

# CT Early Childhood Cabinet Meeting Minutes

October 21, 2016 • 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Legislative Office Building, Room 1B, Hartford, CT

## ATTENDANCE

Member	Statutory Designation		Member	Member Type	
<b>Nancy Wyman</b> <i>Lieutenant Governor</i>	Co-Chair	X	<b>Grace Whitney</b> <i>Director, Connecticut Head Start Collaboration Office</i>	State Director of Head Start Collaboration	X
<b>Linda Goodman</b> <i>Acting Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood</i>	Co-Chair	X	<b>Cathy Battista</b> <i>Family Resource Alliance</i>	Representative from Family Resource Centers	
<b>Roderick Bremby</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Social Services</i>	Commissioner of Social Services, or designee		<b>Patricia Bryant -Beausoleil</b> <i>Director, Putnam Family Resource Center and Early Childhood Coordinator</i>	Representative from a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program	X
<b>Ellen Cohn</b> <i>Deputy Commissioner, State Department of Education</i>	Responsible for administering the provisions of Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Act	X	<b>Marisol Estrada-Soto</b> <i>Parent</i>	Parent of a child attending or attended a school in an education reform district	
<b>Kimberly Karanda</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services</i>	Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or designee		<b>Helene Figueroa</b> <i>Director, Child Care Division CSEA/SEUI Local 2001</i>	Representative of the CT State Employees Association	X
<b>Harriet Feldlaufer</b> <i>Director, Early Care &amp; Education, Office of Early Childhood</i>	Administrator of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)	X	<b>Linda Francovich</b> <i>Executive Director, Grossman Family Foundation</i>	Representative from the Philanthropic Community	X
<b>Leah Grenier</b> <i>Budget Analyst, Office of Policy &amp; Management</i>	Secretary, Office of Policy & Management, or designee	X	<b>Laura Post, Senior Director,</b> <i>Strategic Planning &amp; Insights, LEGO Systems</i>	Representative from the Business Community	X
<b>Kimberly Nilson</b> <i>Program Manager, Department of Children &amp; Families</i>	Commissioner of Children & Families, or designee	X	<b>Karen Rainville,</b> <i>Executive Director, Bridge to Success Community Partnership and Member, CT Association for the Education of Young Children</i>	Representative of an association of early education and child care providers	X
<b>Evonne Klein</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Housing</i>	Commissioner of Department of Housing		<b>Edie Reichard</b> <i>Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care</i>	Representative of a State-funded Child Care Center	X
<b>Rosa Biaggi,</b> <i>Public Health Section Chief, Department of Public Health</i>	Commissioner of Public Health, or designee	X	<b>Imelda D'Luc</b> <i>Director, Head Start/Early Head Start, Child Care Learning Centers, and Chair, CT Head Start Association</i>	Representative from the Head Start Association	X

<b>Morna Murray</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Developmental Services</i>	Commissioner of Developmental Services, or designee		<b>Eileen Ward</b> <i>Director, Children's Community Development Center</i>	Representative of Local Providers of Early Childhood Education	X
<b>Joan Parris</b> <i>Director, Early Childhood Education, Norwalk CC</i>	Designee for President of Board of Regents	X	<b>Steven Hernandez</b> <i>Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children and Senior</i>	Executive Director of the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors, or designee	X
<b>Maria Synodi</b> <i>Special Education Consultant, State Department of Education</i>	Responsible for administering Section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	X	Vacant	Board of Education for a town designated as an Alliance District, appointed by the Speaker of the House	
<b>Louis Tallarita</b> <i>State Coordinator, Bureau of Health, Nutrition, Family Services and Adult Education, State Department of Education</i>	Responsible for coordination of education services to children and youth who are homeless	X	Vacant	Parent of child attending or attended a School Readiness program, appointed by the Minority Leader of the House.	
<b>Dianna Wentzell</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Education</i>	Commissioner of Education, or designee				

**Attendance Note:**

**Bill Halsey**, Department of Social Services, attended on behalf of DSS Commissioner Bremby

**Peter Palermينو**, Department of Social Services, attended on behalf of DSS Commissioner Bremby

**Nikki Richer**, Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services, attended on behalf of Kimberly Karanda

**Tammy Garris**, Department of Developmental Services, attended on behalf of DDS Commissioner Morna Murray

**A. Welcome and Introductions**

Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman opened the meeting and asked for introductions from Cabinet members. She announced that Linda Goodman, Acting Commissioner for the Office of Early Childhood (OEC), will co-chair the Cabinet with her. Acting Commissioner Goodman welcomed the Cabinet members.

The January 8, 2016 meeting minutes were adopted.

