

Administration for Children and Families
Performance Progress Report from the New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council
for the Period Covering June 1, 2012 to November 30, 2012
ACF-OGM SF-PPR Program Indicators – Attachment B

Introduction

The New York State Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) was established in May 2009. To organize the ECAC's efforts to implement its strategic plan, a steering committee and six work groups were developed and began meeting in June of that year. Each of the work groups were organized to implement specific strategies included in the plan. The work groups include: Promoting Healthy Development, Strong Families, Quality Improvement, Workforce Development, Data Development, and Finance. This report provides a description of progress toward implementing the ECAC's strategic plan during the period beginning June 1, 2012 and ending November 30, 2012.

B-1 Major Accomplishments and Activities during this Period

QUALITYstarsNY Implementation– QUALITYstarsNY, New York State's quality rating and improvement system, is being implemented in areas throughout the state. The New York State Education Department has designated \$4 million from its Race to the Top funds to support quality programming for young children in areas of the state with Persistently Lowest-Achieving schools. An MOA has been signed between New York State Education Department and the CUNY New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute (is the agency designated by the ECAC to administer implementation activities) to implement QUALITYstarsNY in selected early childhood programs. The selected programs are all within targeted communities surrounding the schools and serve a high- needs population (at least 25 % of enrolled children receive child care subsidies).

In addition to the \$4 million from New York State Education Department, the ECAC has committed funds to support inclusion of programs that participated in the 2010 field test, and private philanthropy funds are supporting programs in Buffalo and two communities on Long Island.

QUALITYstarsNY is a voluntary quality rating and improvement system that is designed to increase quality in early learning settings - centers, schools, and homes - throughout the state. In addition to many intangible benefits, participation in QUALITYstarsNY also yields a number of tangible incentives for programs and providers. For example, programs and providers can earn at least \$500 to purchase supplies and materials. They can also gain access to Quality Scholars funding for professional development, including trainings and coursework. Finally, participating programs and providers have access to a dedicated Quality Improvement Specialist who assists them through the various steps of their improvement plans and related goals. In the future, other forms of incentives, such as those offered by other states' quality rating and improvement systems, can be incorporated with additional resources.

The timeline for QUALITYstarsNY implementation (available here: http://qualitystarsny.org/implementation_when.php) provides information about the specific benchmarks of progress. During the reporting period, selected participants in QUALITYstarsNY have been working with their designated Quality Improvement Specialists to complete the standards self-assessment process and submit the requisite documentation. In addition, training on the Environment Rating Scales (ERS) was provided. Participants are expected to input staff qualifications, experience, training and other aspects of their professional history into Aspire, New York State's Workforce Registry. (For more information about Aspire, see the Workforce Development Work Group section of this report.) Once all of the documentation and ERS information has been submitted and verified, programs receive a provisional rating. This rating helps the designated Quality Improvement Specialist identify the program's strengths and areas in need of improvement to draft a Quality Improvement Plan. Ratings will not be publicized in this phase of implementation.

Approximately 400 programs and providers -- licensed, registered, or regulated programs or providers will be selected to participate. They include:

- Center - and family-based child care providers who are licensed/registered with NY State Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) or NY City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (NYCDOHMH)
- Registered/licensed UPK and Head Start classrooms in Community Based Organizations and public schools
- 4410/preschool special education programs
- NY State Education Department registered nursery schools

Programs who serve at least 25% low-income children received preference in the selection process. A map of New York State highlighting the regions included in the statewide implementation of QUALITYstarsNY is available at: http://qualitystarsny.org/implementation_where.php.

The data system for QUALITYstarsNY has been adapted by the WELS Foundation (Web-based Early Learning Systems). A provider portal was launched November 1, 2012 with all participating programs and providers entering information directly into the system. The Quality Improvement Specialists use the WELS system to track progress and tie available financial supports to each program's Quality Improvement Plan.

During this reporting period, QUALITYstarsNY released the draft School Age Child Care Standards which were developed by the Quality Improvement Work Group in partnership with the New York State Afterschool Network (NYSAN). The draft standards can be found at: http://qualitystarsny.org/pdf/QUALITYstarsNY_School-age-Standards_DRAFT_2012.pdf. The work group used the early childhood standards as the basis of the school-age standards, modifying, adding and removing as needed to ensure that all of the standards were relevant to programs serving children

of school-age. Other standards, including current Afterschool Works NY accreditation standards, were carefully reviewed both to inform the QUALITYstarsNY standards and to maximize alignment.

Feedback on the draft School Age Child Care Standards is being sought in two ways. First, a small number of programs will be selected to provide practical reviews of the standards and help leaders anticipate potential obstacles for programs serving older children. Second, electronic feedback will be accepted via the QUALITYstarsNY website. More information on QUALITYstarsNY and supporting activities can be found in the Quality Improvement Work Group section of this report.

