

**Approved Minutes: Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council
November 15, 2019, SCC Jack Huck Continuing Education Center, Lincoln, NE
9:00a.m. – 3:00p.m.**

Council Members Present: Susan Borchert, Carol Bowen, Amy Bunnell, Tracy Burns, Allison Cunningham, Julie Docter, Gwen Easter, Karen Haney, Bernie Hascall, Melody Hobson, Steph Knust, Krynn Larsen, Karla Lester, Joan Luebbers, Brenda McNiff, Cathy Mohnike, Mary Phillips, Suzanne Schneider, Paula Thompson, Brittni Waters, Allison Wilson

Council Members Absent: Sen. Kolowski, Mary Barry-Magsamen, Nicole Vint

Also in Attendance: Council Facilitator, Eleanor Shirley; Council Staff, Karen Hoffman; Technical Assistants, Jennifer Aumen, Amy Bornemeier, Lynne Brehm, Adam Feser, Cole Johnson, Connie Shockley, Kim Texel, and Staci Zuerlein; guests &/or presenters, Amy Mart from the Buffett Early Child Institute, Kim Hawekotte from the Nebraska Foster Care Review Office, and Ben Baumfalk from First Five Nebraska.

Council Meeting Convened/August Minutes Approval

Facilitator, Eleanor Shirley, welcomed the group and pointed out the Open Meetings Act document in the back of the room. She next invited group introductions and asked people to share if they are a replacement member, plus a quick winter holiday memory as a child. New Council members, Tracy Burns and Bernie Hascall were especially welcomed to their first meeting representing the Nebraska Department of Insurance and DHHS Mental Health Agency, respectively. Eleanor noted that former ECICC Chair, Dawn Murphy's term had ended, and she was thanked by the group for her service.

Given Dawn's departure, the Steering Committee, which meets one month prior to the Council meeting, with its authority has asked Vice-Chair, Mary Phillips, to serve as Chair. She has agreed and was thanked by the Council. As the business meeting began, the Council was asked to consider who might serve as the new Vice-Chair, as there would be a paper vote taken. Mary called the meeting to order at 9:20a.m. and called for approval of the August meeting minutes that were sent out ahead of time. A motion was made by McNiff and seconded by Borchert to approve; roll call vote was taken and the motion passed.

Roll call vote: 13-yes, 6-abstain, 0-no.

Yes: Borchert, Bunnell, Cunningham, Docter, Easter, Haney, Knust, Luebbers, McNiff, Phillips, Schneider, Thompson, Waters

Abstain: Bowen, Burns, Hascall, Larsen, Lester, Wilson

Today's Agenda

The meeting agenda was reviewed. Due to illness, Amanda Adams will present for Nicole Vint. With that change it was moved by Bowen and seconded by Lester to approve the agenda as amended. Approval given by consensus.

Election of Vice-Chair for the Council

Nominations from the floor were taken for the office of Vice-Chair. Suzanne Schneider's name was given and there were no others, so it was moved by Borchert and seconded by Knust for nominations to end. Paper ballots were handed out, completed and returned, and counted by Technical Assistants, Adams and Johnson. There were 19 ballots for Suzanne and one write-in for Dr. Karla Lester. Mary reported that Suzanne Schneider will be the next ECICC Vice-Chair. The Council showed its appreciation to Suzanne.

Approval of the Technical Assistant list for 2019-2020

Next, Mary asked for Council approval by consensus of the Technical Assistant list for the year. The names were read, and a motion made by McNiff and seconded by Luebbers; the motion passed by consensus.

Approved TAs include Amanda Adams, Jennifer Auman, Amy Bornemeier, Lynne Brehm, Lauri Cimino, Adam Feser,* Pat Frost, Cole Johnson, Connie Shockley, Kim Texel, Staci Zuerlein (*signifies new TA)

Public Comment, Announcements, Upcoming Events

Mary Phillips asked if there were any Public Comments or announcements for the good of the group. There were none.

Part C Updates

Julie Docter began with a reminder that Part C services under the IDEA are carried out in Nebraska by the Early Development Network (EDN). Annual data submission is required that shows Nebraska, through a number of indicators, is correctly and adequately implementing the requirements of Part C. Amy Bunnell shared some indicator data with a handout and PowerPoint, showing the Federal indicator topic, and the data source Nebraska uses to obtain it comparing 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The “pool” of children that are measured changes from year to year, which means the numbers change, as well. There was discussion about ongoing challenges with the Teaching Strategies data tool used, as well as the ramifications those challenges and affects have on Nebraska’s annual data reporting, and the resulting determination. An internal team comprised of NDE and HHS staff, and contracted statisticians from UNMC, as well as staff from three national Technical Assistance centers, are all working to address these challenges. The next round of data will be submitted February 1, 2020, and Nebraska will learn its rating as to whether it is meeting federal requirements for child outcomes.