**B. Responsibilities of the State Advisory Council**

Acting Commissioner Linda Goodman reviewed the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services and the Department of Education document, "Guidance to State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education & Care." The core responsibilities of the State Advisory Councils (SACS) are the following:

- Conducting periodic statewide needs assessments on the quality and availability of high-quality early care and education (ECE) programs.
- Identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally-funded and state-funded ECE programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among state agencies responsible for administering such programs
- Establishing recommendations for:
  - Developing a statewide, unified data collection system.
  - Creating or enhancing a statewide professional development system and career ladder.
  - Improvements in state early learning standards and undertaking efforts to develop high-quality and comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.

- Increasing participation of children in ECE programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations.
- Assessing the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-year institutions of higher education to support the career development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in Head Start or pre-kindergarten programs.

There was consensus that the Cabinet will function as the State Advisory Council and its work will be within this framework moving forward. The Cabinet will meet at least four times a year.

**C. Every Student Succeeds Act**

Ellen Cohen, Deputy Commissioner at the State Department of Education, provided an overview of the federal Every Childhood Succeeds Act (ESSA). The last reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, then called the No Child Left Behind Act, was in 2003. The new reauthorization returns control to the states. Connecticut is well poised to implement ESSA. The State Board of Education adopted the SDE five-year strategic plan, which will serve as the “north star,” guiding the work of the SDE. The five-year plan is grounded in four promises to students:

- 1) Ensuring their non-academic needs are met so they are healthy, happy, and ready to learn.
- 2) Supporting their school and district in staying on target with learning goals.
- 3) Giving them access to great teachers and school leaders.
- 4) Making sure they learn what they need to know to succeed in college, career, and life.

SDE has put in place an implementation plan to solicit feedback from stakeholders, draft the plan, and submit by next spring. SDE is working with the RESCS to conduct focus groups with 80 stakeholder entities across the state regarding ESSA. The focus groups are just getting started, and will go through December. SDE will then write the plan and post for public comment. Based on feedback, the plan will be revised April through June 2016, and submitted by July 1, 2016.

Ms. Cohen said there is opportunity for collaboration between public school and community early care and education programs. She announced that SDE will hold a focus group with the Cabinet on November 21, from 1 to 3 p.m. at the State Office Building, Room 307.

**D. Opening Doors Campaign: Families with Children Work Group**

Alicia Woodsby, Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities, gave an update of the work of the Reaching Home Campaign and a work group focusing on families with children experiencing homelessness. The goal to end homelessness for youth and families is 2020.

The Reaching Home Campaign, as part of the federal Opening Doors Campaign, is comprised of an extensive leadership and member structure, with 200 entities participating in the goal to end homelessness in Connecticut. It includes the Governor’s administration, state agencies, providers, and philanthropy.

The work of the Early Childhood Cabinet last year, which had focused on addressing the needs of families with young children experiencing homelessness, is now being continued by The Families with Young Children work group chaired by Tanya Barrett, United Way of Connecticut, and Kim Samaroo-Rodriguez, Department of Children and Families.

Ms. Woodsby shared a profile of family homelessness in Connecticut. The typical family experiencing homelessness is a young, single mother of color with two small children.

- 1,125 families experienced homelessness in CT in 2015
- 85% of these households were headed by a single adult female
- 50% were under 30 years of age, 18% under 24
- 74% were women of color
- 44% of their children were under age 5
- 86% of their children were under age 12

The Families with Children work group draft plan and work group member list was shared with Cabinet members. The next step is to finalize the work plan, incorporate more specific action steps, identify opportunities to work with the Cabinet and the Office of Early Childhood in implementing Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) requirements related to homelessness, and identify what state laws and regulations need to be aligned with the goals to end family homelessness.

Lt. Gov. Wyman thanked the Partnership for Strong Communities for the work underway.

**E. Child Care Development Fund and Care 4 Kids Update**

Harriet Feldlaufer, Director of the OEC Early Care and Education Division, provided an update on Connecticut's implementation of the new requirements under the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) reauthorization. The Office of Early Childhood has held six public information sessions about CCDF and Care 4 Kids changes across the state this fall. The presentation is posted on the OEC website.

The final federal CCDF rules came out in late September. Pieces of Connecticut's CCDF plan (submitted in March 2016) will need to be amended to comply with the final rules. The new requirements under CCDF will better serve families by shifting the child care subsidy from a work support strategy only to a strategy that also ensures quality and continuity of care for the child and family.

There are three cornerstones under the CCDF reauthorization:

- Supporting Families' Child Care Choices
- Keeping Children Safe and Healthy
- Supporting Provider's Skills and Knowledge

The major eligibility shifts under the CCDF reauthorization include: 12-month certificate with significantly reduced reporting within that time frame; the parent can keep the 12-month certificate as long as household income does not exceed 85% of the state median income; 3-month job search if the parent loses employment within the 12-month timeframe; tiered graduated phase-out if at the time of redetermination the household income is over the initial eligibility income threshold but under 85% of the state median income.

