

CT Early Childhood Cabinet Meeting Minutes

December 15, 2017 • 9:00 to 11:00 a.m.

Legislative Office Building, CT

ATTENDANCE

Member	Statutory Designation		Member	Member Type	
Nancy Wyman <i>Lieutenant Governor</i>	Co-Chair	X	Jenn Johnson <i>Director, Connecticut Head Start Collaboration Office</i>	State Director of Head Start Collaboration	
David Wilkinson <i>Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood</i>	Co-Chair	X	Cathy Battista <i>Family Resource Alliance</i>	Representative from Family Resource Centers	X
Roderick Bremby, <i>Department of Social Services</i>	Commissioner of Social Services, or designee		Patricia Bryant –Beausoleil <i>Director, Putnam Family Resource Center and Early Childhood Coordinator</i>	Representative from a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program	
Ellen Cohn <i>Deputy Commissioner, State Department of Education</i>	Responsible for administering the provisions of Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Act	x	Marisol Estrada-Soto <i>Parent</i>	Parent of a child attending or attended a school in an education reform district	
Kimberly Karanda <i>Commissioner, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services</i>	Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or designee	X	Vacant	Representative of the CT State Employees Association	
Harriet Feldlaufer <i>Director, Early Care & Education, Office of Early Childhood</i>	Administrator of the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)	X	Linda Fransicovich <i>Executive Director, Grossman Family Foundation</i>	Representative from the Philanthropic Community	X
Leah Grenier <i>Budget Analyst, Office of Policy & Management</i>	Secretary, Office of Policy & Management, or designee	X	Laura Post, Senior Director, <i>Vice President, LEGO Systems</i>	Representative from the Business Community	X
Kimberly Nilson <i>Program Manager, Department of Children & Families</i>	Commissioner of Children & Families, or designee	X	Karen Rainville, <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
Evonne Klein <i>Commissioner, Department of Housing</i>	Commissioner of Department of Housing		Edie Reichard <i>Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care</i>	Representative of a State-funded Child Care Center	x
Rosa Biaggi, <i>Public Health Section Chief, Department of Public Health</i>	Commissioner of Public Health, or designee		Roberto Burgos <i>Director, Early Childhood Learning Center</i>	Representative from the Head Start Association	X

Tammy Garris , <i>Fiscal Team Program Manager, Department of Developmental Services</i>	Commissioner of Developmental Services, or designee		Eileen Ward <i>Director, Children's Community Development Center</i>	Representative of Local Providers of Early Childhood Education	X
Joan Parris <i>Director, Early Childhood Education, Norwalk CC</i>	Designee for President of Board of Regents	X	Steven Hernandez <i>Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children and Senior</i>	Executive Director of the Commission on Women, Children and Seniors, or designee	X
<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	
Louis Tallarita <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.	
Dianna Wentzell <i>Commissioner, Department of Education</i>	Commissioner of Education, or designee				

A. Welcome and Introductions

David Wilkinson, OEC Commissioner, opened the meeting. Nancy Wyman, Lieutenant Governor, gave welcoming remarks. The January 20, 2017 and April 27, 2017 minutes were adopted.

B. State Budget

Commissioner Wilkinson provided a general overview of the state budget situation. He said that early childhood funding was largely spared in the budget that passed in November 2017. Days after the budget passed, new budget projections reported a deficit for the current fiscal year. The Governor is statutorily required to submit a deficit mitigation plan due to the size of this project budget shortfall. The Governor's deficit mitigation plans reduces funding for Care 4 Kids by \$18 million in FY18 and \$49 million in FY19. Commissioner Wilkinson said he is aware that this causes significant concern among early childhood stakeholders, stressing that Care 4 Kids is a lifeline for families. In response to question how these proposed cuts would reduce enrollment, the Commissioner said current funding would allow for 17,600 children and the proposed reduction would allow for about 9,000 children. Lt. Gov. Wyman noted that the Governor's proposed reductions exceed what is needed to close the budget gap, so the proposal gives a list of option to the Legislature.

C. Project LAUNCH

Maria Pendo-Warren, Local Coordinator for Project LAUNCH, provided an update on the New Haven-based initiative. Project LAUNCH is a five-year SAMSHA grant intended to serve as a state-wide model for improving early identification and treatment of children's mental health. One core aspect of the project is to engage parents in the healthy development of their children.

