

**State Advisory Council (SAC) Subcommittee  
To the CT Early Childhood Cabinet**

**September 30, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

**Attending:** Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor, OEC; Harriet Feldlaufer, OEC; Lynn Johnson, OEC; Grace Whitney, CT Head Start Collaboration Office, OEC; Maria Synodi, SDE; Jenny Vesco, DHMAS; Donna Maselli, DPH; Joan Parris, Norwalk Community College; Bruni Edwards, Birth to Three program; Patricia Bryan-Beausoliel, Putnam Family Resource Center and Early Childhood Coordinator; Magdalena Rosales-Alban, LULAC, Eileen Ward, Children’s Community Development Center

**Federal Office of Child Care Guests:** Rachel Schumacher, Director, Office of Child Care; Shireen Riley, Regional Program Manager, Office of Child Care, Region 1

**OEC Staff:** Maggie Adair, Mary Farnsworth, Diana Lejardi, Loree Armstrong

**Welcome:** OEC Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor welcomed the Cabinet State Advisory Council (SAC) Subcommittee members. Commissioner Jones-Taylor explained that the full Cabinet is focusing on families with young children experiencing homelessness. The Cabinet is charged with identifying strategies to increase access to early childhood services for these children and families. This work will serve to enhance the efforts of the Department of Housing, which has set a goal to end family homelessness by 2022. The Cabinet SAC Subcommittee is charged with addressing the charge of the SAC under the Head Start Act of 2007.

**Introduction:** Harriet Feldlaufer, Division Director of Early Care & Education at the OEC, introduced Rachel Schumacher, Director of the federal Office of Child Care, and Shireen Riley, Regional Program Manager, Region 1, Office of Child Care. She said the new law provides numerous opportunities for providers to strengthen and enhance their practice for delivering high-quality early learning experiences for children across the range of ages and settings. The new law recognizes that child care is a two-generation support and advances the dual goals of high-quality child care assistance by supporting parents’ work and promoting children’s healthy development.

**Child Care Development Block Grant Act Reauthorization**

Rachel Schumacher provided an overview of the reauthorization of the Child Care Development Block Grant Act of 2015 (P.L. 113-186), commonly referred in CT as the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF). It was passed on a bipartisan basis and signed into law by President Obama November 19, 2014. The statute renews authority for CCDF through FY 2020 and represents an historic re-envisioning of the program. CCDBG was originally conceived as a work support under welfare reform. The new plan now addresses not only child care as a work support but also as supporting the early development of the child.

Ms. Schumacher said that the CCDF reauthorization is a law and now federal regulations must be drafted and finalized. She said CCDF reauthorization is a “game-changer” and the State SACs are prominently highlighted in the plan. The CCDF state application (called a “pre-print”) was previously released for public comment and those comments were taken into consideration with the recent release of a new version. The public has until October 26 to submit additional comments on the plan. States have until March 1, 2016 to submit their state plan, which is an application for funding and describes how the law will be implemented.

Ms. Schumacher said the CCDF reauthorization is an opportunity to re-envision child care to better support two generations, to think across early childhood systems, engage federal, state and local partners, and advance the CCDF goals. The key provisions of CCDF Reauthorization are:

- Health and safety minimums in licensing and training
- Criminal background checks
- Monitoring
- 12-month eligibility policies
- Payment rates and provider payment practices
- Consumer education and family engagement
- Training and professional development
- Increased quality spending
- Infant and toddler quality set-aside
- Supply building for under-served populations
- Tribal provisions

States must establish health and safety policies and provide training in the following areas:

- Prevention and control of infectious diseases (including immunization);
- SIDS and safe sleep practices;
- Administration of medication;
- Prevention/response to food allergies;
- Building and physical premises safety, including identifying electrical hazards, bodies of water, and vehicular traffic;
- Shaken baby syndrome and head trauma;
- Emergency preparedness and response planning, for natural or man-caused event;
- Storage of hazardous materials and bio contaminants;
- If applicable, precautions in transporting children; and
- First-aid and CPR.

Monitoring and Inspection requires the following:

- *Licensed Providers* – 1 pre-licensure inspection for health, safety, and fire standards and annual, unannounced inspections.
- *License-Exempt CCDF Providers* – Annual inspections for compliance with health, safety, and fire standards.
- States must ensure licensing inspectors are qualified and have received training in related health and safety requirements.
- Ratio of inspectors to providers must be sufficient to ensure visits occur in a timely manner.

Criminal background checks:

- Will be required for all child care providers and their staff members.
  - Relative caregivers excluded.
  - Includes child care staff members who don't care directly for children but have unsupervised access to children.
- Must include check of listed state and national databases for criminal, sex offender, and child abuse and neglect.
- Look at previous five years, including if lived in other states.
- Includes list of disqualifying crimes, with discretion on felony drug offenses.
- Must have appeals process for providers.

Eligibility policies must also be changed:

- Establishes minimum 12-month eligibility period.
  - CCDF families remain eligible and receive services for no less than 12 months as long as income doesn't exceed 85% SMI.
  - States have option to terminate assistance prior to re-determination if a parent loses employment or ceases education, but must allow for a 3-month period for job search.

- At re-determination, States must provide for a graduated phase-out of assistance for families whose income has increased beyond the initial State threshold, but doesn't exceed 85% of SMI.
- Eligibility re-determination should not require parents to unduly disrupt their employment.

The CCDF plan addresses rates and provider payment practices:

- Requires States to conduct a market rate survey, or use an alternative methodology, such as a cost estimation model, and describe how payment rates will be established based on results of the survey or alternative methodology, taking into account cost of providing higher quality services.
- States must establish policies that reflect generally accepted payment practices for child care providers, including (to the extent practicable) paying for absence days, and timely payment for child care services.