Connecticut has also changed the requirements for unlicensed providers. All unlicensed providers must be relatives, which includes grandparents, great grandparents, uncles and aunts, siblings, nieces and nephews. Relatives may only care for a total of three children with no more than two children under the age of two. Relatives must be 20 years of age or older.

Major health and safety requirements include: increased professional development on health and safety topics; criminal background checks every five years for all staff; emergency plans required for all providers, all public and private schools and municipalities must have an annual health and safety inspection.

Ms. Feldlaufer provided an update regarding the impact that the new requirements are having on the Care 4 Kids budget allocation. The CCDF reauthorization is better for children and families, but without increased funding, fewer children will be served. Because children are enrolled in the Care 4 Kids program for longer time periods due to the new eligibility requirements, Care 4 Kids enrollment and expenditures are up.

To address the financing concern, the Office of Early Childhood closed intake to new applications for Priority Group 4 as of August 1 (working families with household incomes under 50% State Median Income). There are 1,300 households currently on the wait list. The Office of Early Childhood continues to closely monitor enrollment trends and expenditures in order to project FY17 expenditures against the available appropriation.

Cabinet members expressed concerns the impact that the CCDF requirements are having on Care 4 Kids expenditures even with the August 1 closure. They said many early care and education providers rely on Care 4 Kids to remain in business. Parents who cannot access the Care 4 Kids child care subsidy will either have to quit their job and place their child in unregulated, underground care.

Lt. Gov. Nancy Wyman said the Care 4 Kids situation is serious. The Governor's administration is looking very closely at this issue to see what can be done, but could not confirm that a funding solution is possible.

**F. Quality Recognition & Improvement System**

Deborah Adams, Workforce Specialist with the Office of Early Childhood, gave an overview of the vision for Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). Jennifer Johnson is the new Director of the Quality Improvement Division at the Office of Early Childhood. She was away at a conference and therefore, could not attend the Cabinet meeting.

The Five Pillars of Quality were distilled from the work of previous QRIS workgroups: health and safety; workforce qualifications; program leadership; family engagement; and learning environments. Jennifer is conducting listening tours to hear from the field about what they feel is working, their hopes for a system, and ideas about its structure and considerations associated with each pillar. Health and safety takes into consideration group size, staff ratios, nutrition, and sanitation. Workforce qualification takes into consideration Core Knowledge and Competencies and education level. Family engagement takes into consideration cultural responsiveness, whole child approach, and community involvement. Learning environments takes into consideration rating system, curriculum, NAEYC accreditation, Head Start standards, Early Learning and Development Standards. Program Leadership takes into consideration the role of the Director/Administrator/Principal, staff policies and program management.

The newly launched QRIS has a new name: THRIVE! Through Quality Early Learning.

**G. Project LAUNCH**

Melissa Mendez, Associate Director of Early Childhood at Wheeler Clinic and Tirzah Kemp, Project LAUNCH Local Coordinator, provided an overview of Project LAUNCH, a federally funded five-year grant serving children in the Dwight neighborhood in New Haven. The purpose of Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health) is to promote the wellness of young children ages birth to age 8 by addressing the physical, social, emotional, cognitive and behavioral aspects of their development. The long-term goal is to ensure that all children enter school ready to learn and able to succeed. Project LAUNCH seeks to improve coordination across child-serving systems, build infrastructure, and increase access to high-quality prevention and wellness promotion services for children and their families. The lead agency for this grant is the Department of Children and Families, with multiple partners including other state agencies.

Kimberly Nilson, Program Director at the Department of Children and Families, said the grant also requires the grantee to connect with a state-wide early childhood entity that also focuses on systems. The

goal is to draw from the work at the local level to create a statewide policy and model for service delivery to young children. She said that the Cabinet was the most logical entity to approach to adopt Project LAUNCH as one of its work groups. She put forth a request that the Cabinet designate Project LAUNCH as a work group of the Cabinet. Helene Figueroa made a motion and Ellen Cohen seconded the motion. The Cabinet approved Project LAUNCH as a work group of the Cabinet.

**H. Public Comment**

There was one public comment from Lynn Weiner from Yale New Haven Hospital who said all stakeholders must work to produce a solution to the Care 4 Kids funding issue, including reaching out for corporate support. Some Cabinet members remained after the meeting to further discuss the Quality Recognition and Improvement System.

**I. Adjournment / Next Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:15 a.m. The following meetings are scheduled: January 20, April 21, and June 23, all 9 – 11 a.m.