

**Florida Interagency Coordinating Council
for Infants and Toddlers (FICCIT)**

**Quarterly Meeting
June 23 and 24, 2009**

8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Tallahassee, Florida

Members Present: Judy Corso, Lorraine Allen, Janice Kane for Phyllis Sloyer, Roni Bader-Tables, Cynthia Fuller, Carole West for Bambi Lockman, Karen Hartz, Lois Maroney, Lucy Morillo, Pat Grosz, Brittany Birken, Laurie Blades, Sharon Paul, Patricia Badland, and Debby Russo.

Members Absent: Frank Platt

Members Absent with Notification: Lori Massey, Bambi Lockman

Non-members Present: Gail Underwood, Aimee O'Sullivan, La'Tasha Dullivan, Tameka Davis, Jane Wills, Louise Boothby-Llorente, Kathy Reese, Dawn Lynch, Alice Kay Emery, Lourdes Quintana, Kim Galant, Renee Jenkins, Lou Ann Long, Shawn Seabrook, Cheryl Fitzgerald, Debra Dowds, Pam Tempson, and D'Lo Trejo,

FICCIT Business

Welcome and Introductions - Roni Bader-Tables

Discussion: Welcome and Introduction of all FICCIT members and guests.

Ad Hoc Committee Report - Lorraine Allen and Cynthia Fuller

Discussion: The newly established Ad Hoc Committee met via conference call in May to establish procedures/operating guidelines which will replace the outdated by-laws of FICCIT. Members of the Ad Hoc Committee include Cynthia Fuller (Chair), Lorraine Allen, Lois Maroney, Lucy Morillo, and Debby Russo. The Council as a whole discussed the federal laws as well as revisions/outcomes of the Ad Hoc report.

Conclusion: Several actions regarding the wording in the committee report were voted on the first day and incorporated into the report on the second day of the FICCIT meeting.

There was discussion on the requirements of attendance for members and other matters which could not be resolved at this time. Cynthia Fuller called for another conference call of the Ad Hoc Committee for further clarification on July 28 at 12 noon.

The Outreach Committee and the Collaboration Committee were collapsed into one committee resulting in the formation of three standing committees: Executive Committee, Personnel Development and Training Committee, and the Outreach and Collaboration Committee. Discussion included a reminder of each member's duty to serve on a standing committee; therefore, members chose a committee on which to serve based on the information presented. See attached committee assignment sheet.

Concerning other membership news, Roni Bader-Tables is still *acting* Chair since the Governor's Office has not appointed a Chair at this time. Dr. Abrams resigned the Committee, leaving openings for more FICCIT members to be appointed by the Governor's Office.

Note: The Council can voice recommendations and concerns to the Governor's Office, with the understanding that the Governor makes the appointments and FICCIT is an *advisory* Council.—There is also mention regarding need for diversity as well as parent representatives on the Council.

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Date Due
Reconvene the Ad Hoc Committee on policies to revise the draft document including all previously voted on revisions along with policy revisions and options.	Cynthia Fuller	Report from Committee due Next meeting

Approval of Meeting Notes – Roni Bader-Tables

Discussion: The Executive Committee Acting Chair called for a vote to approve the notes from the April Meeting.

Conclusion: Members voted to approve the April Meeting Notes with modifications.

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Date Due
Post April Meeting Notes to the web.	Tameka Davis	ASAP

Status of Action Steps from April Meeting – Roni Bader-Tables - written report at end of summary report.

Early Steps State Office Update – Janice Kane, written report attached at end of summary notes.

Family Leadership Report: Cynthia Fuller – written report attached at end of summary notes. Accolades were given to Lou Ann Long who worked on this report in the past.

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Date Due
<i>The Conversation with Families Report</i> will be referred to the Outreach and Collaboration Committee for future consideration in the development of the Annual Report.	Outreach/Collaboration Committee Members	Next Meeting

Committee Reports

Executive Committee – Roni Bader-Tables – written report attached at end of summary notes.

Discussion: Lorraine Allen was selected to report from the Outreach/Collaboration Committee and attended the Executive Committee Meeting. Judy Corso, as Chair of the Personnel Development and Training Committee, also attended as did Janice Kane.

Resolutions for former chairs and certificates of outstanding service were read and approved for recognition of former FICCIT members.

