

**PROPOSAL: SFY 09 FISCAL SUPPORT FOR THE
EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTATION PLANNING WORKGROUP**
SUBMITTED TO THE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CABINET IN MAY 2008
BY THE CONNECTICUT DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Purpose

With this proposal, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families, a member of the Early Childhood Education Cabinet, seeks an allocation of \$26,000 to support development of a preschool consultation infrastructure, as envisioned in the Cabinet's Ready by 5 and Fine by 9 Investment Framework. This action item was voted one of the top ten priorities in July 2006 but has not received funding.

Goal

The Early Childhood Education Cabinet's *Ready by 5 and Fine by 9* (July 2006) established as one of its top ten priorities, the need to provide preschool consultation (education, health, mental health) in order to enhance the skills of directors and staff in meeting the comprehensive needs of the children they serve. In developing a proposed investment budget for this top ten priority, the Research and Policy Council's *Early Childhood Investment Plan, Part I* (November 2006) identified that, in Connecticut, some work has already been done on selected components such as health. Participants in this ongoing work include the Connecticut Health and Development Institute, Healthy Child Care Connecticut, Head Start State Collaborative in the health consultation area. In the area of mental health consultation, the work is led by the Department of Children and Families' project, Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP).

The *Investment Plan* noted, however, that preschool consultation in Connecticut currently lacks an infrastructure. There is a need to define the roles and responsibilities of consultants and establish minimum competencies, requirements for training and utilization of consultants as well as to ensure that there is a process to monitor the quality of the consultation. In addition to these criteria, the Council's recommendations also included a need to establish a database and methods for determining outcomes and methods of public accountability.

This proposal outlines the process to develop recommendations for a comprehensive consultation network that can be accessed by early care and education programs in order to improve the quality of early care and education programs for Connecticut's children and families. As consultation is a key component of a quality early care and education system, this work will be linked with, and included as a part of, the CT Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) Plan now in development.

Collaborative Management Team and Proposed Members

A Collaborative Management Team (CMT) will be established that represents the relevant agencies/funders with legal cognizance to oversee and manage the discipline-specific planning process. Resulting recommendations will be reported on an ongoing basis to the QRIS working group for inclusion with the proposed QRIS Plan.

DCF - Kathy Bradley

SDE - Harriet Feldlaufer

DPH - Kim Sandor (in consultation with Kevin Sullivan, DPH/ has a current contract with DPH for health consultation work)

Office of the Cabinet – Joyce Staples

Registry Working Group – Sue Wilson

Discipline Work Groups

A diverse set of workgroups, representing education, health, mental health/social work, nutrition, and specialty areas (English Language Learners and special education), will be developed and each will be chaired by a member of the CMT. Each workgroup will include a representative from relevant state agencies, RESC, consultants with expertise in the discipline that is the focus for that workgroup, early childhood programs (infant/toddler, preschool, public/private programs, Head Start, School Readiness, state funded centers etc), professionals with expertise in serving English

Language Learners (ELL) children and children with special needs as well as representatives from parent groups. Workgroups would begin once the process is approved by the Cabinet.

Responsibilities of Each Workgroup

All workgroups will support and integrate the needs of ELL and children with special needs into their recommendations. Responsibilities of each work group includes:

1. Identify consultation services currently available by discipline and location (by community/region)
2. Identify the gaps in these services
3. Identify data elements collected by each program and provide to the Cabinet's Data Working Group
4. Identify and collect any existing Memoranda of Agreement that already exist between services or agencies and provide to the Public Consulting Group for inclusion in the MOA study
5. Collect and analyze relevant data on the services (capacity, services provided, wait lists, cost etc)
6. Develop minimum requirements for the specific disciplines and ages of the children to be served, (education, training, experience, areas of knowledge etc)
7. Develop requirements for the training and expertise needed for coaching, mentoring, consultation, multi-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary consultation.
8. Develop guidelines for the roles and responsibilities of consultants in these programs both as individual consultants and as members of a team.
9. Deliver recommendations to the CMT by August 1, 2008

Responsibilities of the Collaborative Management Team

1. Chair the workgroups
2. Collect data and reports from workgroups to analyze and identify common principles
3. Draft implementation recommendations to include:
 - Certificates of Competency for each field aligned with requirements determined by the workgroups
 - Establishing a Consultant Data Base in the Registry that can be accessed by programs
 - Process for verification of expertise
 - Process for training opportunities
 - Process for periodic evaluation of consultants
 - Integration with the QRIS infrastructure
 - Draft document that includes tips and guidance for programs in how to use consultants effectively
4. Draft a set of recommendations and disseminate to the Consultation Workgroup for feedback by August 8, 2006
5. Revise and disseminate to the QRIS Working Group for feedback by August 15, 2008
6. Receive feedback by August 20, 2008
7. Revise/edit the draft by August 25, 2008
8. Hold a focus group in at least 2 regions for feedback on the draft August 25 - August 28, 2008
9. Revise/edit the draft as necessary September 3 - September 5, 2008
10. Final review and approval will follow the Council/Cabinet process established for QRIS Plan development
11. Request costing of the model to be done by the Research and Policy Council as a part of the QRIS Plan

Budget Request \$26,000

- Contractual time for Health and Registry personnel (~\$ 11,000)
- Registry programming (~\$ 10,000)
- Materials for dissemination and (~\$ 2,000)
- Space and snacks for the 2 public focus groups (~\$ 3,000)