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 and was the sole source of financial support prior to the receipt of federal funds. During the current reporting period, BUILD technical assistance has focused on various aspects of system-building, including developing and implementing strategies to ensure that our programs and initiatives including QUALITYstarsNY support cultural competency; engaging business and corporate involvement in efforts to increase investment in early childhood education; developing a common metric for a statewide child assessment system; and developing a shared services project to support programs/providers participating in QUALITYstarsNY in reducing costs and increasing administrative efficiencies.

NYS Shared Services Alliance Project – Sponsored by the ECAC and with support from the BUILD Initiative, a New York State Shared Services Alliance Project will be implemented as a vehicle to streamline administration of programs, share costs and deliver services among early childhood education programs across the state in order to create financially sound organizations that are better equipped to offer affordable, high-quality programming. On behalf of the ECAC, during the summer of 2012 the Early Care and Learning Council and the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children conducted focus groups in Albany, New York City, and Rochester. Participants were recruited to insure a diverse perspective so the early learning providers who attended were drawn from urban, suburban and rural areas. They included directors and senior managers of child care centers, Head Start programs, family and group programs, preschool special education programs and after school programs. Programs represented ranged in size from family care settings serving six children to large early childhood education agencies serving over 1,000 children. A total of 36 individuals participated in the focus groups. The results were:

- Focus group participants were positive about having access to an early care web site targeted to providers.
- Providers were open to the possibility of building early childhood education alliances to support their operation and move their mission.
- New York City providers indicated that a statewide early childhood education website would need to include the New York City standards because they are different from the rest of the state.
- The primary concerns expressed in all the focus groups were: (1) cost to the user for accessing the website; (2) maintenance of the website so the information remains current and relevant;

(3) ease of use for navigating through the site; (4) ability of the website to respond to the needs of the directors and senior managers of early childhood education programs; and (5) ability of the website to promote quality and support diversity and not “cookie cutter” practices.

- Participants valued that the website was intended to support all types of early childhood education providers and their needs such as: on-line training; staff development; leadership and management; administrative policies; partnership with families; family handbooks; library resources; and QUALITYstarsNY.

Suggestions that emerged from the focus groups included:

- Create a substitute teacher registry that can be accessed by providers to help fill teacher absences.
- Design forums around topics including discipline, communicating with parents and helping older staff embrace new culture of care.

In November, the Shared Services Implementation Steering Committee convened to plan for implementing shared services statewide. In this meeting, the Steering Committee:

- Identified the website data fields that are needed to capture information associated with the user and their relation to ECE.
- Reviewed and discussed the draft implementation plan for Phase 1 which includes: develop website; conduct preliminary research of other state Shared Services Websites; identify partners to help support the funding and implementation of the website; report on marketing and research; develop evaluation plan; and raise funds to support initiative.

The next meeting is scheduled for December 7th in which the Steering Committee members will continue to discuss implementation.

Sustainability – Recognizing the need to sustain the ECAC and its work beyond the federal funding period, the ECAC Co-chairs have appointed several members of the ECAC to an ad hoc group to develop sustainability strategies and an action plan. The group met for two days to develop a draft sustainability plan which will be finalized during December. In addition, efforts are progressing on finding funds for the ECAC and its initiatives, including developing a white paper for using Social Impact Bonds to finance QUALITYstarsNY, and developing and submitting proposals for implementing QUALITYstarsNY to the Governor and the NYS Education Reform Commission. More information on financing strategies for the ECAC can be found in the Finance Work Group section of this report. **(Proposals to the Governor and the Education Reform Commission are attached.)**

Common Metric - New York City Department of Education has partnered with New York University (NYU) to look at how a child assessment system could be built that would provide information on student progress and identify children experiencing difficulties. In looking at how early care and education programs are currently conducting child assessments, they learned that the three most common assessments in use in New York City are: Teaching Strategies Gold, the Work Sampling System, and the Child Observation Record.

To allow programs to continue to use their assessment of choice, a decision was made to pursue development of a common metric that would enable them to compare results of each of the three assessments. A feasibility study has been done which included getting all of the partners on board and in agreement, and data sharing agreements have been signed.

During the process of writing the Early Learning Challenge Grant (ELCG) proposal, the ECAC decided that the Common Metric being developed by the New York City Early Care and Education Steering Committee would have value for the entire state of New York. As a result, it was included in the proposal as a statewide initiative. That proposal did not receive federal funding but, moving forward, the ECAC created a plan to support the development of the Common Metric. Massachusetts is also interested in the Common Metric and is considering contracting with NYU to conduct a study of the Common Metric in that state.

During this reporting period, the ECAC worked with its New York City partners to identify the funds needed to move toward the creation and testing of a psychometrically validated common measure across all three early childhood education assessments and expand the study to other locations throughout the state to enlarge the sample. Teachers will be trained to administer a second assessment tool in their classroom at one point in time in the 2012-2013 school year. This will allow for about 3000 four year olds to be assessed with two of the tools, which will give researchers the data needed to create the Common Metric. Once created it is believed that other states will be interested in using it for their child assessment systems.