Personnel Development and Training – Judy Corso – written report attached at end of summary notes.

Discussion: Even though only one person attended Conversations with Providers, it was deemed a success based on the excellent feedback offered. The need to choose new and various locations for the Conversations with Providers was emphasized.

Conclusion: The Committee will continue to work on current issues and distribute an Autism Assistant Draft for feedback and bring back to full committee in September.

Motion was made and passed to provide a checklist regarding the enrollment of providers.

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Date Due
ESSO will work with local Early Step Offices to develop check lists/guidance documents to assist providers in enrolling to include the following four categories: Licensed providers, non-licensed providers, ITDS providers, and interpreters.	La'Tasha Dullivan	
ESSO will facilitate a conference with Early Head Start staff across the state to include LES, ESSO and members of PDAT to explore the feasibility of using Early Head Start ARRA dollars to credential Head Start staff as ITDS providers.	La'Tasha Dullivan	

Outreach and Collaboration –Lorraine Allen, written report attached at the end of the summary notes.

Discussion: Election of chair was postponed. Much progress was achieved in establishing timelines and a working agenda.

Conclusion: Dates were established for the Annual Report timeline as well as “Conversations with Families” and Palm Cards.

Agency Updates

Department of Education Report

Carole West, written report attached at the end of the summary notes.

(Lorraine Allen – Homeless Education report attached at the end of the summary notes.)

Department of Insurance – Cynthia Fuller reported that there are now a number of insurance companies that have filed proposed large group contract changes to incorporate the new coverage mandate for autism spectrum disorders. These changes, when approved by the OIR, will become effective upon policy renewals by large group employers (50 or more employees). Ms. Fuller agreed to provide the names of large group insurers with approved forms from the OIR and make it available to Early Steps.

Department of Children and Families – Laurie Blades, Mental Health Program– written report attached at the end of summary notes.

Agency for Persons with Disabilities – No report as no representative appointed at this time.

Agency for Health Care Administration – Gail Underwood discussed budget and travel restrictions which may interfere with travel for meetings. Reimbursement concerns were acknowledged, and AHCA is working on the issues.

Agency for Workforce Innovation – written report at end of summary notes.

Head Start and Early Head Start - Karen Hartz referenced the available ARRA funding available in Head Start and Early Head Start which could be used for ITDS training.

Public Comments: None

Meeting Adjourned

2009

FICCIT Quarterly Meetings
September 22-23, 2009 – Orlando, Florida

FICCIT COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS
JUNE, 2009

EXECUTIVE	PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING	OUTREACH AND COLLABORATION
Roni Bader-Tables Judy Corso Janice Kane	Judy Corso – Chair Roni Bader-Tables Bethany Birken Cynthia Fuller Pat Grosz Lois Maroney Deborah Russo	Lorraine Allen Pat Badlands Laurie Blades Karen Hartz Lucy Morillo Sharon Paul Frank Platt *Chair will rotate with a different facilitator each meeting.

Florida Interagency Coordinating Council

for Infants and Toddlers (FICCIT)

Quarterly Meeting Action Status Report

April 2009

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Date Due	Outcome	
Draft Family Leadership Committee Report to be brought back to next meeting for review and action.	Cynthia Fuller	Next meeting	Completed	
Draft Procedures/operating guidelines for review and approval at next meeting to replace by-laws	Ad Hoc committee	By next meeting	Completed	
Conference call information sent to Ad Hoc committee members.	Cynthia Fuller	First week of May	Completed	
Establish committees (draft mission statements, purpose, guidelines).	Lorraine Allen	Next meeting	Completed	
Send resolutions to former FICCIT Chairs and certificates of appreciation to former FICCIT members.	Jane Wills	ASAP	Completed	
Post April Meeting Notes to the web.	Tameka Davis	ASAP	Completed	
When a provider finishes each ITDS course, they will be required to work a certain number of hours if the coursework is funded by the state office.	ESSO		Completed	

A minimum of one and one half to two days of the CMS Statewide meeting in August be devoted to Early Steps operational issues.	Judy Corso	June meeting	Completed	
Development of a hard copy of the Provider Enrollment Handbook, including four sections: Licensed Providers, Non-Licensed Providers, Infant Toddler Developmental Specialists, and Interpreters including all the necessary documents to complete an application.	ESSO		Revised for June status report	
Provider Enrollment Handbook discussed in previous action step to be available on Children's Medical Services website and made available to local offices.	ESSO		Withdrawn since handbook is already available on-line (per Dawn Lynch) New request for guidelines on June status report	

