



Policy Roundtable for Child Care

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MEETING MINUTES

April 14, 2010

10:00 a.m. – noon

Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration

500 West Temple Avenue, Conference Room 743

Los Angeles, California 90012

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Terri Chew Nishimura, Chair of the Policy Roundtable for Child Care (Roundtable), opened the meeting at 10:09 a.m. Members and guests introduced themselves and, in honor of Week of the Young Child' - "Early Years are Learning Years", Ms. Nishimura asked folks to mention their favorite toy as a child.

- **Comments from the Chair – Week of the Young Child**

What is the Week of Young Child?

- The Week of the Young Child is an annual celebration sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the world's largest early childhood education association, with nearly 90,000 members and a network of over 300 local, state, and regional Affiliates.
- The purpose of the Week of the Young Child is to focus public attention on the needs of young children and their families and to recognize the early childhood programs and services that meet those needs.
- NAEYC first established the Week of the Young Child in 1971, recognizing that the early childhood years (birth through age 8) lay the foundation for children's success in school and later life. The Week of the Young Child is a time to plan how we - as citizens of a community, of a state, and of a nation - will better meet the needs of all young children and their families.
- As a part of our "celebration of the Week of the Young Child", Ms. Nishimura noted that the meeting was specially organized with a focus on child care quality rating systems. Therefore, approval of the February and March minutes will be deferred to the meeting scheduled for May.
- Ms. Nishimura also invited members as guests to visit the 2nd floor lobby to check out the Week of the Young Child display.

- **Congratulations to Early Childhood Educators Engaged in Quality Improvement Efforts**

Ms. Nishimura expressed the Roundtable's appreciation to all the child care and development program operators who have "stepped up" and engaged their programs in quality improvement efforts like the Steps to Excellence Project (STEP) and Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) or the accreditation programs sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC). The Roundtable recognizes how hard it is to provide high quality services on a consistent basis.

2. FINDINGS FROM LOS ANGELES COUNTY'S STEPS TO EXCELLENCE PROJECT (STEP)

Ms. Kathy Malaske-Samu used a PowerPoint to guide her presentation on STEP, beginning with an overview of STEP's history within the context of a nationwide movement to develop and implement quality rating and improvement systems, currently in 20 states. Her opening remarks focused on the benefits of children and families participating in high quality programs – narrowing the achievement gap, preventing child abuse and prevention, and supporting working parents – and the results of research on childhood outcomes as a result of their participation in high quality programs.

Next, Ms. Malaske-Samu launched into the brief history of STEP, including its partners and how it is being implemented. She mentioned that to date, 96 programs have been reviewed and rated. Approximately 100 additional programs will be rated by the end of June 2010. Of the programs rated, most are scoring twos or threes with centers scoring a higher than family child care homes. Both program types are scoring lowest in the elements relating to staff qualifications followed closely by working conditions. Among the lessons learned, Ms. Malaske-Samu emphasized the importance of incentives to attracting new participants to the project and making program improvements. She also suggested the need for intense coaching to help programs identify and make program improvements. And on-site observations by a neutral observer, while costly, are essential to the quality rating and improvement system. An area for future focus, according to Ms. Malaske-Samu, is figuring out the family engagement piece.

Lastly, Ms. Malaske-Samu listed STEP's contributions to quality rating and improvement systems. STEP has highlighted the importance of teacher/child interactions, given attention to the rationale for conducting developmental screenings on all children, served as an early model for outreaching to programs that have not participated in quality initiatives yet are most in need of assistance for improving their program services.

A few comments and questions were offered by members as follows:

- A request was made for a meeting to allow Roundtable members to engage in a fuller discussion on the lessons learned to date and to participate in shaping the evolution of STEP.
- Is the funding driving the costs of implementation or is funding reflective of the actual costs of implementation? What would be the cost of implementing STEP countywide?
- Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) is the only school district using Title I funds for enhancing the quality of early care and education programs. Mr. Whit Hayslip suggested looking into how to grab onto the flow of potential funding sources to support quality initiatives.
- Ms. Malaske-Samu will focus the June meeting agenda as a time for more in-depth discussions relating to STEP. In the meantime, she will work with Ms. Helen Chavez, STEP Manager, Ms. Doris Monterroso, STEP Training Coordinator, and Ms. Emily Harding and

Ms. Sandra Hong of UCLA's Center for Improving Child Care Quality to draft some preliminary recommendations.

