

State of Connecticut Request for Head Start ARRA Supplemental Funds

In January of 2010, Governor M. Jodi Rell designated the Connecticut Early Childhood Education Cabinet to be the Early Childhood Advisory Council for the State of Connecticut. This newly formed Cabinet met for the first time in February of 2010. The Cabinet has not been allocated any State funds or staff; however, the State Department of Education provides part-time staff support for administrative purposes only. Although the Cabinet has not been allocated fiscal resources, members representing state agencies, business, public schools, early childhood providers, legislators and parents are committed to improving outcomes for all young children birth to age five.

The Cabinet has recently submitted its application for ARRA funds and has chosen to focus on four priority areas as detailed in the Connecticut Strategic Report. The priority areas focus on quality data systems; family engagement and home visitation; professional development and workforce improvement; and early learning standards birth to age 5 aligned with K-12 standards. In each of these priority areas, specific actions and resulting deliverables were mapped out over the course of the next three years.

Our biggest challenge is management and accountability across agencies, departments and organizations. Much work in the area of early care and education in Connecticut is siloed and we do not have the Cabinet structures in place to take the work that has and will be done to the level of institutionalization and sustainability in a manner that is functional and transparent for all stakeholders. Using the tenet that “form should follow function,” the Cabinet seeks to determine which options will be the most effective in creating a cohesive, unified and sustainable system. Management, planning and system building, resource allocation, fundraising, accountability and

communication are key areas that require additional consideration. This structure will foster state-level, cross-agency collaboration.

Therefore, the Cabinet is requesting that the additional supplemental funds be targeted to assist with the effective administration of the four identified priorities. Given that many of the tasks required to meet each of the four priority areas lie within the purview of several state agencies it becomes increasingly important that coordination and collaboration be improved. The Cabinet must move quickly and efficiently to integrate the current priorities with the preliminary work that was done by the previous Cabinet. These supplemental funds will assist the Cabinet to design and implement a systematic process for decision-making and accountability among the cabinet members and the agencies and institutions they represent. We are requesting funds for technical assistance in order to develop sustainable administration and coordination of the systematic efforts that can become imbedded in the practices of the Cabinet.

Additionally, supplemental funds will be used to scale-up implementation of the Cabinet's "quality data systems" priority to assign unique identifiers at birth. The State Department of Education (SDE) will add a field to the State Assigned Student Identification registry to capture each child's birth certificate number, enabling health/birth records and SDE longitudinal data to link. Birth certificate numbers will be printed on all hard copies of the birth certificates. Funding will be offered to the Department of Public Health to enable them to revise its printing contract so that parents will know the number when they present each child's birth certificate upon enrollment in a publicly funded preschool program.

The Connecticut State Department of Education will meet the requirement of 70% non-federal matching funds through the use of \$466,667 from the State grant for community planning for early childhood (Birth through age 9).