

**CT Early Childhood Cabinet**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
*April 30, 2015 • 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.*  
*The Lyceum, Hartford, CT*

**ATTENDANCE**

<b>Member</b>	<b>Member Type</b>		<b>Member</b>	<b>Member Type</b>	
<b>Nancy Wyman</b> <i>Lieutenant Governor</i>	Co-Chair	X	<b>Marisol Estrada-Soto</b> <i>Parent</i>	Parent of a child attending or attended a school in an education reform district	X
<b>Myra Jones-Taylor</b> <i>Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood</i>	Co-Chair	X	<b>Helene Figueroa</b> <i>Director, Child Care Division CSEA/SEUI Local 2001</i>	Representative of the CT State Employees Association	X
<b>Benjamin Barnes</b> <i>Secretary, Office of Policy &amp; Management</i>	Secretary of the Office of Policy & Management	X	<b>Linda Fransicovich</b>	Representative from the Philanthropic Community	X
<b>Rosa Biaggio</b> <i>Department of Public Health Designee</i>	Designee for Commissioner of Public Health	X	<b>Laura Post, Senior Director,</b> <i>Strategic Planning &amp; Insights, LEGO Systems</i>	Representative from the Business Community	
<b>Roderick Bremby</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Social Services</i>	Commissioner of Social Services	X	<b>Karen Rainville,</b> <i>Executive Director, CT Association for the Education of Young Children</i>	Representative of an association of early education and child care providers	X
<b>Joette Katz</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Children &amp; Families</i>	Commissioner of Children & Families	X	<b>Edie Reichard</b> <i>Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care</i>	Representative of a State-funded Child Care Center	X
<b>Morna Murray</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Developmental Services</i>	Commissioner of the Developmental Disabilities	X	<b>Magdalena Rosales-Alban</b> <i>Director, LULAC</i>	Representative from the Head Start Association	X
<b>Joan Parris</b> <i>Director, ECE, Norwalk CC</i>	Designee for President of Board of Regents	X	<b>Eileen Ward</b> <i>Director, Children's Community Development Center</i>	Representative of Local Providers of Early Childhood Education	X
<b>Dianne Wentzell</b> <i>Commissioner, Department of Education</i>	Commissioner, Department of Education	X	<b>Grace Whitney</b> <i>Director, Head Start Collaboration Office</i>	State Director of Head Start Collaboration	X
<b>Cathy Battista</b> <i>President, FRC Alliance</i>	Representative from Family Resource Centers	X	<b>Elaine Zimmerman</b> <i>Executive Director, Commission on Children</i>	Executive Director of the Commission on Children	X
<b>Patricia Bryant -Beausoleil</b> <i>Director, Putnam Family Resource Center</i>	Representative from a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program	X	Vacant	Board of Education for a town designated as an Alliance District	

**A. Welcome and Introductions**

Governor Malloy provided introductory remarks to the Connecticut Early Childhood Cabinet. The Governor said the Cabinet's focus on children and families experiencing homelessness or unstable housing is critical to the future success of the child and the parent.

Lieutenant Governor Nancy Wyman, co-chair of the Cabinet, called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m. Lt. Gov. Wyman said the Cabinet will tackle its work through a two-generational lens and look at the child and the parent as unit. By the fall of 2015, the Cabinet will present to the Governor a policy and legislative plan to ensure that families with young children experiencing homeless or unstable housing are provided with the needed supports so that they are no longer without a home. She said at future Cabinet meetings, a one-hour meeting will follow the full Cabinet meeting to allow for updates about early child policy and action taking place across state agencies.

Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner of the Office of Early Childhood, and co-chair of the Cabinet, offered introductory remarks and said the work on homelessness will be intensive through the fall of 2015.

## **B. Cabinet Members Perspective**

Commissioner Jones-Taylor asked the Cabinet members to introduce themselves and give their perspective about the new charge of the Cabinet to focus on a two-generational strategy to support families with young children experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. Perspectives shared are the following:

- Families experience homeless in the suburbs can be a challenge due to lack of infrastructure in those communities;
- McKinney-Vento liaisons are an important resource, but McKinney Vento is under-funded;
- Child care options are often limited for parents who are homeless, who are not employed, and looking for a job;
- High-quality, affordable infant-toddler care is high in demand, low on supply;
- Child care for parents working third shift is difficult to secure;
- This work must involve a poverty-reduction strategy grounded in a two-generational strategy;
- State and federal nutrition and food programs should be leveraged;
- Rural and isolated populations must be addressed;
- Families often most in need are hard to reach and engage;
- Public-private partnerships should be tapped;
- Every early childhood setting can support a family; home-based family care must be part of the solution;
- New CCDF reauthorization provide avenues for states to emphasize quality and continuity of care and for states to be more creative in the use of the federal funds;
- Birth to Three services must be part of the strategy in working with these families and young children;
- Issues of trauma experienced by the parent and the child must be addressed.

## **C. Overview of the Early Childhood Cabinet:**

Commissioner Jones-Taylor provided an overview of the newly restructured Cabinet. The Cabinet must engage all state agencies that touch upon the lives of children and their families, including DSS, DCF, DDS, DPH, SDE, DOH, and DHMAS. After discussions with the Governor and Lt. Governor, there was consensus that the Cabinet should embrace a two-generational approach and focus on one or two issues to tackle. The first issue will be young children and their families experiencing homeless or unstable housing. In the second year, the Cabinet will also focus on the needs of infant and toddlers, particularly those who are vulnerable and at-risk.