3. PLANNING FOR CALIFORNIA'S QUALITY RATING AND SUPPORT SYSTEM

Ms. Nishimura expressed delight that Ms. Laura Escobedo joined the Roundtable to provide an update on the work of the California Early Learning Quality Improvement System (CAEL QIS) Advisory Committee. Dr. Celia Ayala, member of the Roundtable and on the CAEL QIS Advisory Committee, had been slated to make the presentation, but she was called to Sacramento at the last minute. Ms. Nishimura stated that Ms. Escobedo would also report on how the Child Care Planning Committee (Planning Committee) has facilitated family child care input to the CAEL QIS.

Ms. Escobedo referred members and guests to her PowerPoint presentation, of which a copy was provided in their meeting packets. Ms. Escobedo began with an overview of the process being implemented by the CAEL QIS Advisory Committee to develop a statewide quality rating and improvement system. There are five topical subcommittees plus a steering committee that meet monthly to develop draft recommendations to present to the full Advisory Committee for adoption or revision. Ms. Escobedo focused on the work to design the rating structure, which has been broken down into five areas with five tiers for each element. The proposal for the first tier is Title 22 with enhancements and the fifth tier is being proposed as aspirational and achievable. See the PowerPoint for further detail on the design structure. As she presented, Ms. Escobedo relayed some of the issues and tensions that prevail throughout the discussions. For example, to a certain extent cost considerations and the current economic climate are driving the discussions to focus on what is possible now rather than planning for better economic times. Discussions and decisions are also shaped at times by who is at the table. Ms. Escobedo mentioned that one of the challenges to the continuity of the discussions is the constant change of public stakeholders at any of the subcommittee meetings.

Ms. Escobedo then presented the results of the forum convened by the family child care representatives serving on the Planning Committee in March. The purpose of this meeting was to solicit input from family child care home providers in Los Angeles County. There were 113 participants representing providers from different areas of the county and various affiliations (Family Child Care Home Education Networks, Federations, Associations, etc.) and from three language groups – Chinese, English and Spanish. The forum agenda targeted four areas of the proposed rating scale: qualifications for providers and their assistants, the Environmental Rating Scale, group sizes and ratios, and family involvement. Consensus was reached in five areas: use Title 22 group sizes and ratios; do not evaluate family child care homes as mini-preschools; consider education/training and experience in determining whether they meet qualification standards; if use the Family Child Care Environment Rating Scale (FCCERS), do not use the same value scale as used for centers; and do not tie reimbursement rates solely to FCCERS scores, rather tie to the overall rating.

Ms. Escobedo reported that the California Department of Education asked that the results of the forum be shared with other family child care home provider groups across the state and the local planning councils. As a result, other counties are now scheduling forums. Ms. Escobedo distributed the recommendations resulting from the family child care forum as well as recommendations relating to workforce issues submitted to the CAEL QIS Advisory Committee by the Planning Committee.

4. QUALITY RATING AND IMPROVEMENT SYSTEMS (QRIS): LESSONS LEARNED FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY

Ms. Nishimura introduced Ms. Abby Cohen who serves as a Region IX, State Technical Assistance Specialist with the National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center (NCCIC). Prior to her position with NCCIC, Ms. Cohen was a staff attorney with the Child Care Law Project. Ms. Cohen was invited to share her knowledge about what is happening around the country with child care quality rating and improvement systems.

Ms. Cohen introduced her presentation by framing it as “lessons we are learning” rather than “lessons learned” as implementation of quality rating and improvement systems is an evolving process. She acknowledged the Roundtable as one of many pioneers across the state and the country, with Oklahoma as the first to develop a statewide system beginning in 1998. Because the systems are evolving “as we speak”, with new variations emerging, it is difficult to compare. Responding to Ms. Escobedo’s comments regarding tensions, Ms. Cohen reflected that these are not static systems. Rather, there are increasing opportunities for learning, developing something meaningful, and upgrading as we learn.

Ms. Cohen mentioned that there are 20 states with statewide system, while NAEYC in a recent Webinar referred to 21 states. According to the NAEYC, there are five components to an overall quality rating system, all of which involve a quality improvement piece; in essence, the movement is more towards a quality rating and improvement system. According to the NCCIC, the five major elements are: standards, accountability measures, program and practitioner outreach and support, financing incentives specifically linked to compliance with quality standards, and parent/consumer education efforts. (For detailed information, see handout, NCCIC. *QRIS Definition and Statewide Systems. An NCCIC Information Product*, March 2010.)