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

- \$23,077,120 of non-recurring funds were allocated for the Individuals with Disability Education Act, Part C Program (Early Steps) in Florida
- Funds begin July 1, 2009 and must be obligated by September 31, 2011
- A spending recommendation based on guidelines is currently in development
- Activity and news related to the ARRA Education funding can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/recovery/>

ARRA Individuals with Disability Education Act (IDEA) Part C Goals

- Maximize short-term investment with lasting results for kids
- Minimize unsustainable ongoing commitments
- Drive long-term program improvement and capacity

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act IDEA Part C Planning

A project team consisting of 3 Local Early Steps (LES) staff and 3 Early Steps State Office (ESSO) staff, lead by the ESSO Budget Manager collected over 80 ideas around the state for spending ARRA funds and developed a spending plan outline.

**ARRA PLAN OUTLINE
Seven Investment Areas**

- DIRECT SERVICES
- TECHNOLOGY
- PROVIDERS
- LOCAL EARLY STEPS GRANTS
- TRAINING DEVELOPMENT & DELIVERY
- PUBLIC AWARENESS
- THIRD PARTY REIMBURSEMENT ANALYSIS

ARRA Plan Implementation

Plans are beginning to move forward and the following funding decisions have been made.

- \$7.4 million has been allocated to Local Early Steps contracts for 2009-10
- \$200,000 has been allocated to support the Virtual School for 40 students to complete ITDS courses through June 30, 2011
- The Local Early Steps have been sent an order form for BDI2 protocols and supplies

ARRA Plan Next Steps

The Early Steps State Office will be further refining plans and implementation strategies over the next couple of weeks. The ideas presented here are subject to change as further planning proceeds.

- Mark Twain

**I was gratified to be able
to answer promptly.
I said I didn't know.**

State Performance Plan (SPP)

- Requirement of reauthorization of IDEA
- Submitted in Jan, 2006
- Florida's baseline performance against specific indicators
- Targets for each year through 2011
- Planned activities for improvement

Annual Performance Report (APR)

- Due in February each year
- Report the status of progress toward meeting the targets set in the State Performance Plan
- Analyze progress and slippage during the past year
- Report the status of improvement activities during the year

DETERMINATIONS

The reauthorization of IDEA requires OSEP to make a determination of each state (Part C & Part B) each year. This determination is based on the state's performance.

DETERMINATION CATEGORIES

- ✓ Meets Requirements
- ✓ Needs Assistance
- ✓ Needs Intervention
- ✓ Needs Substantial Intervention

Determination for Florida, Part C (Early Steps):

2009: NEEDS ASSISTANCE

- Florida is a "NA3" state: 3rd year as Needs Assistance
- Determination was based on: Performance in Indicator 1 (timely service delivery) and Indicator 9 (correction of noncompliance within one year)
- Sanction has been imposed: Required to utilize available technical assistance and report in our APR how this technical assistance is being used to improve performance

**Things could be worse.
Suppose your errors were
counted and published
every day, like those of a
baseball player. (Anon)**

Early Steps Orientation Modules

- Early Steps requires 3 orientation modules for all providers serving children in the Early Steps system
- The overall purpose of the orientation training modules are to introduce or enhance the learner's knowledge of family-centered early intervention services in the context of each child and family's everyday routines, activities, and places
- Revisions are being made to make them consistent with current policies

Module 1

- Overview of the Early Steps
- Mission, goals, and the philosophical basis of Florida's early intervention system
- Florida child abuse and neglect reporting procedures.

Module 2
Early Steps Service Delivery System

- Early Steps Service Delivery System provides training on services in Everyday Routines, Activities and Places!
- Early Steps service delivery system include:
 - Family-Centered Service Provision: Supporting Families to Meet the Developmental Needs of their Children
 - Services in Everyday Routines, Activities and Places of Children and Families: Maximizing Natural Learning Opportunities
 - Integrated Supports and Services: Utilizing a Team Based Primary Service Provider Approach

Module 3
Introduction to the Individualized Family Support Plan Process

- Includes first contacts and the Early Steps' requirements for first contacts
- How to identify strategies to communicate effectively with families to establish and maintain a working relationship.
- Identifies the critical elements of child evaluation and assessment
- Discusses the major steps and timelines in planning for transitioning children at age three

Early Steps Orientation Modules

Although the target audience of the modules is service coordinators and providers, as new members of the council, the modules will prepare you to better meet the challenges of your position and to work effectively in Florida's Early Steps system.