D. OEC Commissioner Report

Commissioner Wilkinson provided an overview of the OEC strategic direction. He said the agency has a family-first approach that focuses on accountability and outcomes. The agency needs to act on evidence-based research and practice, driven by data. The Commissioner noted several significant priorities and accomplishments over the past 6 months including: reopening the Care 4 Kids program, transitioning the Birth to Three program to a Medicaid fee-for-service model; launching the Quality

Recognition and Improvement (QRIS) pilots; securing full bonding for the Early Care and Information System (ECIS); securing a \$1.5 million federal home visiting innovation grant; working with the Department of Social Services (DSS) to secure a \$1 million SNAP Employment and Training grant; working with the State Department of Education's ESSA plan as it relates to early childhood; securing three technical assistance grants to focus on data and outcomes and improved state contracting models; and working with DSS to build Care 4 Kids eligibility management system within the DSS IMPACT model.

Commissioner Wilkinson said the two-generation legislation that was included in the state budget implementer provides an opportunity for ~~cross-sector~~ collaboration across the Executive and Legislative branch and among nonprofit providers. The legislation charges this collaborative partners to build a two-generation system of change.

Commissioner Wilkinson said the OEC will announce in January a new initiative that will provide bonus payment to providers delivering home visiting services. The bonus payments will be tied to improved parent and child outcomes.

One major challenge is the new legislatively required increase in fees for criminal background checks. The Commissioner said he is aware that the \$87 fee is a major burden on early care and education staff and providers and family members. The OEC is making one improvement by purchasing a software platform that will allow for providers to track whether a background check has cleared.

Cabinet member Karen Rainville said it is exciting to hear about the work underway at the OEC. However, many requirements and processes still pose a significant time and resource burden on providers and families. She urged the OEC to pursue streamlining and reducing redundant requirements and processes.

E. Homeless Families with Young Children

Alicia Woodsby, Executive Director of the Partnership for Strong Communities, reported on the work underway to end homelessness in Connecticut under the Reaching Home Campaign. She said the goal is to end family homelessness by 2020. A key component of the initiative is prevention and diversion. The Coordinated Access Networks (CANS) are finding that many people who seek out housing in a homeless shelter actually have other housing options. About 75% of families seeking shelter are diverted to other housing options.

In 2016, there were 1,100 homeless families with about 2,000 young children, half of those children under the age of 5. Research shows the detrimental impacts that trauma has on the healthy development of very young children; therefore access to child care is critical. The CANS and the OEC have entered into an MOU to link homeless families to early childhood resources.

F. Delivering on the OEC Vision

Commissioner Wilkinson announced that the OEC will convene early childhood stakeholders in February to share key early care and education priorities that have been identified by stakeholders over the past few years at various a variety of listening forums and meetings. The OEC will share plans to act on some of these priorities and solicit feedback and ideas from those attending the gatherings.

G. Announcements/Public Comment

Merrill Gay, Executive Director of the Early Childhood Alliance, thanked the OEC for reopening the Care 4 Kids priority groups. He noted the freezing of intake to the three priority groups has taken an

enormous tool on families and providers. This has resulted in closure of infant and toddler rooms and in some cases, closure of entire centers and family child care homes. He also said that the OEC still needs to release a legislatively mandated unmet need report to the Legislature. If the OEC is unable to release the report, then it should release the raw data and methodology.

Georgia Goldburn, Director of New Hope child care center in New Haven, echoed Mr. Gay's comments. She said Care 4 Kids situation has resulted in the presence of increased illegal child care. Ms. Goldburn said that the Early Childhood Cabinet lacks people of color in its membership. Decision making is taking place without the voices of people of color. Ms. Goldburn also raised an issue related to family reunification under DCF policy. She said once a child exits foster care, the child care assistance disappears. She said child care is a critical support for parents and children being reunited.

Joanne Kelleher, Director of the Early Child Care Collaborative of Southington, asked ~~if~~ the OEC can share any data at the local level, noting it is difficult to access local early childhood data.

H. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.