Ms. Cohen continued with her presentation, often referring to examples of states implementing quality rating systems. Ms. Cohen mentioned that important to the study of the systems are identifying the goal and intent of the systems. For Oklahoma, the initial goal was to enable lower income children to access higher quality programs as part of welfare reform. Among her comments was a reflection on efforts to build systems during times of incredible budget constraints. At the same time, there may be opportunities in the near future to help states. She added that there is now a QRIS National Learning Network, which is a coalition of states and organizations that are sharing information on their expertise and experiences in implementing quality rating and improvement systems. The Web site, www.grisnetwork.org, serves as a clearinghouse of resources available to help states with their efforts to develop a QRIS. In addition, the NCCIC has developed a Web-based resource guide at http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/poptopics/gris_resources.html for States and communities to explore key issues and decision points during the planning and implementation of QRIS.

In terms of actual lessons learning, Ms. Cohen offered the following:

- 1) **Goals, short versus long term.** Initial discussions were about improving program quality, which is not the same as childhood outcomes. If it is childhood outcomes, what is being done to move in that direction? What will that mean for developing standards?

- 2) **Getting people on board and expectations.** Is the expectation for everyone to be at a level five? If no one is a five, is that what we are after? Pennsylvania made a steady drumbeat of upping the ante of expectations over 10 years, revising their quality requirements. Ms. Cohen suggested not reaching for the moon at the start, rather it should be about continuous quality improvement, in the standards as well as in the programs. Ms. Cohen added that her biggest fear is that there will be no effort to feed quality components into licensing. On the other hand, New Mexico is considering moving first tier standards into licensing.
- 3) **Obtaining buy-in of all key stakeholders.** Want to invite people to participate, while also attending to concerns about participating.
- 4) **Work on strategically aligning pieces of the system.** California has an onerous challenge with multiple systems to align. Important to build upon the existing system rather than create something new. States that have experienced an easier time have built strong foundations. Ms. Cohen recognized some of the issues looming for California:
 - a. Licensing in California is in terrible shape. Most states require annual licensing visits. In some states, licensing is doing quality ratings. Tennessee, for example, has a quality rating system and licensing issues report cards.
 - b. No professional development registry. Twenty-three states have a registry that tracks the qualifications of early educators. The registry helps streamline ensuring programs meet licensing requirements and assigns a quality rating score. In addition, the registry administers the training approval systems and updates. Ms. Cohen referred those interested in professional development registries to www.registryalliance.org for more information.
- 5) **Workforce.** What supports are in place to help build a workforce and provide technical assistance? First year do not rate programs; rather focus on making improvement with the help of technical assistance and coaching. When take things slowly, create more learning experiences and can identify some of the difficulties. Ms. Cohen mentioned one state that started by creating a child care whole health consultation system and is now developing a mental health consultation system.
- 6) **Adequate resources.** Create a more comprehensive tool with key components; it becomes problematic when use more specialized tools. The more complicated and difficult the system, the more expensive and cumbersome. Some states developed more resources. Louisiana, for example, developed a special series of tax credits focused around the quality rating. Among the components; the higher quality program a family selects, the greater their tax credit; providers, teachers and directors receive tax credits based on their levels of education; and businesses receive tax credits for contributing to high quality centers. Most states rely on federal Child Care and Development Block Grant Funds. Target the resources toward the quality rating and improvement system and either give priority to programs that participate or eliminate certain things and focus on quality initiatives. Ms. Cohen stressed that sufficient incentives are need for programs and providers to participate.
- 7) **Standards development.** What is the appropriate mix? Define what each standard should look like, and the steps. Oklahoma begins with a 1+. It had lots of programs that could barely move from a level 1 to a level 2, so they set expected timeframes for program improvements. What are the appropriate measures? We have experience knowing something is important, but how do we measure and take into account these important items? Pennsylvania wanted to keep programs engaged in making improvements, so they created a guide that identified steps within steps what was good, what could be better, and what would be considered best practices. It helped to create a progression for moving from one level to the next and the extent of the movement.

- 8) **Comprehensive data systems.** How do we respond to what data says – get rid of the item or identify resources.