Communication Consultant –The ECAC has been working with Advocates for Human Potential, a communication consultant firm, to develop and implement a communications plan for the ECAC. This contract enables 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 decision makers, businesses, parents, and people working in early childhood services. During this period, the consultants completed the ECAC’s communication plan, an assessment of the ECAC’s existing website and an audit of the ECAC’s communication efforts and processes to date. They also developed a new logo and tagline and an outline for the development of a new website.

Expanding Opportunities - In the summer of 2012, members of the Expanding Opportunities Leadership Team formed subgroups to revisit the strategies developed as a result of the stakeholder meeting held in the spring of 2011. Each strategy was analyzed to determine its feasibility, and its relationship with initiatives of the ECAC such as the professional development work to promote the *Core Body of Knowledge* and the QUALITYstarsNY initiative. In December, ECAC leadership will reach out to leaders within the relevant state agencies, including the Child Care Division of the NY State Office of Children and Family Services, the Early Intervention Bureau of the Department of Health, and the Preschool Special Education Office and Office of Early Learning of the NY State Education Department to discuss and gain buy-in for the implementation of the Expanding Opportunities strategies. **(Expanding Opportunities White Paper is attached.)**

Work Group Activities and Accomplishments

Data Development Work Group

While New York State was not awarded an Early Learning Challenge Grant, the opportunity to develop a proposal had many significant benefits. One of these benefits was the collaborative development of a proposal to establish an early childhood education data system. Through this process, leaders in each of state and city agencies whose data would be included in an early childhood education data development system worked together to design a system that would provide, for the first time, comprehensive information on young children. During this reporting period, the Data Development Work Group staff person and Co-chairs have revised that proposal to use for future funding opportunities. The staff person assigned to support the work of the Data Development Work Group has been a member of the Steering Committee and Project Team of New York State Education Department's P-20 Data System Project, where he successfully worked on the inclusion of available early childhood data in the P-20 Data System.

An Early Childhood Technology Subgroup was created to 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 online training and reporting activities, Child Care Time and Attendance, *New York Works for Children* workforce registry and QUALITYstarsNY data systems, New York State needs to effectively plan for and deploy new web-based tools.

To address these issues, the Early Childhood Technology Subgroup worked with an outside organization to investigate the feasibility of developing and conducting a survey of early childhood providers. After investigating several strategies for conducting the survey, the ECAC Steering Committee determined that the cost of doing this kind of research outweighed the utility of the information that would be gathered, especially since many of the state agencies participating in the ECAC currently gather similar information.

In September the staff person assigned to the Data Development Work Group resigned his position to pursue another opportunity. It is expected that this position will be filled soon.

The 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 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 continued to collect information needed to populate the cost model. Of the necessary data and funding information, 98 percent has been gathered and sent to APA. The programs that remain in the cost estimation model without funding or population data are still under development. The APA representatives continue to analyze the data to put the information into a format that is conducive to developing the cost estimation model.

During July and September of 2012, APA provided several prototypes of the cost estimation model for review and comment. ECAC staff tested the usability of the cost estimation model prototypes and then held several webinars to discuss them. In addition, ECAC staff provided APA with the program description and per unit cost methodology for each of the 88 programs included in the cost estimation model. Starting in October 2012, ECAC staff began to test the cost estimation model to determine if the programs were linked to the right domain and the data was presented in the right context. ECAC staff intends to test the cost estimation model with stakeholders to ensure the data is calculating the funding and expenditures correctly. In the meantime, ECAC staff continues to review the model and suggest changes needed prior to launching the model. In November, there was a webinar to demonstrate the cost estimation model to the Finance Work Group members. It is expected that all changes will be made and the cost estimation model can be formally unveiled in December.

Part of the Finance Work Group workplan is to identify new financing strategies including a mix of public and private resources to increase investments in a comprehensive system. In an effort to meet the workplan objective, on December 14th the work group will hold an ECAC Financing Strategies Forum. The forum will help gather information on various aspects of financing strategies that will support early care and education programs and services within New York State. All ECAC members were invited to attend along with members of other ECAC work groups. The forum will focus on three financing strategies:

- Social Impact Bonds: A way to identify private/public financing options that will support proven and rigorous measurement of outcomes associated with early learning programs and services.
- Federal Waivers: A review and discussion regarding New York State's Medicaid Waiver amendment and the maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting component of the waiver.
- Braiding and Blending Funds: A way to consider alternative funding usages to bring comprehensive services into early childhood settings.

The presenters for the above topics include representatives from Ready Nation, CLASP, ECAC consultants, and New York State administrators. In addition to gathering information regarding the three pre-identified financing strategies, there will be a presentation by APA, which is developing a Return on Investment component to the cost estimation model. A representative from APA will present on the importance of knowing the Return on Investments of various programmatic options as a way to provide decision makers and stakeholders with useful information. This analysis will expand the ECAC cost model by reporting the economic and non-economic benefits of specific investments.

