

# ***Rhode Island Early Learning Council Work Group Meeting***

Thursday, August 16, 2012 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Community College of Rhode Island – Knight Campus, Room 4090

400 East Ave., Warwick, RI

**Work Group Members In Attendance:** Leanne Barrett, Michele Palermo, Larry Pucciarelli, Karen Beese, Blythe Berger, Tammy Camillo, Terese Curtin, Susan Dickstein, Rhonda Farrell, Maryann Finamore-Allmark, Ruth Gallucci, Leslie Gell, Kristen Greene, Jerry Hatfield, Cindy Larson, Khadija Lewis Khan, Joseph Morra, Leslie Sevey, Susan Warford, Judi Stevenson-Garcia

**Additional Attendees:** Rachael Flum, Laura Mason Zeisler, Emily Eisenstein, Carol Votta, Sara Mickelson,

**Facilitator:** Kristin Lehoullier

## **Welcome/Meeting Overview**

The Rhode Island Early Learning Council Work Group meeting was called to order at 9:00 a.m. by facilitator, Kristin Lehoullier. Kristin facilitated introductions and reviewed the agenda.

## **General RTT-ELC Project Management**

Clark gave an update on RTT-ELC project management. Key points included:

- All agencies are moving forward on hiring.
- The Scope of Work was approved and monthly monitoring calls and protocol have been established.
- Most subcommittees will convene before the September Early Learning Council meeting.
- The Core Project teams are revising the Scopes of Work for a September 1st submission to our Federal team.

No questions were raised.

## **Council Subcommittee Updates**

Kristen Greene and Susan Dickstein gave an update on the Early Standards Project (see status report).

Key points included:

- Public feedback was sought on the structure and organization of the standards in July.
- This was used to decide on a structure and create a first draft of the RI standards. The draft will be available for comment Sept 10<sup>th</sup>-28<sup>th</sup> during which there will be another round of public forums and focus groups as well as an online survey.
- The Letter of Intent for phase II of the project to contract with national experts who will review the draft standards has been posted.
- The next Sub-Committee meeting will be on 9/28/12 from 1-4 p.m.
- All subcommittee meeting materials are on the ELRI website.

The following questions and comments were raised in response to the report out:

- The next subcommittee meeting is at the same time as the RI Early Learning Conference – can the date or time of the meeting be changed that so that it doesn't conflict?
- Can we translate the Early Learning Standards into Spanish for the Spanish-speaking community?

Kristen Greene stressed that she looked at every possible solution to address the scheduling conflict between the Early Learning Development Standards Subcommittee meeting and the RI Early Learning Conference. Due to a Federal call scheduled that morning along with the timeline for the work and the consultant's schedule, there was no way to change the meeting time or date. However, the subcommittee meeting will be held as close to Bryant University as possible (at Northern Collaborative) to make it easier for people to get there.

Michele explained that the core team is thinking through how to best engage non-English speaking providers including looking at whether it is feasible to translate the draft RI standards for the next round of public forums and focus groups.

Karen Beese, Brenda Almeida, and Michele Palermo gave an update on the Program Standards Alignment Project (see status report). Key points included:

- Early input is being sought before revisions are started through a series of public forums and focus groups.
- DCYF has begun work with NARA to revise the standards. NARA's recommendations and report will be done in mid-September.
- The core team is thinking about what other resources they need to make informed decisions about revisions for each of the components.
- The work to revise and align the standards and regulations won't start until late Sept –early Oct.
- A first draft of the revisions will be released in early December and there will be another round of focus groups and public forums to get input and feedback.
- The next subcommittee meeting is Sept 19<sup>th</sup>.

The following questions and comments were raised in response to the report out:

- When will the revisions be finalized?
- When will they go into effect?
- When will there be decisions about the notion of requiring people to join BrightStars?
- We need to clarify the term alignment. It does not mean that everything will be the same. But it does mean that definitions of terms are the same across standards and how something is measured is the same between agencies. There are some baseline standards that will be the same for everyone but in some areas there will be a progression across the standards.
- Can we do a survey in Spanish to get feedback from non-English speaking providers?
- The Head Start Directors would like to see the Head Start Performance Standards recognized in this.
- When will the RFP for BrightStars and Professional Development be released?

Michele shared that the final standards will be made available for public comment in January and February and then finalized in March. The decision about when to put the new standards in effect will be dependent on the degree of changes being made. That decision won't be made until after it is clear what

the changes will be. As for BrightStars enrollment, the core team is charged with looking at that issue this Fall.