Next Amy talked about the annual Part C Family Survey and how it gathers valuable information regarding family perceptions of how EDN serves them and their children. The group was taken through those indicators and results from the last two years.

Finally, each year the ECICC Chair is asked to sign the prepared APR (Annual Performance Report) as required by the U. S. Department of Education. Amy asked for a motion to allow this to happen again; so moved by Lester and seconded by Waters; a roll call vote was taken and the motion passed.

Roll call vote: 19-yes, 0-abstain, 0-no

Yes: Borchert, Bowen, Bunnell, Burns, Cunningham, Docter, Easter, Haney, Hascall, Knust, Larsen, Lester, Luebbers, McNiff, Phillips, Schneider, Thompson, Waters, Wilson

Pritzker Grant

Ben Baumfalk, Policy Analyst from First Five Nebraska, shared an update about this grant that included a draft handout detailing work that began when the award was made in April of 2019, and completed to date. The national goal is to reach an additional one million expectant mothers and children birth to age three and, through Nebraska’s grant, in its own state, within three years. Nebraska was one of 11 states to be funded, and deliverables are due January 15, 2020. Ben walked through the document, which included the project scope and inclusion criteria, and a landscape analysis of existing state statutes, administrative rules, and regulation policies that impact the population of interest. The initiatives fall into one of the three “buckets” and Ben asked the group to take this document back to review with other people in members’ own organizations, and then provide input and feedback, especially about ideas of policies that would benefit the target population.

The next phase of the grant will be submitted on January 15, 2020, and the intention is to act on those initiatives that “rise to the top,” and then meet with individuals whose agencies would be touched by the results and resulting work.

Head Start Update

Joan Luebbers shared a PowerPoint about the 2020 Census and it’s far reaching importance to the country. Some noted facts included one to two million children under the age of five are not counted in the Census; when people are not counted accurately, it results in millions of lost dollars over time to individual states. Data gathered is confidential and not to be released for 72 years, and only then to support historical research. Information cannot be used against an individual. A slide showed the questions on the census, and it was noted there is currently no citizenship question included. Joan shared that the census questionnaire can be answered via online, paper, in person, or by phone. Homeless people will be approached directly in the places where they are. Activities for the Census will occur between March 12 and April 27, 2020, and census takers are being sought. Karen will send out the PowerPoint so it can be shared across all the agencies.

Next, Steph Knust shared a number of updates, first reminding the group about the Head Start duration requirements changes affecting the number of days and length of the day of care. When the Head Start program performance standards were revised in 2016, there was a new requirement added for the programs stating they must meet a duration requirement by a certain time for services, which means length of day and amount of day. Head Start programs would have to transition from part-day programs, or 4 hours or less, to full-day programs, or 6 hours or more. There was not funding to do this, however, so it became a phase-in process. In addition, there was room for the Secretary to hold off on the timeline since there was not funding. Steph said they hope to hear something more definitive by February.

There are some changes being developed to the way that Head Start is going to be using class observations for the monitoring and re-designation process.

Regarding Head Start funding, Steph shared there is a proposed increase included in both the House and Senate budgets that have been put forth, and are now waiting for the final, overall budget to be negotiated before seeing what the President signs.

Finally, Steph shared that anyone affiliated with a Head Start program, and was affected by the 2018 or 2019 weather-related disasters, may be eligible for a portion of \$55 million in federal funding assistance that is available. This is a temporary grant with a two-year program window with which to apply.

Legislative Updates

New ECICC Technical Assistant, Adam Feser, from First Five Nebraska, shared 2019 ‘Legislative Highlights’ that included notes from the last session and what might happen this next session. The First Five Nebraska website has a bill tracker that can be accessed for updates about bills of interest to early childhood subjects. Adam noted there might be some bills related to the Pritzker grant work findings, and there may possibly be some future legislative activities resulting from work by a Step Up To Quality program review team. First Five Nebraska’s website is: <http://www.firstfive-nebraska.org/>

Recruitment to the ECICC

Council Facilitator, Eleanor Shirley, engaged members and Technical Assistants in a brainstorming activity about recruiting to fill needed vacancies on the Council. Current openings include three parent members, three Service Provider representatives for Developmental Disabilities, Public Health, and Early Childhood Public Schools, and lastly, for Head Start Tribal programs. Julie Doctor reminded the group that a parent representative must have a child with disabilities no older than 12, and one of those parents must have a child under the age of six. It was clarified that the definition of a disability must fall under the state designation. A note was made that parents may receive a \$75 stipend per meeting, and can be reimbursed for childcare expenses incurred for meeting attendance. The online Executive Appointment application can be found at <https://governor.nebraska.gov/board-comm-req>, on the “Boards and Commissions” page of the Governor’s website. Application and notification processes were discussed, as was the idea of Council members alerting Karen and Eleanor when there is a known application having been made. Updating the ECICC website to make the application process more fluid was also discussed. The current Planning Region Team Resource Guide contains some recruitment information that could be adapted for ECICC use. Reaching out to younger parents via social media was also suggested.