Annual Part C Application for Funds

- State submits application for funds to Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in spring of each year
- State completes use of funds/budget section based on amount allotted (based on formula)
- Amount budgeted must add up to the total amount of the state Part C allotment for the year
- State provides assurances in the application that the state will operate consistent with IDEA, Part C requirements

State Policies

- OSEP must approve and have on file all state policies
- State must conduct a 60-day public participation period, including public hearings prior to revising or adopting new policies (completed March through May 2009)
- State submits any new or revised policies for OSEP review/approval along with the annual application for funds
- IDEA Part C grant funds are available to states on July 1 each year - as long as application is submitted by due date and all budget and policy requirements are met

Budget Update

2008 - 2009 Travel for FICCIT

Purpose of Trip	Estimated Cost of Travel	Actual Expenditures
FICCIT August 26-27 Meeting	\$6,575.00	\$6,803.25
FICCIT Oct 22-23 Meeting	\$6,575.00	\$4,373.50
FICCIT January Meeting	\$6,575.00	\$3,118.05
FICCIT April Meeting	\$6,575.00	\$5,064.47
Expenditures other than FICCIT Quarterly Meetings	\$700.00	\$843.49
TOTAL	\$27,000.00	\$20,202.76
	BALANCE	\$12,722.48

Aim for service and success
will follow.

- Albert Schweitzer

We worry about what a child
will become tomorrow,
yet we forget that he is
someone today.

- Stacia Tauscher

**Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers
Family Leadership Committee Report
"Conversation with Families"
2006-2008**

In 2006, the Family Leadership Committee of the Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers (FICCIT) embarked on an activity entitled, "Conversation with Families."

In the late afternoon/early evening prior to nearly every quarterly FICCIT meeting from January 2006 through August of 2008, the Family Leadership Committee met with families served by local Early Steps. A total of 9 Conversations were conducted in Tallahassee, Jacksonville, Melbourne, Tampa, Miami, Daytona, Panama City, Gainesville, and Ft. Myers

The Committee's intent in holding informal meetings with families was two-fold:

- First and foremost, the Committee intended the Conversation meetings to create a direct, person-to-person opportunity for families to "converse" with members of the statewide advisory council, FICCIT and to permit FICCIT members, in turn, to speak directly to families currently served by that area's local Early Steps.
- Secondly, the Committee believed the Conversation events could serve as an additional opportunity to recruit new family representatives to FICCIT membership.

The Conversation activity was not designed to collect statistically valid results, but rather to engage families in an informal dialogue, in a family-friendly environment, to encourage families to talk about the experience of participation in Early Steps. However, in each Conversation meeting the Committee used a uniform set of topics/questions in order to create a sense of continuity among all meetings.

Each Conversation meeting opened with a discussion of Child Find followed by discussions covering Evaluation and Assessment-Family Service Plans, Service Coordination, "Your Rights under Early Steps", Services received and Transition. The meeting closed with a final discussion intended to capture any remaining recommendations for improvement and answering any final questions posed by participating families.

The topics were designed to present a chronological reflection of a family's experience in Early Steps – from initial knowledge of or referral all the way through transition to Part B services for children over age 3. The Committee's findings – impressions gathered through the Conversations events -- are summarized as follows:

Topic: Child Find

The Child Find discussion that opened the Conversation event was designed to identify sources of referral and the effectiveness of introductory information about Early Steps.

Standard questions included:

- How did you find out about Early Steps?
- Do you think you got enough information soon enough about Early Steps?
- Are there better or new ways to tell other families about Early Steps?

Information gathered through the Conversation events indicated that elements of the "Child Find" system are present in every community, even if the term "Child Find" was not familiar to most families.

Most referrals to Early Steps came through pediatricians, specialists, NICUs, hospitals, while other referrals came via child care centers, the Florida Central Directory, information from magazines, information available

in pediatrician offices, and information from family and friends. The Committee also heard from one family who was referred from an out-of-state program when that family moved to Florida.

