

CT Early Childhood Investment Update: April 1, 2008¹

Notes & News

Legislative Fiscal Update

SFY 09 budget proposed by CGA Appropriations Committee includes: \$600,000 in Cabinet roll forward funds; COLA for DSS preschool center parity with SRP increase(s) TBD; COLA increase for SRP TBD; of the proposed \$1.8 million reduction to the SRP account, return half (\$900,000) but to Competitive Municipalities line item. SFY 09 roll forward also provided for CT DHE Higher Ed workforce development efforts. The SFY 09 legislative session ends on May 7th.

The proposed SFY 09 budget also provides funding for several initiatives of the CT Child Poverty and Prevention Council. NOTE: The Cabinet allocated \$50,000 to OPM on behalf of the Poverty Council to support cost modeling and ROI analyses related to child poverty reduction strategies. This partnership will result in an RFP for this cost modeling, to be released in April. Contact: Edmund Schmidt, OPM/Child Poverty and Prevention Council.

Governor's Early Childhood Research and Policy Council Update

Council met March 24. Agenda through SFY 09 to include: (a) re-basing preschool expansion multi-year plan; (b) oversight of QRIS Plan development; (c) involvement in Research Network development; (d) study of Cabinet operations and Investment Plan implementation as directed by Executive Order #13; and (e) development of a strategic communications plan. CT Economic Resource Center was awarded multi-year contract for Council staffing, TA & consulting. A committee of Council was established to serve as reporting structure for QRIS Planning Group (Nee, Rader, Hanley). See additional update below. A year-to-date fiscal and program update was provided at the March 24th Council meeting, and is online at – www.ecpolicycouncil.org -- click on "documents."

National Recognition for Connecticut's Early Childhood Investment Work

Cabinet Co-Chair Gruendel was selected as one of 15 policy advisors nationally to serve on a working group with faculty from the Harvard Center on the Developing Child. Connecticut has been selected as one of 14 states to attend a June symposium at Harvard, sponsored by the NGA, NCSL and Harvard Center on the Developing Child. The symposium will explore further policy implications of early brain science, as presented in CT in January at the *Governor's Summit on Early Childhood: Investing in the First Thousand Days*. CT team members are: Gruendel & McQuillan (Cabinet); Nee (Council); Guay (OPM); CGA legislators Hovey and Urban; Judge Keller (ST Judicial Branch); Vince Siberon (ASPIRA CT).

The Cabinet will be represented at the NGA state leaders retreat in June at a working session on early childhood councils and will present at the July annual meeting of the Education Commission of the States. The Cabinet also recently represented at Annie E. Casey Foundation national working session on the impact of chronic absences in the early school years.

Kellogg Foundation Partnership: Forum on Ready Children-Ready Schools

The Kellogg Foundation with the Cabinet and the Governor's Office will co-host a forum in late May or early June (date to be announced) on PreK-3 transitions as the bridge between *Ready by Five*, *Fine by Nine* Goals One (B-5) and Goal Two (K-3). Dr. Robert Pianta and other national leaders will present. A working group, staffed by the Office of the Cabinet and the Communications Consortium Media Center (Washington, DC), is developing the format for the event. This new partnership was announced by Governor Rell at the January Summit. Contact: Gruendel

Connecticut Applies for New NGA Funding: Strengthening the Cabinet and ECE System

Governor Rell has transmitted a new application for NGA funding for the period May through September 2008 under the NGA early childhood councils initiative. The CT application is online at -- www.ecpolicycouncil.org/cabinet.php.

¹ Prepared by J.M.Gruendel, Ph.D.

The application is focused on strengthening the Cabinet's role as a collaborative management entity through completion of a B-5 ECE systems plan, including CT Head Start programs. The application also clarifies that the Cabinet will serve as the early childhood council for Connecticut as referenced in the 2007 federal Improving Head Start legislation. States selected to participate in this national peer team will be notified in April 2008. Contact: Gruendel

Strategic Communications

With UCONN Coach Jim Calhoun, the CT Commission on Children has launched the *CT Playbook for Prevention*. The playbook can be downloaded from -- www.cga.ct.gov/coc/PDFs/playbook/playbook.pdf. Contact: Cabinet Member Elaine Zimmerman, Pat Estill – Commission on Children

Under contract to the Early Childhood Research and Policy Council, the CT Economic Research Center continues development of a proposal for a Cabinet-Council strategic communications plan. Several focus group sessions have been held, website development is in process, a newsletter format is complete, and the proposed plan will be complete in June 2008 for Cabinet and Council review. Governor Rell has asked that the plan include attention to: (a) better public knowledge of the work of the Cabinet and Council; and (b) a way to leverage resources across state agencies to better reach vulnerable families with young children served by more than one state agency, including expanding public knowledge of HELP ME GROW and the Ages & Stages developmental checklist for parents and providers.