The Council discussed forming an Ad Hoc committee to work on efforts to recruit new members and, perhaps, create a tool, such as a brochure, to use in that recruitment. A group would meet, possibly virtually via Zoom, to define the scope of work and then submit a proposal to the Steering Committee, which would decide if the work is necessary and what resources would be needed. Amy Bunnell reminded the group regarding the proper protocols related to By Laws and Operating Procedures to establish an Ad Hoc Committee. Ad Hoc duties include submitting a proposal to the Steering Committee first before moving forward. There would need to be a voting Council member to serve as an Ad Hoc Committee chairperson, who would help develop agendas for the meetings, and work with Council staff to obtain any needed materials. An Ad Hoc committee would submit progress reports to the Council. Mary Phillips volunteered to serve as the Committee chair, and affirmed Zoom calls would be sufficient. Mary asked for those interested in being part of an Ad Hoc group are to contact Karen by Tuesday, November 19. Members can expect to

meet in December via zoom. (Post Meeting Note: Steering Committee will not meet until late January. An Ad Hoc group would be unable to meet until parameters are met per the Steering Committee consideration process.)

Working Lunch: Governor's Report Dissemination - Recap of Council Efforts

With the November meeting beginning the next Council year, Eleanor led a working lunch discussion and recap about the previous year. A handout was distributed and time given for table talk about some questions. Positive feedback was given about the more individualized orientation that has occurred with Eleanor meeting with new members. Wide agency representation and open-minded discussions was also noted as a positive. Suggested improvements included the need for more diversity among the membership, more timely replacement of Council members who go off, and having more wide-ranging information and feedback about the Governor's Report. The handouts were turned in to Eleanor who will distill group input and keep for future reference.

Child Welfare/Foster Care Programming Updates

Kim Hawekotte, Executive Director for the Nebraska Foster Care Review Office, shared about her work. The Office mandate is to provide oversight for all children in out-of-home (OOH) placement, which, as defined, includes those youth within the court system placed in foster care, youth on probation in out-of-home care, and children in a trial home visit (but who have a case that is still open in the court system). Under statute there are statewide boards comprised completely of volunteers that meet monthly to look at, and make recommendations to, legal parties about these cases. The goal is to make sure the safety and permanency of children are being met, and her office is able to take a legal standing in any case and advocate on behalf of a child. Referrals come from judges, Health and Human Services staff, attorneys, providers, etc. While reviews are done once a year, and for some, twice, Kim said there should really be a review every six months for all cases. However, the office is not fully funded to do this. Under statute, their office provides individual case management via file reviews, and prepares case summaries to share with board members about safe and appropriate placements, whether a child's needs are being met, and the overall, general welfare of a child. The office also creates quarterly and annual reports to all stakeholders and makes recommendations for systemic improvement.

Kim talked about a 30-year database that has been developed and is providing a systemic view about what is going on with children in OOH settings and what needs to improve. She said children tend to benefit from being placed in a home setting versus a group or institutional one. About 50% of children are placed with a relative or "kin." Some areas of concern include the high percentage of children aged 0-5 in OOH placements, that many in this age group have had four or more placements, and the long term, negative effects of those many changes. Most children benefit from being in a family setting of some sort, and if a change must occur, Kim said it is very important for a child to be kept in the same daycare, same school, etc. The reasons children are removed from a home are neglect, parental drug abuse, and mental health issues. Encountering physical and sexual abuse are also factors.

Kim commented that as a system, Nebraska does a good job making sure a child's needs are met once removed. However, mental health is another issue, and she feels that they sometimes see kids in the child welfare system who, instead, really belong in a "child with a disability" system. Her office worked with the Center of Public Policy at UNL, with students reading over 1100 of their file reviews. All the information was coded, and they now believe they have good data and results. A few points of concern included that African American girls were in OOH placements the most; the high number of placement moves, especially in the first year, and finally, that 70% of these children are developmentally disabled, with two-thirds of them being DD eligible but not funded. This raises the question about whether many of these children are in the wrong system, and how much of their issues were created by that system.

This coming year they will be focusing on this data more, and Kim said to let her know of any additional data they could collect.

