

***Rhode Island Early Learning Council***  
***Program Standards Alignment Sub-Committee***

Wednesday, September 19, 2012 12:00-2:30 p.m.  
Community College of Rhode Island, Knight Campus, Room 4090

**Meeting Summary**

**AGENDA SUMMARY**

The Program Standards Alignment Subcommittee agenda addressed the following topics:

- Review and discussion of the Core Team’s guiding principles for the program standards alignment work.
- Overview and key findings from the public input process regarding program standards and regulations including information gathered through the NARA Public Forums (regarding DCYF licensing revisions), the program standards alignment public forums and focus groups, and the online surveys.
- A discussion of the most important findings/themes from the public input process to focus on during the revision process
- A review of next steps and timeline for the work
- An opportunity for public comments

**KEY POINTS**

Key discussion points from the meeting are summarized below:

**Guiding Principles**

Questions and Comments about the Principles

- It is good that there is a clear goal to eliminate duplication for providers and unify guidance materials, applications, monitoring and assessment policies and procedures. This will have a very positive impact on the field.
- What is meant by reasonable and achievable with support through a continuous quality improvement process? For example, if a provider has an issue with facilities and that is their major barrier to quality what kind of support would be available to them?
  - The idea behind “reasonable and achievable” is that there might be more than one way to meet a standard. This will vary depending on the kind of program but we know that that there needs to be some flexibility between program types and structure about how the standard can be demonstrated.
  - Most of the most difficult stumbling blocks to quality for providers have to do with facilities. This is where we need to make sure the standards are aligned and reasonable. And we need to make sure that there are resources to help programs remediate facilities issues.

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**Suggestions for Improving the Language**

- The guiding principles should use stronger verbs to convey commitment and action. Rather than using “should”, they should use words like “must” or “will”.
- The statement “what matters most for children” is vague. Can we put more specific language about child outcomes instead?
- Add families in parenthesis along with children and providers to the following sentence, “Tiered program quality standards need to reflect the cultural diversity of our population (children and providers).”
- Change the language from “children in low income families” to “children in low income communities” in the following statement, “tiered program quality standards need to be relevant to the needs of children with developmental delays and disabilities, children who are English language (dual language) learners, children in low-income families and communities, and children who are involved in the child welfare system.”
- For the statement above, there should also be language that the program standards need to be relevant to the needs of children who are experiencing trauma; not just children who are involved in the child welfare system.

**Process Overview and Key Findings from Public Input Sessions**

- No discussion points or questions

**Discussion: What are the most important findings/themes to focus on during the revision process?**

- It would be great if providers could access more information on KIDSNET such as the date of a child’s last physical.
- We should seek national guidance and look at national best practice around:
  - Alignment with the Head Start Federal Performance Review.
  - Background checks (there are some recent publications that contain strong recommendations on this)
  - Teacher certification
- We need to look at the practical effect of group size on the bottom line for private child care providers.

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- We need to find better ways to support English speaking family child care providers. There is a lot of support for Spanish speaking family child care providers but not as much for English speaking family child care providers.
- The standards will look at both research-based and evidenced-based practices and they should have a bibliography that references the sources for each practice.

**Next Steps**

- No discussion points or questions

**Public Comment**

- The summary of the public feedback was comprehensive and accurate.
- Revising and aligning the program standards are just the icing on the cake. It is the policies and procedures underneath the standards that will really create the alignment.
- BrightStars facilitated a process last fall to develop recommendations for BrightStars revisions which could help inform the program standards revision/alignment work.
- Strengthening Families is doing a lot of work nationally and in other states to align and integrate their frame work with early learning and education systems e.g. early learning and development standards, the Head Start Framework, etc. In addition, the federal staff who drafted the Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge RFP used Strengthening Families as a reference. If we are really serious about reaching all children, we need to look at supporting families. We should look at Strengthening Families as a potential framework to guide the revisions work.
- The national NAEYC office has a wealth of resources and experts who could advise us on alignment with their standards as well as the Head Start Performance Standards.