

**CT Early Childhood Cabinet  
Subcommittee on Families with Young Children Without Homes**

**September 24, 2015 Meeting Minutes**

**Attendance:** Commissioner Roderick Bremby, DSS; William Halsey, DSS; Laura Dunleavy, OEC; Louis Tallarita, SDE; Donna Maselli, DPH; Kim Somaroo-Rodriguez, DCF; Elaine Zimmerman, CT Commission on Children; Steven Hernandez, CT Commission on Children; Ann Giordano, Education Connection; Lisa Tepper Bates, CT Coalition to End Homelessness; Betsy Cronin, The Connection; Arietta Slade, Minding the Baby; Alicia Woodsby, Partnership for Strong Communities; Sherri Linton-Massiah, Child First; Magdalena Rosales-Alban, LULAC.

**OEC Staff:** Grace Whitney, Maggie Adair, Mary Farnsworth, Diana Lejardi

**Introductions**

Mary Farnsworth welcomed the group and outlined the order of the meeting. Mary noted that the Three Branch Institute meeting on Thursday, October 1 will focus on supportive housing. The key note speaker is Ralph de Costa Nunez, president and CEO of the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness.

**Two-Generational Legislation**

Elaine Zimmerman provided an update about the two-generation legislation passed in 2015 that creates a pilot program in six communities to address workforce readiness for the adult and school readiness for the child. The six communities are Bridgeport, Greater Hartford (Hartford, East Hartford and West Hartford), Meriden, Colchester, Norwalk and New Haven. The legislature allocated \$1.5 million for the pilot in each year of the biennium. Elaine said the Aspen Institute has offered to provide training and materials to the pilot sites. The plan is to bring in a national expert to conduct an evaluation of the pilot. Elaine said the Early Childhood Cabinet will be invited to participate in the site training. She said the funding will move from the Department of Labor to the United Way of Connecticut, which will serve as the fiduciary.

**Review of Draft Policy Package**

Mary Farnsworth explained that the Cabinet's focus on families with young children experiencing homelessness is intended to complement the work underway through the Department of Housing (DOH). The charge of DOH is to end homelessness of families by 2022. The charge of the Cabinet is to identify strategies to support young children experiencing homelessness through access to early childhood services.

Mary then shared a draft policy document outlining the top-ranked policy priorities identified by the subcommittee with additional input from state agencies. She also shared a one-page policy document provided by DOH. Mary asked the group to review the two documents and provide feedback.

The group then engaged in a lively policy discussion. Bill Halsey noted that many of the policies identified focus on prevention. He sees this as a three-pronged effort: 1) prevention of homelessness; 2) supporting families when they are homeless; and 3) supporting families after they are housed.

Commissioner Bremby stressed the importance of developing a system of supports that ensures families do not return to homelessness. Securing housing is does not solve the entire problem; families need ongoing supports to ensure they remain housed.

Elaine Zimmerman said the two-generational pilots could be used as a testing ground to work with families moving from shelter to housing.

Alicia Woodsby said the Connecticut Opening Doors campaign brings in many stakeholders, including various state agencies because no one entity can tackle family homelessness. DOH has adopted the goals of the Opening Doors campaign.

Magdalena Rosales-Alban said this is not just a two-generational issue - it can span over three and four generations.

It was noted that residency restrictions, such as the School Readiness program, poses a barrier for homeless families to access early care and education. Maggie Adair noted that legislation passed this past session provides the option for local School Readiness Councils to open up residency to early care and education programs. She noted some Councils have taken up this option while others have decided to keep the residency restriction.

Lisa Tepper Bates said her organization has written a policy brief about a shelter diversion initiative in New London County that is doing excellent work to ensure that some families do not end up in shelters. This type of initiative could be replicated statewide.

Commissioner Bremby reiterated that homelessness is symptomatic of multiple social stressors present in a family's life. A comprehensive human service strategy is needed to support these families, before, during and after shelter.

Sherry Linton-Massiah asked how the Cabinet's policy recommendations will be vetted with community stakeholders. She said all too often policies are made without local input and with little understanding how policies play out at the local level.

Mary thanked the group for the active discussion and review of the draft document. She will incorporate the feedback into the document. A final draft will be presented and discussed at the full Cabinet meeting on October 27.

### **Adjourn**

The subcommittee meeting adjourned at 11 a.m. The full Cabinet will meet on October 27 at the LOB.