Accountability Update

Accountability: Cabinet-Council Collaborative Management Brief

Cabinet Co-Chair and Council member, Dr. JM Gruendel, prepared a briefing report on the collaborative management structure of the Cabinet and Council, available online at -- www.ecpolicycouncil.org. NGA and national foundations are interested in our dual Cabinet-Council structure and in our evolving public-private partnerships.

Accountability: Data Work in Progress

The Cabinet has allocated funds to address significant data development and sharing challenges across state agencies. To provide support for this work, the Cabinet has developed a SFY 08 contract and scope of work with Public Consulting Group. The scope of work includes the following: (a) Cabinet birth cohort study; (b) Young Parents/Young Children study; (c) Agency MOU survey and report; (d) RBA and Systems Frameworks review and report; (e) TA to Cabinet Data Matters working group and state agencies. In addition to this work, the Cabinet continues to be represented on the Commissioners' Data Interoperability Project, co-chaired by the Commissioners of DSS/DMHAS.

By agreement, the work of multi-agencies to establish an ECE workforce data registry is being expanded and will be included within the Data Matters Working Group of the Cabinet (a component of the Standing Committee on Accountability and the Cabinet's mandated Accountability Plan). For more information, contact co-chair Gruendel.

Accountability. Data Work. Birth Cohort & Young Parents/Young Children Studies

At the January Summit, Governor Rell asked the Cabinet to prepare a report on the Cabinet's first birth cohort, children born in SFY 06-07. Public Consulting Group will work with Cabinet agencies and others to assemble existing data on this group of babies, identify gaps in information and note case management challenges for vulnerable young children, and their families.

Additionally, the Cabinet has partnered with the CT Youth Vision Team and the Child Poverty and Prevention Council to take a data-based look at young vulnerable parents (ages 14 to about 22), and their young children. The Cabinet's Data Matters Working Group is beginning to establish itself, and will provide guidance and support on these studies. To date, the following individuals have agreed to work with PCG on these studies: Ed Schmidt (Child Poverty & Prevention Council/OPM), Bennett Pudlin and Dr. Barry Goff (Charter Oak Group); Charlene Russell-Tucker/ Paul Flinter (SDE), Jon Swift (Youth Vision Team/OWC); Rudy Brooks (DCF); Linda Goodman (DDS), Representative Toni

Walker (CGA), and Joyce Staples (Office of the Cabinet). Other interested parties should contact the Office of the Cabinet to join the group. Reports from both studies are due at the end of June 2008.

Accountability: QRIS Planning Update

Guided by national QRIS experts (Anne Mitchell, Louise Stoney, Reeva Murphy), development of a proposed QRIS system for center-based ECE programs was launched in February 2007. A working group meets monthly, with materials and updates posted to the Council's website – www.ecpolicycouncil.org. Interim Project Manager is Joy Staples, Office of the Cabinet. The Council expects to hire the formal QRIS project manager very shortly. While the work is focused initially on center-based programs, the group is committed to addressing quality issues related to family-based ECE services as well. There will be a formal update on QRIS planning progress at the June Early Childhood Research and Policy Council's meeting. A QRIS proposal is expected to be adopted by the Council in the early fall and transmitted to the Cabinet for consideration by November. The QRIS Plan is due at the CGA in December 2008.

Accountability: Preliminary Research Designs for PreK-3 Study

On behalf of the Cabinet and Council, the Department of Higher Ed (as co-chair of the Council) contracted with the National Institute for Early Education Research (www.nieer.org). The purpose of this contract was to develop several designs by which Connecticut can conduct: (a) the legislatively mandated PreK-3 student outcomes study (required to begin early in SFY 09); and (b) the longitudinal study of children's development required in Executive Order #13. Design work from NIEER will also include scenarios for required short-term ROI studies of Connecticut's School Readiness Program. Contact: Dr. Carlota Schechter, Department of Higher Education.

Ready by Five, Fine by Nine Services & Systems

Birth to Three and Kindergarten through Third Grade

Work to propose B-3 and K-3 priorities for Cabinet consideration in May is underway, based on the two systems framework reports reviewed by the Cabinet over the fall and adopted in January 2008. TA is provided by the Charter Oak Group. Contact: Bennett Pudlin, Charter Oak Group.

