



Family Involvement/Home Visitation Workgroup Summary

July 14, 2011 (9:00am-11:00am)

In Attendance: Rudy Brooks, DCF; Pam Langer, ConnPAT; Doug Edwards, Real Dads Forever; Christina Morales-Smith, COMPASS Collaborative; Trudi Lebron, Family Life Education, Inc.

Cabinet Co-Chairs: Elaine Zimmerman, SAC/COC; Trish Moylan Torruella, Hartford Department of Families, Children, Youth & Recreation

Cabinet Project Director: Sherry Linton-Massiah, SAC

Absent:

Amos Smith, Patti Keckeisen, Darcy Lowell, Tawana Bourne, Grace Whitney, Deb Zipkin, Jennifer Carroll, Gabe Fonseca

Discussion:

After a round of introductions, Trish guided a review of the workgroup membership list, which led to the question of who, if anyone, is missing? Recommendations were made to have the group include Dawn Homer-B., from the Commission on Children, Darlene Klase from the Department of Developmental Services, Luis Tallarita, with expertise on homelessness, a representative from the Parents Information Resource Center (PIRC) and representation from DPH, who is the grantee for the statewide federal home visitation systems grants.

Trish guided a review of the Workgroup Charge to Committee, which prompted a question about the context within which the workgroup operates and how it relates to the larger Cabinet.

The discussion transitioned into the Big Picture agenda items, with a an overview of the ECE Cabinet's history and current focus on Early Learning Standards, Data Systems, Professional Development, and Family Involvement/Home Visitation. An organizational chart of the Cabinet was distributed and reviewed.

Federal grant opportunities including the Race to the Top- Early Learning Challenge, the Home Visitation grants being offered through the Child and Maternal Health Act, Grossman and Kellogg Foundation literacy-related grants were reviewed. Context provided to inform group that the Cabinet's involvement in home visitation planning with DPH around the federal HV funding opportunity is primarily focused on the need to develop a system of administering early care and education services.

The Children's Trust funding, the Right from the Start—Graustein Memorial Fund convening-- and the Quality Rating Systems were also raised in the discussion to provide greater context for the work being done statewide to establish an early care and education system.

The point was made that now more than ever family civics need to be encouraged, as in the case with the Parent Trust funding.

Other opportunities discussed included, the most recent funding by PEW Charitable Trust to CT to look at the state's budget prioritization and their fiscal outcomes. Members of the legislature participate on this group, with the focus being on prison reform, ripe with possibilities for family involvement.

A review of the group's work plan highlighted the primary areas of Parent Leadership Training, Parent Education, Home Visitation, and Fatherhood. The point was made that the premise of the work on family involvement is to assist parents to get involved and assist professionals to value the involvement of families.

A review of the first strategy revealed the caution that training modules of professionals without ongoing mentoring are less effective. The option of connecting with other Cabinet workgroups to test trainings was also shared.

Other opportunities discussed for family involvement in CT included the recent increase in Title 1 funding from 1% to 2% to be committed to parent engagement.

A rich discussion took place on the systemic marginalization of fathers, and the need for agency-wide culture shift in the approach to working with fathers. Doug E. shared the utility of the Fatherhood Audit, a tool developed to assess the level to which organizations are intentionally inclusive of fathers in their service delivery, with the goals of having organizations become more father friendly. His current work with a prenatal organization in Hartford aims at, "Connecting dads to the long-term arch of the child life, irrespective of his relationship with the Mom."

Trudi L. shared briefly on her work to connect families, especially teen parents to services that meet basic needs. She noted that her experience with home visitation supports the need for fatherhood initiative efforts to be inclusive of fathers in responding to family needs. She finds that fathers most often ask for assistance in securing employment so they can be providers.

The Fatherhood Advisory Council being piloted in New Haven courts was briefly discussed as a site where the benefits of the Audit are evidenced.

Discussions of the Fatherhood Audit prompted the inquiry into how agencies represented in the workgroup could benefit from the use of the Audit.

Christina Morales-Smith provided a comprehensive overview of the work of COMPASS, a Community Based Organization housed at the Hartford Magnet Middle School that provides a full service approach with the whole child at the center of the work. Christina indicated that her organization is focused on a Peace Builders Initiative and advancing Community Schools.

Workgroup Outcomes/Action Items:

- Pam Langer (ConnPAT) to meet with Doug Edwards to determine how the Fatherhood Audit can be embedded in the Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visitation curriculum certification training that is utilized by 110 early care and education programs and 250 educator in Connecticut.
- Doug Edwards and Trudi Lebron to collaborate on identifying candidates and/or pre-service training for a newly funded fatherhood staff position at the Family Life Education Inc. organization.
- Opportunity identified to embed the Fatherhood Audit in the Family Development Credential & Training Program (FDC).

Adjourn

Next Meeting, July 26th 9:00 am@ the Commission on Children—same place as previous meeting.