Starting in September, the ECAC began to explore the possibilities of using Social Impact Bonds as a method to support early learning programs. Natasha Lifton has been hired as a consultant to write a white paper (tentatively titled, *Using Pay for Success Strategies to Increase School Readiness in New York State*) to outline an Early Childhood Social Impact Bond project (EC-SIB) in New York. The white paper will provide strategies on how to engage government officials, funders, business leaders, service providers and advocates around the idea of creating a “school readiness capital partnership” that would advance an EC-SIB in New York. In addition, during this time, the ECAC had the opportunity to participate in the Governor’s Request for Information – Identifying Innovative Ways to Finance Social Services. There were two components associated with the RFI: a roundtable discussion and a formal written response. The ECAC participated in both components. **(The ECAC Response to the NYS Request for Information is attached.)**

Promoting Healthy Development Work Group

The Promoting Healthy Development (PHD) Work Group is building capacity among providers in child-serving systems to improve the health and social-emotional development of young children. This includes identifying and responding to the social-emotional needs of young children and their families, promoting health and safety through the development of training and consultation, and identifying opportunities to collaborate with public health programs.

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.

Nutrition and Obesity Prevention - The Nutrition and Obesity Prevention Subgroup created last year has been working with the Quality Improvement Work Group and the QUALITYstarsNY staff to address QUALITYstarsNY standards on nutrition (including standards supporting breastfeeding and enrollment in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)) and increased physical activity. They compiled a robust set of user-friendly and well-researched resources that will accompany each standard and be available on the QUALITYstarsNY website, in order to give providers participating in QUALITYstarsNY the information they will need to meet each standard. In addition, members of the work group also provided language to be included on the website clarifying each of the standards and their importance to quality care and children’s health. In developing these resources and clarification statements, the subgroup consulted state agencies, including the Department of Health, in order to ensure consistent messaging.

Efforts to increase the numbers of early childhood education programs and providers in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), originally proposed in New York State’s Early Learning Challenge Fund Application, has become a project of the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group. A subgroup comprised of ECAC members and staff and representatives of Child Care Resource and Referral programs and the Department of Health’s Division of Nutrition was organized to spearhead the effort. Their work produced *Good Nutrition Pays* brochures (one for family child care homes and one for child care centers) in English and Spanish. These brochures, along with a personalized letter from the ECAC

Co-chairs, were sent out to all licensed and registered providers, with a special mailing to those who are participating in QUALITYstarsNY. The brochures are also being distributed widely throughout the state through many other channels, including through the CCR&Rs and other early childhood and health-related networks. **(Copies of the *Good Nutrition Pays* brochures in English and Spanish are attached.)**

As a result of distribution efforts, the NYS Department of Health has received an influx of calls from early childhood education programs seeking to enroll in CACFP. A consultant has been hired to work with the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group to help ascertain why providers were now willing to join and what barriers to participation still exist. Concurrent with this work, the Department of Health received a CDC Community Transformation Grant to look at barriers to CACFP participation in several upstate communities and coordinated efforts to reduce those barriers. The ECAC and Department of Health are working to bring these two projects together to better inform each project. The Department of Health has also assigned an evaluator to the joint projects to review the effectiveness of these efforts.

Health Insurance Enrollment - The work group is also working with the Early Care and Learning Council (the statewide CCR&R membership organization), the Department of Health Outreach and Enrollment Unit and Children's Defense Fund NY to develop ways to institutionalize enrollment of children, families and early care and education employees in health insurance. Eligibility for New York's Child Health Plus program extends to 400% of the federal poverty level. As a result, many children attending early childhood education programs and the children of most staff are eligible to participate in either Child Health Plus or Medicaid. To support enrollment efforts, the state funds an extensive network of facilitated enrollers in community based organizations that could be used to support this initiative. There have been previous efforts to make connections between these enrollers and CCR&Rs and many have resulted in strong effective partnerships, but there remains a need to build stronger sustained relationships statewide.

Through this effort, the Department of Health outreach unit surveyed the CCR&Rs about the level of engagement with facilitated enrollers. The Children's Defense Fund NY organizes the facilitated enrollers and is helping to provide education on the effort to their members. In addition to enrolling children into public insurance now, it is hoped that the connections being developed can be used to enroll parents and early care and education employees into health insurance once the New York State Health Insurance Exchange, being created under the Affordable Care Act, becomes operational.

Social-Emotional Development - The ECAC has contracted with the Children's Institute, Inc., an affiliate of the University of Rochester, to work with the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group and other work groups to advance the social and emotional health of children in the state. The Institute is known as a center of excellence for the social and emotional health of children and provides diverse programs, resources and cutting edge research.

