

Michigan Child Care Task Force Minutes for September 5, 2007 Meeting

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting of the Michigan Child Care Task Force (MCCTF) will be on November 7, 2007 at a location to be announced. For more information, contact the MCCTF co-chairs Jane Zehnder-Merrell at janez@michleagueforhumansvs.org, or Richard Lower at richard@mhsa.ws.

GUEST SPEAKER: Richard Lower introduced Lisa Brewer-Walraven, Federal Liaison and director of the Office of Early Education and Care in the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS). Lisa summarized the recent reorganization of the DHS, and provided a new organizational chart (available online at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/DHS-Org-Chart_145051_7.pdf). The reorganization, which has been in the works for more than six months, was undertaken to save money (approximately \$1 million), to realign existing staff in light of the impact of early retirements and hiring freezes, and to strengthen accountability. Lisa noted that the reorganization will not affect the DHS strategic plan, which will be published by the end of September.

Ismael Ahmed is the new DHS Director, beginning September 10, 2007. Mr. Ahmed was formerly the Executive Director of the Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS) in southeastern Michigan.

Lisa summarized DHS's work in redesigning the Child Development and Care Program (CDC). As part of its review, the DHS held focus groups over the summer, and a summary of the information gathered will be published soon.

Lisa noted that there are new federal requirements affecting the use of Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) dollars, and the DHS is working proactively to ensure integrity in the state's implementation of its CCDF plan. The DHS CCDF "integrity plan" addresses errors, program non-compliance and fraud. It reflects an ongoing collaboration between the CDC, the Office of Inspector General, and the DHS Office of Children and Adult Licensing. The goal is to strengthen policies and procedures to ensure better oversight and accountability.

Lisa indicated that the state is awaiting final federal approval of its CCDF plan. CCDF quality set-aside funds, which are administered through the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC), will continue to flow under current contracts. It is anticipated that the ECIC will make recommendations to the DHS on changes in the use of quality set-aside funds next spring, and RFPs will be revised at that time.

STATE BUDGET UPDATE: Richard Lower provided an update on the current state budget debates. The Michigan Head Start Association, staff from the Michigan Department of Education, staff from the ECIC and others have been meeting to develop recommendations for policy and statutory changes to improve Michigan early childhood programs, and to ensure better coordination between the Michigan School Readiness Program (MSRP), Head Start, and other early childhood programs. Some of the recommended changes are in current versions of the School Aid budget, so the issues will be raised when appropriations conference committees meet to resolve differences in the fiscal year 2008 budget. If advocates are not successful in getting the changes in fiscal year 2008, work will begin to incorporate them in the fiscal year 2009 budget.

Among the desired changes are the following:

- Language allowing MSRP dollars to be used by school districts and community groups (now limited to districts). The goal is to encourage partnerships at the local level, including subcontracts with Head Start programs and non-profit and for-profit preschool centers that meet standards of quality.
- Language restricting districts from supplanting MSRP funds by using them for children who are already eligible for other programs.
- Language stating that if a full-day program is available, children enrolled in Head Start shall be considered "unserved". The goal is to ensure that communities braid MSRP and Head Start dollars to create full day services.
- New language requiring collaborative partnerships between MSRP, Head Start and private providers, modeled on the work of local Great Start Collaboratives where they exist. Included would be collaborative recruitment and documentation that districts are working with other providers. While collaboration requirements are included in MSRP policy manuals, the new statutory language would give the MDE more power to evaluate and monitor compliance.
- Increased per pupil funding, from \$3,300 to \$3,500.
- Language authorizing pilot projects blending MSRP and Head Start funds and services (through ISD consortiums, with waivers of some eligibility and funding limitations).

The Governor and the House of Representatives approved a new full-day MSRP program that would serve up to 11,000 at-risk children at a cost of \$43.7 million. In addition, the House approved a \$43.7 million universal preschool program. Richard noted that if the full-day program is adopted, language allowing districts to use two MSRP slots for full-day programming for a single child would be eliminated (for school districts and academies, but not for the competitive MSRP program). If a full-day program is not adopted, current language would need to be reinserted, along with language allowing Head Start and MSRP programs to blend funding.

Pat Sorenson noted that the House budget also includes \$22.5 million in new funding for ISDs for comprehensive services for children age 0 through 3 and their families.

Judy Levine reported that the House budget assumes that the full-day and universal preschool programs will not start-up until January of 2008. This is creating problems for districts that don't know how much money they will have to spend. Some superintendents are laying off staff until a budget is adopted. Others are opening programs at a financial risk. Richard encouraged MCCTF members to have parents and teachers call their legislators about the impact on local children and programs.