In 2014, there were 1,260 families who were homeless in Connecticut, including 2, 128 children. More than 80 percent of those mothers have previously experienced domestic violence, and their children are more likely to have emotional and behavioral challenges.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor said the Cabinet will implement a Collective Impact Model, which emphasizes a 1) common agenda, 2) shared measurement, 3) mutually reinforcing activities, 4) continuous communication, and 5) backbone support.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor introduced the OEC staff working as a team to support the work of the Cabinet:

- Myra Jones-Taylor, Commissioner
- Linda Goodman, Deputy Director
- Grace Whitney, Director, Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office within the OEC;
- Mary Farnsworth, Strategic Planning Manager
- Maggie Adair, Director, Government & Community Relations
- Diana Lejardi, Director of Communications
- Loree Armstrong, Executive Assistant

Cabinet members were provided with a written overview of the vision for the Cabinet, the role of two subcommittees, and a schedule of meetings for 2015.

**D. Family-Shelter Partnerships Presentation:**

The Cabinet heard a presentation about the Family Shelter Partnership and the DCF Family Partnership.

The presenters were:

- Grace Whitney, CT Head Start State Collaboration Office/Office of Early Childhood;
- Megan Graham, Early Care and Education, CRT, Inc., Hartford
- Amanda Beane, Department of Children & Families
- Jason Montgomery, Habitat for Humanity

Grace Whitney provided a federal and state perspective on young children experiencing homelessness or unstable housing. The impact on young children includes poverty, physical health, developmental status, mental health, educational outcomes, and mobility. Children in these circumstances are at the far end of a “continuum of risk.” Research has shown that trauma and extreme stress in childhood can lead to detrimental changes in brain structure and function. More than half of children in shelter programs are under the age of five.

Whitney presented that the federal Administration for Children and Families provide recommendations to states working with young children and families living without a home. They include:

- Prioritize access to services for homeless families
- Provide “grace periods” that give homeless families sufficient opportunity to gather required documentation
- Coordinate with homeless educational state coordinators and McKinney-Vento liaisons
- Work with housing coalitions to ensure that the unique needs of young children are met

Whitney said Head Start is a great match for homeless families with young children. Head Start provide comprehensive services, focuses on the parent and the child, is required by federal law to identify and prioritize homeless children for enrollment, allows homeless children to enroll while required paperwork is obtained, and coordinates with McKinney-Vento liaisons and community agencies.

The Head Start – Family Shelter Partnership Project involves Head Start working with shelters to provide enhanced services to both the child and the parent. The project goals are increased Head Start enrollment, child-proofing in the shelter, and sustained partnerships. Small grants support the Head Start-Family Shelter team, which includes technical assistance, team building and cross-sector training.

As one example of this Head Start-Family Shelter Partnership, Megan Graham presented CRT’s project. CRT, a large community action agency, also operates the East Hartford Family Shelter. Their grant strives to expedite enrollment of children living in the shelter in Head Start classrooms, provide a more home-like environment to decrease mother and child stress, increase availability of developmentally appropriate toys and books; and expedite comprehensive services to families.

Jason Montgomery said Habitat for Humanity is one partner in this project that assessed the East Hartford Family Shelter for site needs, facility improvements and furniture and equipment donations. Habitat for Humanity assisted with site redesign and renovations.

Amanda Bean presented about the DCF Partnership project. DCF provide workshops on the safe sleeping, rights when working with DCF, fatherhood initiatives, and priorities for enrolling DCF children in high-quality child care. This Partnership works to connect families with community resources such as: community supports, care coordination; HUSKY-intensive case management, emergency mobile crisis support, 211 infoline, DCF Voluntary Services, and other resources.

**E. Cabinet Process:**

Commissioner Jones-Taylor said a subcommittee focusing on young children and families experiencing homelessness or unstable housing will be created and convened in early June. The subcommittee members will be appointed by the Lt. Gov. and OEC Commissioner and chaired by Grace Whitney. This subcommittee will do the legwork throughout the summer and fall and bring back data, findings, and recommendations to the full Cabinet at the Cabinet's summer and fall meetings. The full Cabinet ultimately will determine policy and legislative recommendations that will be brought to the Governor for consideration. Subcommittee members will be asked to contribute about 10 hours per month toward this work.

A second subcommittee will address the role of the State Advisory Council (SAC) and be responsible for advising, gathering feedback, and discussing early childhood matters as required by the federal Head Start Act governing State Advisory Councils (SACS), bringing recommendations to the full Cabinet. Additionally, this body will meet the statutory requirement to review and provide recommendations to the full Cabinet for approving Connecticut's CCDF plan. Note that the Cabinet is the designated body serving as the SAC for Connecticut. The federal membership requirements of the SAC meet a subset of the Cabinet membership. These federally required members will be asked to serve on this subcommittee, which will be convened later in the summer. Maggie Adair will chair this subcommittee.

**F. Public Comment:**

Lt. Governor Wyman opened the meeting to public comment and questions. Eileen Ward said the role of private early care and education providers must be brought into the discussion. Some areas of Connecticut do not have any state or federally funded early care and education programs yet there are low-income parents in every community.

**G. Adjournment / Next Meeting:**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting will be held on July 30, 2015.