Children's Institute is working to assist the Promoting Healthy Development Work Group with several goals including: compiling best practices and research-based resources on social-emotional development; infusing information on social-emotional development promotion, prevention and intervention into the training of professionals who work with young children and their families; and developing strategies for integrating screenings and evidenced-based curriculum and other program

supports into early care and education and primary care settings. The Promoting Healthy Development Work Group is coordinating this work and involving other work groups, primarily Workforce Development and Quality Improvement, where the expertise of Children's Institute could be useful.

During this reporting period, the Children's Institute has been identifying best practice training approaches on social-emotional development; developing strategies to infuse training on social-emotional development into the training and professional development of professionals who work with young children and their families; identifying sources for sustaining professional development in social emotional development, and where sources are not specified, articulating challenges; and developing and compiling materials, including curricula, screening tools, and other resources, both for the ECAC website and for the QUALITYstarsNY Resource Guide. Several key Children's Institute staff have become integral members of the Work Group.

Developmental Screening - A subgroup organized last year to examine ways to promote screening, particularly developmental screening, finalized two tools. A brief, entitled *Improving Early Childhood Screenings in New York State* explains the importance of screenings as foundational to children's healthy development and ability to learn, and why early childhood stakeholders across the state should support its promotion in primary care and early care and education settings. **(The Brief, *Improving Early Childhood Screenings in New York State*, is attached).**

The second document, *Are You Pregnant or the Parent of a Young Child? Here Is What You Need to Know about Developmental Screening* is a brochure on developmental screening designed specifically for parents. Several clinics tested the brochure with clients to see if they understood the material and if the material was relevant. The results were very positive as parents felt the brochure helped them ask for screening when they saw their child's pediatrician. The brochure is now available on the ECAC website and is being marketed to ECAC member groups and other organizations. The New York State Department of Health is finding ways to link the brochure to their early intervention efforts. **(The developmental screening brochure for parents is attached.)**

The Promoting Healthy Development Work Group continues to partner with the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Project Coordinator to expand the use of health care consultants in early care and education. The Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Project Coordinator contracted with a writer to produce a detailed white paper with background and policy options for expanding the role and the number of child care health consultants. The paper is being finalized and will be ready for release shortly.

Quality Improvement Work Group

The Quality Improvement Work Group is charged with promoting and supporting efforts to plan for the future and sustain QUALITYstarsNY. As mentioned earlier (in section B-1 of this report), a major accomplishment during this reporting period is the completion of draft program quality standards that are targeted to programs serving children in before- and after-school settings. Similar to the center-based and family-based standards, the school-age child care standards build upon the basic health and

safety regulatory requirements and outline the aspects of programming that are proven to impact quality. The standards were drafted with the widespread involvement of the after-school membership organizations in New York State.

In addition to supporting the completion of the School Age Child Care Standards, the Quality Improvement Work Group has focused considerable attention to the coordination of resources to assist programs and providers in the field of early care and education as they embark on the process of participation in the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY. The Resource Guide section of the QUALITYstarsNY website will contain a Clarification Statement, Resources, and Documentation Samples for each program standard. Clarification Statements help the programs and providers understand the importance of that particular standard and why it was included as an indicator of quality. Resources for each standard will be identified to support programs and providers who need supplementary information about each standard. And, finally, the inclusion of documentation (samples or templates) will help programs and providers by showing them examples of exemplary practices.

The Quality Improvement Work Group tapped the considerable expertise of all the work groups of the ECAC in identifying and vetting the resources and tools recommended for inclusion in the Resource Guide section of the QUALITYstarsNY website. Ad hoc subgroups were created on specific topics/standards and provided their collective advice and guidance to outline best practices. This initiative is viewed as an ongoing responsibility of the work group. To view this section of the QUALITYstarsNY website, visit http://qualitystarsny.org/standards_guide.php

During this reporting period, two more issues of the QUALITYstarsNY e-newsletter, which reaches an audience of 2100 interested colleagues and stakeholders statewide, were published. **(The July and September issues of the QUALITYstarsNY newsletter are attached.)**

In addition to the external newsletter, staff to the work group also published an internal electronic update, *News and Notes*, to work group members. **(News and Notes newsletter is attached.)**

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 met in-person on November 1st to formulate a workplan for the next 6 months.

Major activities this period include:

QUALITYstarsNY: The Quality Improvement Work Group had asked for assistance developing strategies for the family engagement standards in QUALITYstarsNY. The Strong Families Work Group formed a subgroup that researched resources and best practices and submitted three documents: one on

communications, one on family involvement and support, and one on transitions. These documents will be used to inform the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY and the work group will be available to respond to feedback from the early childhood field on what resources were valuable and what other assistance early care and education providers would find useful.

Family Engagement Initiative: The work group formed three subgroups that are defining family engagement for and identifying the needs of: parents, policymakers, providers (i.e., professional development). The work group will utilize the work of the subgroups to determine a product (or products) for certain audiences (e.g., child care providers, home visitors, etc.). The work group is also in the process of contracting with a national expert on the production of a webinar that would outline components of successful family engagement practices/strategies.