The CCDF plan addresses consumer education and family engagement:

- State must provide information (through resource and referral agencies or other means) to parents receiving CCDF, the general public, and, where applicable, child care providers, including availability of child care services, research and best practices concerning children's development, and policies regarding the social-emotional behavioral health of young children, including expulsion policies.
- States must provide information about other financial assistance programs that families might be eligible for, including TANF, Head Start and Early Head Start, LIHEAP, SNAP, WIC, CACFP, Medicaid, and SCHIP
- Programs carried out under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)
- State must provide information on developmental screenings

The CCDF plan addresses transparency:

- States must make electronically available provider-specific information showing results of monitoring and inspection reports.
- States must report on the number of child deaths, serious injuries and instances of child abuse in child care settings annually.
- States must have a website describing licensing and monitoring requirements, and processes for background checks.

The CCDF plan addresses professional pathways for the workforce:

- Requires States to establish professional development and training requirements to improve the knowledge and skills of the child care workforce.

The CCDF plan addresses improving quality:

- Requires a phased-in quality set-aside from 4% to 9% over a five-year period.
- Requires new minimum of 3% in funding to improve the supply and quality of infant-toddler care.
- States must establish outcome measures and evaluate progress of quality activities.
- State must spend quality funds on at least 1 of 10 specified quality activities.

The CCDF plan addresses improving access to underserved populations:

- States must develop strategies for increasing supply and quality of services in underserved areas, infant and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children in non-traditional care, which might include use of grants or contracts and alternative payment.
- States must establish procedures for enrollment of homeless children and use CCDF funds for training and outreach to promote access to services for homeless children.

There are staggered dates for implementation of many of the new requirements:

- The 9% quality set-aside must be met by FY20.
- The 3% minimum for infants and toddlers must be met by FY17.
- Background check requirements must be met by 9/30/17.
- Monitoring of licensing and regulatory requirements must be met by 11/19/16.
- Posting results of monitoring and inspection reports must be met by 11/19/17 or one year after monitoring is in place.
- Priority for services requirements must be met by 9/30/16.

### **Recognition of Legislators Attending**

Commissioner Jones-Taylor recognized the following legislators attending the forum: Senator Henri Martin, Senator Beth Bye, Representative Gail Lavielle, Representative Gayle Mulligan; and Representative Michelle Cook.

### **Questions and Comments from SAC Members**

- SAC member Donna Maselli, DPH, commented on the need for transportation services for children attending child care settings. Ms. Schumacher said transportation is not an allowable use of CCDF funding, but acknowledged the need for transportation support.
- SAC member Eileen Ward asked if the plan has a definition of “quality.” Ms. Schumacher replied that there is no specific definition, but the plan requires quality components.
- SAC member Magdalena Rosales-Alban referred to the Head Start framework and asked how Head Start professional development resources could support CCDF providers. Ms. Schumacher said local collaboration between Head Start and other child care providers is strongly encouraged.

### **Timeline and Process**

Ms. Feldlaufer outlined the process and timeline for the CCDF plan. An OEC CCDF team is working on drafting the plan. There are “team leads” for each section of the plan. The OEC submitted comments to the federal government on the first pre-print draft. The OEC team is meeting October 13 to review the latest pre-print draft and plans to submit comments.

Ms. Feldlaufer said the OEC will be making policy decisions such as serving more infants and toddlers, reducing family, friend and neighbor, and making homes children and priority.

The goal is to have a draft plan available by late November. The OEC will then schedule five public hearings to be held throughout the state, including an evening and Saturday morning. The OEC will record the public comment, review and modify the plan based on public feedback. SAC members were invited to provide input and comments to the OEC CCDF team leads.

### **Public Comment**

- SAC member Eileen Ward said some child care providers are working with very little capacity and meeting the professional development requirements may be difficult. Ms. Schumacher said states must be innovative in how they deliver professional development. It should not be one-shot training and coaching and mentoring is encouraged.
- Kursten Holabird, from SEIU International, said early childhood teacher wages are too low and must be raised. She asked if quality set-aside funds can be used to raise wages. Ms. Schumacher replied that the use of quality set-aside funds is flexible. She referred to the T.E.A.C.H model as one way to increase wages. Commissioner Jones-Taylor said the OEC spent \$1.9 million last fiscal year for teacher scholarships to support their pathway to a bachelor’s degree. The OEC will continue to provide scholarship support. Ms. Schumacher said some states provide bonuses to teachers who secure a degree.

- There was a question about inspection requirements for license-exempt settings. What is the definition for inspections for those settings? If a public school already has a fire and health inspection completed, would that suffice? Ms. Schumacher said decisions about inspection requirements are up to each state.
- Helene Figueroa, CSEA-SEIU Local 2001, asked about a strategy for reducing use of family, friend and neighbor providers. Commissioner Jones-Taylor said the OEC plans to reduce the use of family, friend and neighbor through a phased-in process. The goal is to encourage family, friend and neighbor providers to get licensed, and as a result build their skills and their wages. Once licensed, instead of being paid to care for two children, they are eligible to be paid for six children.
- In regard to the allowance of licensed-exempt providers, which includes schools and family, friend and neighbor, Ms. Schumacher said states must provide a strong rationale for allowing such exemptions and how the state is ensuring the health and safety of children in those settings.
- Kim Dole, Riverfront Children's Center, asked if the professional development requirements apply to all providers, or only those that accept the Care4Kids subsidy. She expressed concern that providers will stop accepting Care4Kids due to the new requirements.

The forum adjourned at 3:15 p.m.