will have a Parent Representative Group comprised of approximately 6 persons who sit directly on the ECAC as "ex officio"\* members, and also participate in a work group of their choice. Two of these parents will also sit on the Steering Committee in the same "ex officio"\* capacity.**

### Decisions Needed

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Following the protocol established at the ECAC Steering Committee Retreat, The ECAC Steering Committee needs to vote on the recommended structure. If it is approved, then the full ECAC membership will vote on the structure at the September 19<sup>th</sup> Membership meeting. Also at this meeting, there will be further discussion about the application and selection process and orientation.

\* The vetting process was considered by many ECAC members to be a deterrent from parent participation.

## Consensus from the (SurveyMonkey) Survey

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Parent Representative Roles and Responsibilities would be:

- To attend ECAC meetings
- To participate on a work group
- To be knowledgeable on the issues and projects of the ECAC
- To solicit input from and give information to other parents regarding the work of the ECAC

Parent Qualifications

- Have experience in a leadership or advocacy role
- Have a child who is currently or recently involved in an early childhood serving system
- Willing to attend meetings and be an active work group participant
- Have a broad view perspective ( beyond their child) of the system and issues
- Have a commitment and interest in the goals of the ECAC

Supports needed from the ECAC

- Travel compensation and support for child care
- Orientation to the work of the ECAC
- Clear expectations of their role and expectations

**For Decision**

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- **Vote on the proposed structure**
- **Who will the “deciders” be in the selection of representatives**