New York State Home Visiting Coalition: The work group is supporting the efforts of the NYS Home Visiting Coalition, which include discussions around systems- and infrastructure-building, the sharing of best practices from other states, and proposed legislation to embed home visiting in statute.

New York State Parenting Education Partnership: The work group continues to support the work of the New York State Parenting Education Partnership (NYSPEP) to promote and improve 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 of children from birth to age 5 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 learn about 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.

To date, four sample chapters of the guide have been drafted and reviewed by an expert panel including home visiting program managers, a pediatrician, and a fatherhood program expert. Once the revisions have been completed, the sample chapters of the guide will be graphically designed and reviewed by parent focus groups. Additional parent focus groups are also currently being held to inform the design of the Kit as well as to inform the additional components that will accompany the parent guide in the Kit.

Community Cafés – In September of 2012, 16 Community Teams, composed of parent leaders and organizational support staff, were chosen through a competitive grant process to participate in Community Café Orientations held in 4 regions of the state: Rochester, Ithaca,

Albany, and New York City. Supporting organizations include Head Start programs, Cooperative Extension Offices, Child Care Coordinating Councils, and behavioral health organizations.

In partnership with the state's Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems project and the NYS Children and Family Trust Fund, NYSPEP provided each team with financial support to ensure all team members, including parents, could participate in the regional orientation and with \$2,500 in seed funds to support each teams' efforts to host cafés in their communities. Prior to attending the orientations, each community team was led through an Appreciative Inquiry interview by Robin Higa, parent leader consultant with the National Alliance of Children Trust and Prevention Funds. A summary report of the project and of the interviews is being distributed to each team and to state level stakeholders, including members of the ECAC. **(The Community Café Interview Summary is attached.)**

Currently community teams are planning and beginning to host cafes, including kids' cafés, which offer creative and educational activities for children of all ages. NYSPEP is also facilitating monthly conference calls to provide opportunities for peer learning between community teams in addition to collecting and sharing reports from each café held by the teams. To capitalize on the project's momentum and to build awareness, NYSPEP is beginning to plan a Community Café panel at the Prevent Child Abuse New York annual conference in the spring of 2013.

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. Credential levels accommodate entry level, novice, intermediate and master parent educators; each level 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. In the first year, almost 50 NYSPEP members received one of the first two tiers of the credential. Tiers three and four of the credential are completed and will be piloted in the first quarter of 2013. NYSPEP has held several free 2-hour Parenting Education Credential Orientation webinars as the first step in the process.

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, retention, continuing education and compensation for early care and education professionals. Work group members have been working to create and implement a competency-based professional development system through a variety of related activities, including four priorities:

- Revision of the *Core Body of Knowledge* and development of the *Early Learning Guidelines*
- Alignment of Early Learning Standards

- Launching *New York Works for Children* and developing New York's workforce registry and career lattice; and
- Promotion of high quality learning opportunities for active professionals and students entering the early care and learning professions.

Revision of the *Core Body of Knowledge and Early Learning Guidelines* - The revised *Core Body of Knowledge* and the first edition of New York State's *Early Learning Guidelines*, were released in April 2012 at the New York State Association for the Education of Young Children (NYSAEYC) annual conference. Both documents are designed to guide the learning and development of young children in New York State and support the professionals who work with them. Over 5,000 copies of each publication have been distributed throughout the state to all licensed child care programs, Early Head Start, Head Start and prekindergarten programs, training organizations and faculty of early childhood teacher education programs. Copies are now being sold at cost to college bookstores and to early childhood professionals upon request. Both documents can be accessed for free online.

The work group has been working with higher education faculty and professional organizations to encourage the use of these documents in teacher preparation. Work group members have also provided input on the curriculum for three in person Train the Trainer modules designed to increase understanding of the content of the *Core Body of Knowledge* and the *Early Learning Guidelines*, including practical applications designed for both family child care and center-based settings. Work has now commenced on a web-based training tool that would include the development of an interactive distance learning module and an online resource library of videos demonstrating best practice.

Alignment of early learning standards - To demonstrate the alignment of all early learning standards used in the state, the Workforce Development Work Group, led by the State Head Start Collaboration Project Director, developed a document *New York State's Early Learning Alignment Crosswalk* that showed how the *Early Learning Guidelines*, the *Prekindergarten Foundation for the Common Core*, and the *Head Start Child Development and Early Learning Framework* are fully aligned across developmental domains. To inform the field about how best to use these standards in their programs and classrooms work group members and others have conducted numerous workshops and presentations across the state. A statewide video conference on the standards is planned for 2013.

