

# **Implementation Sub-Committee of the Task Force on Federal Legislation of the Children's Cabinet**

## **MEETING MINUTES**

**January 14, 2005**

**Linda Katz called the meeting to order at 9:05 AM at the Arnold Conference Center. Introductions were made. The December 10, 2004 meeting minutes were reviewed and approved.**

### **1. REPORT FROM EDUCATION SUB-COMMITTEE, LD PROJECT - STEVE BRUNERO/LYNN LANDI**

**Steve Brunero gave a brief history of the Learning Disability (LD) Project, which he and Diane Cook started at ORS in 1999. The purpose of the project was to identify and serve individuals who, because of significant learning deficits, had difficulty in obtaining and maintaining employment. Steve and Lynn Landi described the Learning Disability Pilot Project, implemented April 1, 2004 in the Pawtucket, Warwick and Johnston DHS offices. Social workers were trained to administer the Washington State LD Screening Tool in order to identify potential indicators of learning disabilities in FIP beneficiaries. Highlights of the analysis of the six-month pilot include the following: a flow chart for social workers to help in clarification of the process; increased interaction between social workers and FIP individuals in the pilot areas; more efficient and timely process;**

**better response to contacts in pilot areas; 90% of referrals from pilot project offices diagnosed as learning disabled; better coordination of services in pilot project areas for those with illness, housing needs and crisis intervention; and improved referrals to appropriate rehabilitation counselors.**

**Donalda Carlson thanked all who participated in the project. Debra Borst thanked the DHS field staff in particular for their impressive work, demonstrated by the 90% accuracy rate of appropriate candidates identified and referred to the program.**

## **2. OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES - JANE HAYWARD**

**Jane Hayward addressed the group regarding the establishment of the Office of Health and Human Services. The Department of Health, Department of Human Services, Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals, the Department of Elderly Affairs and the Department of Children, Youth and Families provide direct services to almost one-third of Rhode Islanders at a cost of \$2.3 billion dollars per year. This is 41% of the state budget. A review by the Fiscal Fitness Team determined the need to: coordinate planning, budgeting, policy-making, and communications; address judicial overlap and duplication; coordinate access, eligibility, and tracking procedures to make evaluating outcomes, quality assurance and fiscal integrity less difficult and more user-friendly; and coordinate**

**departments, while enhancing the environment for employees.**

**Jane told the group that she has been meeting with the department directors over the past few months collaborating on the development of the mission, vision, values and set of goals to guide the restructuring process and to serve as the basis for the executive office's operations.**

**Legislation has been prepared and will be introduced to establish the Office of the Secretariat. Jane stated that this is not another layer of the bureaucracy. It establishes a central point of accountability for health and human services. Jane also noted that this is truly an opportunity, since we can do more together than any one department could.**

**Jane stated that she and the Governor are worried about TANF reauthorization and about what may happen in Medicaid, that there is much at risk regarding services and dollars.**

**Linda Katz offered that this task force is ready to help in any way it can. Jane concluded by stating that this group is seen as the way to do things, that it is quite extraordinary.**

### **3. RAPID JOB ENTRY (RJE) - CAMILLE VOLLARO**

**Camille gave a brief update of the Rapid Job Entry (RJE) Program including the following. The program now accepts Food Stamp (FS) clients, mixing them in groups with FIP clients. Providence DHS has been asking for a Spanish RJE workshop. The RJE pilot program starting January 31 in the Providence DHS Office will be open to clients statewide. Camille has been working closely with Child Support Enforcement and with the Department of Corrections. There is going to be a Newport Job Fair. Camille distributed a Rapid Job Entry brochure that will be available in DHS Offices. This was the product of collaboration with Diane Cook. The Rapid Job Entry Program has taken out testing, concentrating on seeking and securing jobs. Camille said that the FIP average wage is \$9.28. Camille continues to do outreach to try to get referrals. However, referrals continue to be down. It was noted that this is partly due to baseline changes in FIP caseloads. Linda Katz advised that cases that are closing need information regarding how to find jobs.**

#### **4. BRIEFING ON NEW TAX INTERCEPT POLICY - JACQUELINE KELLY/STEVE DINOBILE**

**Jacqui Kelly and Steve DiNobile shared an issue with the group that was created by a change in the policy language in the statute that allows the department to intercept state tax returns for outstanding overpayments on FIP. The change in the language from “delinquent” to “if there are monies owed” has caused the taxes to be scooped not**

only where there is delinquency, but in all cases where there is any money owed, even when there is a legitimate payment plan in place. Steve stated that about 10,000 notices were sent out alerting people to the problem and informing them of their appeal rights. Jacqui advised the group to tell clients to file an appeal and to provide specific information in hopes of clearing up the case in an adjustment conference prior to a hearing. Steve emphasized that his unit at DHS is balancing a dual mission to incur revenue and to help clients.

Linda Katz concluded the discussion by agreeing that there is a need to go back for a statutory change in the language from “owed” to “delinquent”.

## **5. UPDATE ON RECENT POLICY CHANGES – SIMPLIFIED REPORTING – CHRISTINE UNSWORTH**

Simplified reporting was implemented December 1 and notices were sent. The goal is to reduce Food Stamp (FS) errors and the FS error rate. Christine stated that Rhode Island has the highest FS error rate in the nation. RI went to 6-month recertifications for purposes of simplification. Chris explained the difference between the two kinds of reporters, simplified reporters and change reporters. Sherry Campanelli stated that Rhode Island needed to simplify reporting to improve its 51st place Food stamp error rate. Linda Katz mentioned that the Rite Care recertification would be done at the same time as

**the FIP recertification.**

## **6. SUPPORTIVE EMPLOYMENT & TRANSITIONAL JOBS – DIANE COOK/JEANNETTE CABRAL**

**Donalda Carlson distributed a Supportive Employment & Transitional Jobs Progress Report that, due to time constraints, will be discussed at the next meeting.**

## **7. BRIEFING ON FEDERAL BUDGET ISSUES – LINDA KATZ**

**Linda stated that time would not allow for further discussion today but that Jane Hayward had briefly touched on some of the issues.**

## **8. OTHER BUSINESS**

**Linda Katz suggested that the next meeting be largely devoted to discussion of FS and FIP issues. Linda shared that she and Cathy Gorman would like the group to discuss whether to combine this meeting with the Food Stamp Advisory Meeting, since both groups share common issues.**

**ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 11:20 AM.**

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Jeanne Hunter**