DEPARTMENT UPDATES:

Michigan Department of Education: Judy Levine reported the following:

- Despite the budget uncertainty, reader sessions have been held for the competitive MSRP grants.
- The House budget removes language allowing districts to use two MSRP slots for a single full day program, as well as language allowing them to use the funding for parent involvement programs for young children. On the positive side, there have been no attempts to cut the MSRP budget, and there is some recognition of the need to increase the per child allotment.
- Limitations on travel have changed the types of support the MDE can provide, so "webinars" are anticipated in the fall. Currently scheduled is a session on September

28th from 10 a.m. to noon providing interactive support and the experience required to use the Preschool Program Quality (PQA) assessment tool. For more information contact Patti Allman at allmanp@michigan.gov or 517.373.8483.

ECIC/Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS): Kathi Pioszak reported the following:

- Judy Samelson, CEO of the ECIC, will present to the MCCTF at its November 7th meeting.
- The ECIC website has some new statistics relating to community conditions, health, child care and early education, socio-emotional health, family support and parent education. To check it out, go to www.ECIC4Kids.org
- ECIC external advisory committees have been formed and are meeting to identify strategic priorities that will guide their work in 2008.
- The Michigan Early Childhood Challenge summit will be held in Lansing on November 13, 2007 at a place to be announced. A goal of the summit is to develop a strategic plan and statewide consensus on a policy agenda.
- The ECIC Corporate Board will hold its first meeting on October 11, 2007. To-date, 14 ISDs have joined the Corporate Board by signing inter-local agreements, for a total of 45 new members. The Board will meet annually, at the time of the fall summit.
- The Finance Project is nearly done with the first phase of its work for the ECIC, which is a map of current funding for early childhood services in Michigan. The map will be presented to the ECIC Board and selected policymakers. Next steps include a plan for blending and braiding funding, and work to increase public awareness.
- Chris Kolb, ECIC Vice President for Public Affairs, facilitated 3 presentations to the Michigan Legislative Children's Caucus on the economics of investments in early childhood, brain science and early development, and financing.
- ECIC has been working with Fight Crime Invest in Kids on a series of community conversations.
- Work continues on the early childhood workforce study being conducted by Public Sector Consultants, with statewide data likely to be released first.
- ECIC is circulating a "healthy child care" survey to providers, and MCCTF members are encouraged to ask providers to complete and return them by September 28th.

Michigan Department of Community Health: Deb Marciniak reported the following:

- Although the budget is not complete, it is hoped that all 16 child care expulsion projects (in 31 counties) will be funded.
- The Michigan Association for the Education of Young Children (MiAEYC) is sponsoring the 3rd annual Infant Toddler Conference in Dearborn on September 21, 2007. More information is available at www.MiAEYC.org.
- New research shows that child abuse has a more significant impact on preschool-aged children. For more, go to <http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/articles.cfm?articleid=1336=htmlEm>
<<http://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/articles.cfm?articleid=1336&ref=htmlEm>>
- A new electronic guide on child and adolescent social and emotional development is available. To access the guide, entitled *Healthy Social and Emotional Development in Children and Adolescents*, go to http://222.mchlibrary.info/KnowledgePaths/kp_Mental_Healthy.html
- A new monthly podcast series shares the latest research on early childhood development. FPG Voices, a series produced by the FPG Child Development Institute, features interviews with researchers and is designed to be accessible to a broad public. For more, go to www.fpg.unc.edu/~snapshots/snap46.pdf.

OTHER UPDATES:

· Don Vita reported that there will be some tweaking of the center rules. The Department is also training school-age caregivers in CPR, and all providers in safe sleep and shaken baby procedures. Fee increases are also being implemented for child care centers, family and group homes. These are the first increases since the 1990s, so they are significant (approximately doubled). Renewal fees were also increased effective June of 2007. Finally, work is underway with the Bureau of Construction Codes to clarify zoning for family and group homes because of inconsistencies across the state in how provider homes are classified.

· Richard Lower reported that Head Start reauthorization bills passed the House and the Senate, with plans to have the conference committee meet in October and final votes done before Thanksgiving. With the upcoming elections, delays past Thanksgiving might stop progress on reauthorization, creating more instability for programs.

· Jane Zehnder-Merrell noted there is a \$1.8 billion shortfall in the fiscal year 2008 budget, which couldn't be fully fixed even if the income tax was restored to prior levels.

There is still no legislative compromise on solutions to the shortfall, with the Republican Caucus holding firm on reforms, including more program cuts. Jane also described the *Countdown to Chaos* public education campaign designed to motivate communities to contact their legislators asking for a solution to the budget crisis. For more information, contact Jane at 517.487.5436 or janez@michleagueforhumansvs.org.