



NEW YORK STATE EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 required Governors to establish, and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act included funding to support, State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care. The goal of the state councils is to help strengthen statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide range of early childhood programs and services in the state, including child care, Head Start, Early Head Start, IDEA preschool and infants and families programs, pre-kindergarten, and other early childhood care and education programs. In New York State, we have expanded the scope of our collaboration to include human services, social-emotional development, and health care supports and services.

The notion of a statewide early childhood advisory body is not new to New York State. In 2007, New York established the Governor's Children's Cabinet. To assist the Cabinet in its efforts, a Children's Cabinet Advisory Board, a small and diverse group of experts from outside New York State government, was also established. Currently, the Deputy Secretary for Human Services, Technology, and Operations chairs the Children's Cabinet and the Deputy Secretary for Education serves as vice chair. Cabinet members include the commissioners and directors of 20 state agencies and several staff from the Governor's Office.

To respond to the federal requirement to establish or designate State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care, the Children's Cabinet decided to reorganize its Advisory Board and establish a new body— the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). The ECAC includes individuals with early childhood expertise who represent early care and education, health care, child welfare, and mental health programs, as well as state agencies, advocacy organizations, foundations, higher education, unions, and others involved in the provision of services to young children and their families. The ECAC is focusing its efforts on addressing the structural issues that have impeded the development of a comprehensive system of early childhood supports and services.

While the creation of an advisory council is not unique, the opportunity for significant federal funds to support planning, data collection and other system-building efforts is quite new. New York's federal allocation for the Early Childhood Advisory Council is \$5.6 million over three years. These funds require an in-kind and/or cash state contribution of \$13 million.

Sherry Cleary, Executive Director of the NYC early Childhood Professional Development Institute and Bob Frawley, Deputy Director of the New York State Council on Children and Families, chair the ECAC. The Council on Children and Families also staffs the Governor's Children's Cabinet and its Advisory Board. Staff from the Council on Children and Families and the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy serve to support the new group and its workgroups. A synopsis of the workgroup structure follows.

EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL

Workgroup Structure:

Finance is focused on developing a consistent finance framework and model to apply across the ECAC's four focus areas—Healthy Children, Strong Families, Early Learning, and Coordinated and Responsive Systems. Work will concentrate on identifying the key service components in New York's vision for a comprehensive system of services for young children, as well as identifying current investments in those components. This work will inform the construction of an early childhood cost model, an analytical tool that will allow policymakers to gauge the impact of changes in access, quality, and funding levels. The cost model will also inform the workgroup's analysis of the barriers to and opportunities for maximizing use of existing resources to support the goals of a coordinated and comprehensive system of services that meet agreed-upon standards. The Finance Workgroup also plans to identify new financing strategies including a mix of public and private resources to increase investments in a comprehensive system that includes key services, infrastructure supports, workforce retention and development, and ongoing quality assurance/improvement. *Co-Chairs: Mark Jasinski, Director of Early Childhood Programs, NYS Prekindergarten Administrators Association; & Nancy Kolben, Executive Director, Center for Children's Initiatives.*

Quality Improvement is developing a system of actionable quality assurance across three of the ECAC's focus areas - Healthy Children, Strong Families, and Early Learning. One major activity includes overseeing the ongoing implementation of QUALITYstarsNY, New York's Quality Rating and Improvement System for center- and family-based early care and education programs. The Quality Improvement Workgroup will also focus on family support and engagement by exploring its definition and practice across broad sectors of early childhood services, considering how to integrate it into existing quality assurance frameworks, and striving to create a common definition and common standards across sectors. *Co-Chairs: Recy Dunn, Director, Office of Early Childhood Education - NYC Department of Education; Anne Mitchell, President, Early Childhood Policy Research; & Janice Molnar, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Child Care Services - NYS OCFS*

Strong Families is developing a workplan for New York State to support families that incorporates the principles of strengthening families, promoting resiliency, and enhancing protective factors as a framework for all health, education, and human services to ensure that we provide appropriate services and supports to strengthen families. Those services/supports include parent education, screening and assessment of children and families, and voluntary home visiting for all expectant and new families. Strong Families will compile information on best practices in each of these areas, disseminate that information, make recommendations when advisable, and assist existing efforts in implementation of strategies that will forward the Workgroup agenda. *Co-Chairs: Evelyn Blanck, Associate Executive Director, NY Center for Child Development; & Denise Harlow, President, NYS Community Action Association.*

- **NYSPEP:** Supporting the New York State Parenting Education Partnership's (NYSPEP) work to empower parents and caregivers through the provision of high-quality, accessible information that supports positive parenting practices, early learning, and healthy development. *Co-Chairs: Susan Perkins, Senior Policy Analyst, NYS Council on Children and Families; Liz Hood, Director of Educational Television & Public*

EARLY CHILDHOOD ADVISORY COUNCIL

Broadcasting – NYSED; Judy Richards, Program Director, NYS Children and Family Trust – NYS OCFS; Chris Deys, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse New York

- **Screening and Assessment:** Guiding the establishment of a system of universal screening and the expansion of assessment activities that identify families in need of additional supports and services at the earliest possible point. *Evelyn Blanck, Associate Executive Director, New York Center for Child Development; and Mary McHugh, Director of the Bureau for Strategic Initiatives, Division of Children and Families, New York State Office of Mental Health.*
- **Home Visiting:** Guiding the development of a system for providing comprehensive home visiting services for vulnerable pre- and post-natal women, fathers, and families. *Jenn O'Connor, Senior Policy Associate, Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy.*

Data Development is working to determine data needed for a cross-early learning program data system that helps state and local agencies and others identify trends in early learning programs, answer policy questions, and plan for program development. Plans are to extend this effort to other early childhood service systems and to link data systems to P-20 student tracking system being developed by the State Education Department. *Co-Chairs: Carol Saginaw, Executive Director, Early Care & Learning Council; & Bob Frawley, Deputy Director, NYS Council on Children and Families & Lee Kreader, National Center for Children in Poverty*

Early Learning Workforce Development is organized to advance the components of an early learning professional development system and respond to related issues such as coordination of pre-service education in early childhood (i.e., articulation agreements among institutions of higher education) and staff recruitment, retention, and compensation. In the coming months, the Early Learning Workgroup will evaluate the status of work currently being done by organizations such as Winning Beginning NY, the New York City Early Childhood Professional Development Institute, and others, and prioritize activities for the workgroup. *Co-Chairs: Sherry Cleary, Executive Director, NYC Early Childhood Professional Development Institute; & Kristen Kerr, Executive Director, NYS Association for the Education of Young Children*

Promoting Healthy Development is building capacity among the many different providers in child-serving systems to improve the health and social-emotional development of young children. This includes identifying and responding to the social-emotional needs of young children and their families, promoting health and safety through the development of training and consultation, and identifying opportunities to collaborate with public health programs to achieve key health outcomes for young children. The group will gather information about current projects, best practices, and available trainings; and monitor and advise related activities that are already on-going in New York. The group will compile health and social-emotional trainings with the goal of developing an on-line resource. *Co-Chairs: Dina Lieser, Executive Director, Docs for Tots NY; & Mary McHugh, Director of Strategic Direction and Training, NYS OMH*