Launching *New York Works for Children* and developing New York's workforce registry and career lattice - The work group also launched a new website *New York Works for Children*, which serves as a vehicle for communicating to the field about the ECAC's efforts to fully develop the state's career development system for early childhood education. The website includes access to Aspire, the workforce registry for New York State early education professionals. Teachers, directors, family child care providers and trainers can use this new online system to help them keep track of their employment history, education, ongoing professional development, and contributions to the field. Directors can also keep a complete profile of their program staff. Programs that intend to participate in QUALITYstarsNY develop an Aspire program profile, along with profiles of program employees, as an essential first step in preparing for participation. Finally, the Registry is a cost effective tool for licensors to review staff qualifications and training to determine regulatory compliance. A series of online webinars and training

forums were held throughout the state in August and September to introduce the Aspire registry system to directors and practitioners, especially those participating in New York's quality rating and improvement system. Feedback from practitioners has been active and positive. The Workforce Registry is, connected through *New York Works for Children* to a training calendar and training registry, with links to professional associations. For more information, go to: www.nyworksforchildren.org.

Over the last year, the work group has made progress developing a list of credentials and degrees that are aligned with the *Core Body of Knowledge* and is developing a draft of a career lattice (*A Guide to Positions in Early Childhood*) that articulates career pathways.

Promotion of high quality learning opportunities for active professionals and students entering the early care and education professions - During the month of November, the Executive Director of NYSAEYC, also a co-chair of the Work Force Development Work Group, joined staff from OCFS Division of Child Care Services (the state's child care licensing agency) and the State University of New York at Albany's Professional Development Program (a major training contractor) to conduct a series of regional meetings to promote professional development and the state's trainer credential. Promoting the trainer's credential is important because in 2013 applicants for financial assistance for training expenses through the Educational Incentive Program will be required to use that financial assistance solely for training provided by credentialed trainers.

B-02 Problems

None

B-03 Significant Findings and Events

ECAC Membership Meetings – ECAC meetings have been designed to support the members' understanding of systems building work with a particular focus on the cross-system nature of issues being addressed and the strategies needed to effectively move those issues forward. Each meeting has several component parts with a significant portion devoted to innovative strategies. These innovative strategies discussions have been useful in increasing the knowledge of members and provide a forum for determining cross system solutions to common problems. The ECAC held two membership meetings during this period: June and September 2012.

The June meeting included a presentation by Anita Murphy, Associate Commissioner for Curriculum, Instruction and Field Services for the State Education Department, regarding their efforts to effectively connect early childhood to the larger effort to improve public education, including restructuring the school review rubric to integrate early care and education experiences into a more complete picture of all the factors that contribute to children's learning over time. The Innovative Strategies portion of the meeting was devoted to two topics: Introducing Opportunities to Build Cultural Competence into the Practice of the Early Care and Education Field, including ways in which culturally competent practice can be promoted and captured within QUALITYstarsNY standards; and developing a Statewide Shared

Services Alliance and how it can benefit early childhood educators within New York by improving quality of services and reducing costs.

In addition, a presentation was provided regarding the ECAC's support for the statewide implementation of a Common Metric, currently being developed by the New York City Early Care and Education Steering Committee, that would allow early care and education entities across the state that use different assessments to compare results.

The September meeting included a follow-up presentation on Cultural Competence, including reports from ECAC members regarding how their own organizations and agencies have implemented culturally competent practice, and how to best move forward to embed standards on cultural competence within QUALITYstarsNY.

Other topics at the September meeting included the unveiling of several publications designed to improve children's health: a brochure for parents and a policy brief for stakeholders to support the practice of routine developmental screening of young children throughout the state; and brochures for family child care homes and centers that would be used to expand their participation in Child and Adult Care Food Program.

Members also discussed and affirmed an ECAC response to the Governor's Education Reform Commission, which had created recommendations for improving the educational system. The ECAC members endorsed the following recommendations to the Education Reform Commission's work:

- Funding the implementation of QUALITYstarsNY, a quality rating and improvement system for all licensed and regulated early care and education programs.
- Establishing New York's Early Learning Framework as the foundation for the Birth – Grade 2 Teacher Certification.

B-04 Dissemination Activities

ECAC Newsletter - Starting in January 2011, the ECAC has produced a newsletter, *Updates*, which has focused on significant developments and activities within, or of interest to, the ECAC. The newsletter's distribution, initially limited to ECAC and work group members, as well as a small number of other professionals connected through the Council on Children and Families, has now expanded to include approximately 500 early childhood stakeholders and supporters throughout the state. Newsletter features include a Members' Corner, reports on QUALITYstarsNY Implementation, and highlights of other ECAC projects. **(Copies of the ECAC newsletter are attached.)**

In addition to the monthly newsletter, the ECAC has begun to produce "e-blasts" to capture late-breaking news in a format that reaches our target audience as quickly as possible. **(Copy of the ECAC E-blast is attached.)**

ECAC Website – The ECAC website is a significant communication tool for making people aware about the ECAC and its work. Information on the website is constantly updated so that people using the

website are getting information in as timely a fashion as possible. The ECAC's communication consultants have recently provided an outline and guidance for a greatly improved website that should improve the effectiveness of our web communication. It is expected that work on the website redesign will begin soon. The link to the ECAC website is: <http://ccf.ny.gov/ECAC/index.cfm>

B-05 Other Activities

National Survey of Early Care and Education--New York State policymakers have observed that rural counties in the state seem to have an under-subscription 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 needs 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.