Ms. Cohen stated that most states started with pilots to figure out what was working. She asked, “Are those who really need access to quality supports getting access and benefiting from the systems?” Some of states are doing well, but are not addressing the children with the greatest needs. In Maine, subsidized programs or serving subsidized families must participate in the quality rating and improvement system; however there is no requirement around what level they must achieve. Some suggest that programs should only receive incentives if they are accepting subsidized children. In Oklahoma, subsidized families cannot choose a one star program. Ms. Cohen added that the demand side of services has not been well addressed. Minnesota is conducting pilots in certain urban communities. They started outreach using the Internet, but learned that 40% of parents have no access to Internet services.

Ms. Cohen concluded with a hope that the Roundtable share and feed up to the State its learning lessons as the system evolves. She stated that real life experiences are critical to the decision makers and stakeholders. Looking state to state, she is amazed at how different the quality rating and support systems look, in what constitutes certain levels of quality and items of priority or focus. For example, Ms. Cohen stated that a three in one state may be a five in another. For areas of focus, some are emphasizing a strengthening families approach and incorporating language and culture standards. She concluded that it will be interesting to see if consensus builds in field, particularly in big areas, less so in the deeper components.

Questions/comments:

- Is there a federal movement on a unified system? Ms. Cohen relayed that Dr. Richard Fiene, Associate Professor of Human Development and Family Studies and Research Director of the Early Childhood Research and Training Institute at Penn State University (http://citr.hbg.psu.edu/bsed/faculty_bio.cfm?FacultyID=96) has been conducting research relating to quality and national standards. He wrote a paper in 2002 about the 13 quality indicators most important for quality child care; the paper, *Licensing Related Indicators of Quality Child Care* is summarized at: http://ecti.hbg.psu.edu/docs/publication/ccb_article_13_indicators_%20of_%20qcc.doc. More recently, he has been talking about national standards, see <http://ecti.hbg.psu.edu/docs/publication/NationalChildCareStandards1.pdf>. Overall, it is not a discussion item. The federal government is more interested in quality. There is likely to be movement slowly in some direction; the question is around creating a mandatory system or one with incentives. Ms. Cohen believes that the investments will be in resources for incentives
- What is the degree to which quality rating and improvement systems have impacted licensing structures in states? A number of states have beefed up their licensing as a result of the rating system. For the most part, licensing has been not been invited to participate in the development and implementation of rating systems. In California, licensing has remained an outsider and is not at the CAEL QIS table.
- To what degree has quality rating and improvement systems impacted reimbursement rates for providers? Lots of states have tied reimbursement to quality ratings. The challenge is to look across states at the ratings. One issue that is being discussed is the additional resources needed. Ms. Cohen stated that if you are planning to argue for a quality rating and improvement system, resources are needed to make it happen. And if you cannot get to full level, build the foundational pieces. Pennsylvania and others are good examples of building something and leveraging resources.

5. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PUBLIC COMMENT

- Deferred to next meeting due to time constraints.

6. CALL TO ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Commissioners Present:

Mr. Duane Dennis
Ms. Ann Franzen
Mr. Whit Hayslip
Ms. Charlotte Lee
Dr. Jacquelyn McCroskey
Ms. Carolyn Naylor
Ms. Terri Chew Nishimura
Ms. Holly Reynolds
Ms. Arlene Rhine
Ms. Connie Russell
Ms. Esther Torrez
Ms. Mika Yamamoto
Ms. Ruth Yoon
Ms. Sarah Younglove

Guests:

Ms. Belen Amaya, Mar Vista Family Center
Ms. Frances Avila, Child Development Consortium of Los Angeles
Ms. Abby Cohen, National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center
Ms. Jennifer Cowan, First 5 LA
Ms. Lucia Diaz, Mar Vista Family Center
Ms. Zafira Firdosy, Telstar Montessori
Ms. Lesbia de la Fuente, UMDA
Mr. Jeremiah R. Garza, UCLA Public Health Student
Ms. Emily Harding, UCLA Center for Improving Child Care Quality
Ms. Sandra Hong, UCLA Center for Improving Child Care Quality
Ms. Jennifer Hottenroth, Department of Children and Family Services
Ms. Terry Ogawa, Education Coordinating Council
Ms. Cyndee A Riding, Van Nuys Civic Child Development Center
Ms. Kate Sachnoff, First 5 LA
Ms. Terna Sepulveda, Telstar Montessori
Ms. Eugenia Wilson, Living Advantage, Inc.

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