Michele also explained that the core team will be looking at three levels of alignment: 1) Alignment of content; 2) Alignment of language, and; 3) Alignment of the system and how it works together. The core team will start working on the last one in the first half of January after the standards are developed. One of the first things the core team will work on is the conceptual alignment. It is expected that the most substantial changes will be in the licensing regulations because they haven't been revised in a long time.

The core team is also thinking about how to best engage non-English speaking providers in the work. It is definitely on the team's radar.

Tammy noted that last Fall when BrightStars was looking at possible revisions there were several recommendations that got moved ahead and one of them was to treat Head Start programs with a successful federal review the same was as NAEYC accreditation

Michele noted that this is something that the core team will research in relation to what we are trying to achieve and how we plan to measure each piece.

Karen Beese and Leanne Barrett gave an update on the Program Quality Improvement Project (see status report). Key points included:

- The first subcommittee meeting was held in August. The group brainstormed barriers that programs were facing in improving their quality.
- It is clear that many quality challenges are very similar across all the standards and regulations.
- A key piece of the work is the cost analysis that Anne Mitchell is doing to assess the cost of operating programs at various levels of quality. She will be coming to a meeting this Fall to present her findings.

The following questions and comments were raised in response to the report out:

- How will incentives be rolled out to programs?
- How will programs that don't serve children receiving Child Care Assistance (CCAP) access the incentives?
- Does your work include looking at the issue of wages and compensation?
- Will there be ways for programs to access funds for facilities?
- Is there a difference between a quality improvement grant and incentive grant?

Karen noted that, in addition to the tiered bonus payments for CCAP programs, there will also be program improvement grants to programs participating in BrightStars. The core team is also looking at other ways to get incentives out to programs.

Leanne explained that Anne Mitchell is looking at the issue of wages and salaries in her cost model and how it affects differences in levels of quality. She will be making recommendations on how to address the wage and compensation issue. She also noted that the core team is looking at issues around facilities as well.

Karen explained that the core team is strongly considering a participation incentive for programs which enroll in BrightStars. However, over the long-term the focus will be on program quality improvement grants. The Core Team is discussing how to include programs that enrolled after the ARRA incentives expired.

Larry Pucciarelli gave an update on Access (see status report). Key points included:

- The CCAP policy revisions went into effect switching recertification requirements from 6 months to 12 months.
- The verification process for work schedule was changed to self attestation.

Michele introduced Judi Stevenson-Garcia who will be co-leading the Early Childhood Assessment subcommittee with Mindy Mertz. This subcommittee will begin meeting in September.

Karen Beese and Khadija Lewis Khan gave an update on the Workforce Subcommittee (see status report). The first subcommittee meeting will be in September. People have self-selected to participate on this committee. An invitation will be coming out very soon to everyone who volunteered.

Michele Palermo gave an update on the Early Learning Data System. She shared that RIDE is working to hire staff to lead the effort.

**Discussion:** Where do you see these projects intersecting? What connections do we need to make sure take place as the work unfolds? Key points included:

- Where do we talk about TEACH now that it is no longer an official subcommittee of the Council?
- Why are we requiring that early childhood teachers be certified? Is certification required for TEACH? From a Director's perspective, staff that get certified will be difficult to retain and will be targeted by the school district for hiring.
- In most other states across the country people are using TEACH to get an Associates degree.
- In BrightStars certification is optional.
- It would have been helpful to receive the Scopes of Work before the meeting.

### **Draft Early Learning Council Strategic Plan – Review/Feedback**

Kristin reviewed the draft strategic plan with the Workgroup Members and asked for feedback. The following key points were raised:

- The document was easy to follow and to read.
- We need to do more to explain the role of the Council and Work Group.
- We should include more detail about the subcommittees and co-chairs.
- We need to include information on the importance of community input.
- This plan is very focused on birth to age five. However, we are charged with birth to eight. We need to explain that this Strategic Plan is based on birth-five as a first step.
- We need to include a definition of early childhood educators in the definitions.
- We need to add in a strategy about providing professional development to directors and administrators.

- Should the focus of Access be broader? Are you only trying to expand access to high quality early learning programs or are you trying to expand access to early learning programs.
- The charge of the council is to expand access to high quality early learning programs (which can be achieved by improving the quality of programs where children are already enrolled).
- We need to include Early Head Start in the definitions.
- The definition for Workforce Knowledge and Competencies says the competencies are for people who work with children in a classroom setting. What about people who work with young children in other settings?

### **Public Comment**

None

### **Next Steps**

Kristin reviewed next steps with the group:

- **Next ELC/ELCWG Meeting:** September 27, 2012 12:00-2:00 p.m. (Warwick Radisson)
- **Next ELCWG Meeting:** October 18, 2012 9:00-11:00 a.m. (TBD)