Legislation making its way through the CGA would support the development of a "master contracts" demonstration effort, as included in the Cabinet's B-3 Systems Framework as well as replication of the Bridgeport Child First program. Contact: Dr. Darcy Lowell and Cabinet member Elaine Zimmerman

Work on an early childhood health system continuum, supported with Cabinet and matching philanthropic funds, is underway. The cost-modeling component of this work will be completed through the CERC contract to the Council. Contact: Cabinet member (representing Rep. Peter Villano) Dr. Judith Meyers

Preschool Expansion and Quality Improvement

It is likely that about 2,000 new preschool slots in the Connecticut School Readiness Program will be opened over the SFY 08 and SFY 09 biennium. These slots are all in the 19 Priority School District communities, and resources are available to support this expansion along with a rate adjustment, start up and local administrative funding. An additional 1,000 preschool children could be served in the 44 School Readiness Program communities; however, no additional funding was appropriated for those communities in the current biennial budget.

In March, the Cabinet adopted and transmitted to the CT General Assembly's Appropriations Committee a 2nd report (Addendum) on the SFY 08 and proposed SFY 09 preschool expansion effort. These reports identified important policy, rate and legislative changes needed over the coming year to enable communities to accomplish the intended preschool expansion for low-income children. The reports are being used by the legislature to frame both budget and statutory language for SFY 09. Access them online at -- www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-3-10/PRESCHOOL_Addendum.pdf; www.ecpolicycouncil.org/docs/2008-1-14/Preschool_Expansion_Report_to_ECE_Cabinet.pdf

An Ad Hoc Working Group on development of a preschool consultation network (one of the few unfunded top 10 Cabinet priorities) is redrafting a proposal for SFY 09 funding, for Cabinet reconsideration at the May or June Cabinet meeting. Contact: Rudolph Brooks, DCF; TA provided by Sue Wilson, CHDI, and Joy Staples, Office of the Cabinet

Preschool program quality improvement work continues through a MOU from the Cabinet to Charter Oak State College for ECERS administration, training and quality improvement grants to SRP programs. This is guided by a Collaborative Management Team of the Cabinet, Charter Oak State College, and SDE. Contact: Joyce Staples, Office of the Cabinet.

PreK-facility expansion work continues through an MOA between the Cabinet and CHEFA. The Facilities Leadership Team has met twice (Cabinet-Gruendel, SDE (McQuillan), DSS (Starkowski), CHEFA (Gray) and Graustein Memorial Fund (Nee). Formal surveys with four communities (New Haven, Hamden, Hartford and West Hartford) are in progress. Interim report to the legislature was submitted and is online; final report to be reviewed and approved by the Cabinet in June. Funding for this work was allocated by the Cabinet to CHEFA. Contact: David Wasch, CHEFA, or Marcus Rivera, Office of the Cabinet

Work on the legislatively mandated *Plan for ECE Workforce Development* continues. A draft of the plan is expected at the June Cabinet meeting. Expect draft plan to Cabinet in June 2008. Contact: Dr. Carlota Schechter

Building Local Capacity

Family and Community Support

In July 2008, the Cabinet entered into a formal public-private partnership with the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund to jointly invest in building the strategic planning and collaborative management capacity of Connecticut communities in relation to the well-being of their young children. The Cabinet allocated \$525,000 in each year to be matched initially by \$300,000 each year in foundation funding for these multi-year awards. Following a joint RFP process, the Cabinet awarded grants to 27 communities in January 2008 for the period through June 2009. In addition to the matching grant funds, the Graustein Memorial Fund is providing for technical assistance to the communities from the national Center for the Study of Social Policy as well as for formal project management. A formal Collaborative Management Team has been established for this investment; it includes the Cabinet, the Memorial Fund, and the State Department of Education. Since establishment of this public-private partnership, the Children's Fund of Connecticut and the Memorial Fund have allocated an additional \$200,000 to support local capacity building.

The Cabinet is also building a formal public-private partnership to support expanding parent leadership development opportunities. In SFY 08 and SFY 09, \$100,000 in Cabinet funding has been matched dollar-for-dollar by the William Caspar Graustein Memorial Fund and is being awarded to local communities for parent leadership initiatives. The Memorial Fund will match an additional \$100,000 in new state funds in SFY 09, should the Cabinet or other state entity provide additional funds at this level. Following an RFP process, the initial round of Cabinet-Memorial Fund awards were made in early 2008.

Cabinet Standing Committee on Local Capacity

An ad hoc working committee of the Cabinet is reviewing and finalizing proposed language outlining the roles and responsibilities of the Standing Committee on Local Capacity. Cabinet members who have volunteered for this short-term assignment include Betsy Morgan, Lynda Fosco, Judith Meyers, and Janice Gruendel. Proposal expected for the May Cabinet meeting. A presentation by communities funded through the Cabinet public-private local capacity building partnership with the Graustein Memorial Fund and the Children's Fund of CT will be the focus of a June Cabinet meeting. This set of presentations was rolled forward from April to June at the March Cabinet meeting.