B-06 Activities Planned for Next Reporting Period

During the next reporting period the ECAC will hold quarterly membership meetings in December 2012 and March 2013. For the December meeting, the ECAC is planning to discuss how social impact bonds could be used to support early childhood services and how the federal election will impact services for young children. In addition, presentations will be provided on the ECAC's Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model and the potential role of the ECAC in promoting aspects of health care reform that will impact children's health.

Work Group and general ECAC activities planned for the coming period include:

- Finalize the sustainability plan for the ECAC and its initiatives.
- Continue to oversee implementation of QUALITYstarsNY.
- Develop recommendations for an appeals process for the QUALITYstarsNY rating system.
- Create and monitor an evaluation plan for QUALITYstarsNY implementation.
- Revise school-age child care QUALITYstarsNY standards following review period and trial use of the standards in small set of programs.
- Finalize the Resource Guide for the QUALITYstarsNY standards so that each standard has a clarification statement, resources for additional information, and samples of documentation that could serve as evidence of meeting that standard.
- Unveil the ECAC Early Childhood Cost Estimation Model to ECAC members and other potential users, and develop trainings and technical support.

- Finalize the interagency protocols for requesting analysis and recommending changes to the cost model to ensure integration and improved access and quality.
- Finalize the technical document and user manual that provides definitions of the programs and services included in the cost model and an explanation of the methodologies used to identify per unit costs and funding.
- Conduct the ECAC Financing Strategies Forum.
- Develop documents and/or products that would outline the strategy 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.
- Finalize recommendations for implementing new financing strategies.
- Continue to promote Aspire, New York State's Early Learning Professional Development Registry, including linking with the QUALITYstarsNY database.
- Continue plans for developing training modules and professional development opportunities for trainers and practitioners. Ensure that the training plans include 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.
- Continue work with early childhood teacher educators and training organizations to incorporate the *Early Learning Guidelines* and *the Core Body of Knowledge* into pre-service and in-service education of the early childhood workforce.
- Disseminate for comment the completed draft of *A Guide to Positions in Early Childhood* which includes defining acceptable educational alternatives to early childhood coursework/majors, referred to as 'related fields.'
- Revise the content of the Train the Trainers modules for the *Core Body of Knowledge* and conduct focus groups with trainers.
- Develop web-based modules for supporting use of the *Early Learning Guidelines* and the *Core Body of Knowledge*.
- Continue planning for the development of the New York State Early Learning Data System.
- Finalize the proposal for developing an early childhood education data system that would be linked to the P-12 student longitudinal data system and eventually other early childhood data systems.
- Continue efforts to promote health and well-being in early care and education settings.
- Develop a plan for coordination of the ECAC CACFP Expansion project with the Department of Health CDC grant, including developing and executing a series of activities to gather information on remaining barriers to CACFP participation. That information will be used to inform the barrier reduction activities of the CDC grant.
- Design tools that will allow the insurance enrollment project to institutionalize relationships between CCR&Rs and Facilitated Enrollers. PHD staff will be addressing one or more meetings of Facilitated Enrollers to discuss the project.
- Continue work to compile social-emotional best practices, materials and screening tools and develop strategies to approach professional organizations and entities to embed social-emotional development content into their trainings and professional development.

- Continue marketing the developmental screening parent brochure and ensure that it becomes widely distributed, and explore other avenues to promote screening with policymakers and to provide education to physicians.
- Explore ways to use the white paper on child care health consultants as a vehicle to discuss the recommendations and develop a workplan for implementation.
- Create/adopt one definition of “family engagement” using input from Head Start, Protective Factors Framework, and the Family Engagement Coalition.
- Develop the “case” for family engagement as an essential ingredient in early care and education.
- Create “10 things state agencies should do” to increase family engagement and review current status of this issue among state agencies.
- Identify strategies to influence cross-program professional development on family engagement.
- Identify community-level strategies
- Create a strategy for developing a webinar with a family engagement expert that would be recorded and shared broadly with providers, practitioners, home visitors, parenting educators, etc.
- Organize a conference call to explore how to target Early Intervention Coordinating Council and Parent Coalitions to expand on the existing activities related to Community Cafés.
- Develop Parent Partnership strategy and tools.
- Further populate folders on Groupsite (online work sharing space) to explore:
 - Groups that are having similar dialogues—locally, at the state level, and nationally
 - Best practice tools and resources for families, practitioners, systems (training, curricular, assessments)
 - Funding streams (federal, state, local, private)
 - National experts
 - Existing Services by State Agency.
- Hone draft of document, *Criteria for Successful Family Engagement*.