PDG – Preschool Development Grant Updates

Amy Mart, from the Buffett Early Childhood Office, reviewed the overall vision and goal of the Preschool Development Grant and recapped the PDG Needs Assessment that focused on families, communities, and building on existing work and engaging with stakeholders throughout. They have been in partnership with First Five Nebraska,

benefitting from its policy knowledge, which has helped produce a robust strategic plan. Amy reminded the group that surveys were sent out and used to find a statewide voice in continuing to learn about parent perspectives. Their findings include that many families experience more than one vulnerability. She shared about the availability of early childhood care in Nebraska, and gave information about what types of care families are using, saying some are using more than one. A goal of the grant is ensuring that all families have equitable access to quality childcare, and that “access” means not only is there a spot for a child, but can the family afford it AND can they get to it. The biggest barrier to accessing care is cost, followed by availability, and 75% of families said they need flexible hours. All families need access to a full range of essential services. Vulnerable families may need more services than non-vulnerable families. Amy said that information was sought through Nebraska Educational Service Units (ESUs) because they are often the primary infrastructure and resource for families. When families were asked about how they defined quality, parents said they value warm, kind staff, and a clean facility. Vulnerable families are also more likely to factor affordability and subsidies into their decisions about early childhood care.

Regarding workforce and professional development, Amy shared that there are issues around hiring experienced, well-qualified caregivers, and that professional development is not happening at the high rate desired. A key finding has been around home-based childcare providers’ training, which is often a one-time training. Access to coaching is the lowest for this group of caregivers, and Amy notes that access to training is a key issue for improving things.

Professional support around mental health issues in children was also discussed, with providers having been asked if they felt they had adequate support to address children’s challenging behavior. While larger towns have mental health and behavior supports, providers do not necessarily know how to get to it. It was noted that smaller, rural towns might have more success with these supports because people tend to know each other and how to connect to those supports.

In conclusion, Amy shared a slide with highlights about the next three phases of the PDG Strategic Planning Process that will culminate in submission of the final plan on February 29, 2020. The PDG e-newsletter can be subscribed to through the website, Nebraskapdg.org, which will offer opportunities to attend meetings and review documents. Amy Mart can be reached at amart@nebraska.edu.

CCDF (Child Care Development Fund) Update

Amanda Adams shared updates in Nicole Vint’s place. LB460 was signed into law in May and affected transitional childcare and “kinderprint,” or fingerprint, requirements. As of September 1, 60 families had been helped to maintain child care longer than originally possible. Over 700 required child care providers, staff, or household members had either started the fingerprint process or had had them processed. Amanda said it is a fairly easy process once all materials are submitted. The Department of Public Health/Licensing has updated its website, and updates it weekly with a Q&A. The application has also been updated to be more use friendly. It is also working on a YouTube video to show how the process works, with some process footage from the State Patrol. A public hearing was held on October 25 for the Child Care Subsidy Regulations, Title 392, and they are currently reviewing the comments and preparing a response. Amanda shared the next step will be sending it to Governor’s policy office and the Attorney General for review. Suzanne Schneider shared some input from a Child Care Center standpoint that it is still taking three to four weeks to get fingerprinting completed, even after paperwork is all in. Amanda said she would share this input with her contact.

A question was asked about when the policies discussed at the subsidies hearing would be put into place, since some of them will be impactful for providers to reduce the barriers for why they do not accept subsidies, or limit the number of subsidies that they take. Amanda responded that the goal is January for approval, but that some policies will have more steps than others for implementation. Given this, March may be more realistic.

February Meeting Components

After reminding the group that February can bring some challenging weather and illness, and that there must quorum in order to hold a meeting, Eleanor Shirley asked for components for the February 21 Council meeting. The Steering Committee will consider each when creating the next agenda.

- Have each Technical Assistant share some brief highlight from individual’s work
- The PDG will remain a standing agenda item

- Report out from Mary and Brenda having presented the Biennial Report to the Governor
- Have a presentation about the YHDP (Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program) grant that was awarded to Nebraska and supports a wide range of housing interventions for youth.

Other/Adjourn

Mary asked for a motion and a second to adjourn, which Hobson and Easter, respectively gave. The meeting adjourned at 3:05pm by consensus.

Next Meeting: February 21, 2020, at SCC Jack J. Huck Continuing Education Center, Lincoln, NE

2020 ECICC meeting dates, all at Jack Huck CE Center

- May 1
- August 21
- November 13

2021 ECICC meeting dates, location TBD

- February 19
- May 7
- August 20
- November 19

**Council vote needed*

*** Public Comment Invited*

****Lunch is pre-ordered and limited to Council members, presenters, personnel, technical assistants, and agency support staff who have been identified prior to the meeting.*