The oft-repeated statement by families that “[we] wish we had known earlier about early intervention” suggests that referral locations and provider education materials may need regularly scheduled review and “refreshing” to assure timely referrals are made to local Early Steps services. There were comments made by families that in some areas, not all physicians refer families to Early Steps – specifically, physicians in specialty areas. The families also noted that insurance companies do not refer families to Early Steps and that parents are not always aware of the extensive information available from the Florida Central Directory.

Topic: Evaluation & Assessment/IFSP Meeting

The Evaluation and Assessment-Family Support Plan Meeting discussion that took place during each Conversation was designed primarily to gauge the timeliness of assessments and the degree to which assessment results were presented in terms and under conditions that were “family friendly.”

Standard questions included:

- Was your child evaluated /assessed within 45 days after you were referred?
- Do you think the evaluation results were explained in a way that you could understand?
- Are there ways to better explain the results of the evaluation/assessment for your child and your family?

Almost uniformly, initial assessments are taking place within required 45-days and families expressed satisfaction with the assessment process, understanding of the assessment results, and confidence in the professionals performing the assessments. For those families in Early Steps who receive assessments and IFSP development in the natural environment, families expressed approval and satisfaction with the experience of the team visit. The value of the home setting was best captured (in paraphrase) by one family member who stated her confidence in her child’s service team was bolstered by the fact that “they had been in my home” and could then better understand the challenges faced by her family and her child.

There were, however, several statements repeated in multiple locations that suggested the critical importance of communication mechanisms:

- Many families did not know the acronym “IFSP” or understood the role of the IFSP as the foundation document that would guide the services received by their child in the Early Steps;
- Few families seemed to understand that the IFSP document can be modified as the child progresses through Early Steps services;
- The relationship between the assessment and recommended services was not always clear to families – assessment results and services recommended “did not match;”
- Families repeated the concern that “too much information” is presented all at once through the assessment/evaluation process;
- Families were not always aware of available family supports in the community – FRS, parent support groups, local pro bono services, and the Central Directory; and,
- Many materials use terms and acronyms that are not well understood by families.

It should be noted that the specifics of these “improvement” comments did not offset the general impression received from families that Early Steps teams were conducting assessments and IFSP development in family friendly atmosphere. The comments did suggest there is a persistent challenge in the need to convey information in a manner and at a time that does not, in the words of one family member, create the sense of being “overwhelmed” with the scope and amount of information that is conveyed at this time. The Committee had the sense that in some cases, information about the role of Early Steps personnel, providers, and progress points might be missed given all the information that may be presented at the time of the IFSP meeting.

Topic: Service Coordination

The Service Coordination discussion that took place during each Conversation was designed to elicit frequency of contact and information about the relationships formed with service coordinators.

Standard questions included:

- Do you know the name of your service coordinator?
- How often do you receive some sort of contact from your service coordinator, a letter, a phone call, a visit or other type of contact?
- How does your service coordinator help you?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

In the majority, families placed high value and satisfaction with their service coordinators. Most all family members knew the name and contact information for their service coordinator, had frequent contact with the coordinator and received timely response when a request was made for assistance. Most family members praised the efforts of service coordinators to effectively coordinate services and indicated the coordinators were a significant source of family support. Many families expressed the opinion that the service coordination role was critical to child's success in Early Steps.

The Committee did hear comments that suggested the term "service coordinator" is uniformly used and that the role of a service coordinator is not well understood. In some areas high case loads are preventing maximization of the effectiveness of the service coordinator position and potentially, the quality of service delivery to participating families. Families expressed these concerns in terms of high turnover rates in service coordination staff, not all service coordinators have regular or frequent contact with the family, and not all service coordinators appeared to have equal knowledge about the program and/or community services, referrals, or support services that might be available to families. Those comments were heard in areas where, in some cases, the service coordinator role is served by the child's principal provider.

Topic: Your Rights under Early Steps

The "Your Rights under Early Steps" discussion that took place during each Conversation was designed to help validate that families had an understanding of how to proceed if there was dissatisfaction with services, communications between families and Early Steps staff, providers, or other aspects of receiving Early Steps services.

Standard questions included:

- Do you know what to do if you are not satisfied with services provided to your child and your family?
- Do you know who to call or (write)?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Many families were aware of the right to contact Early Steps if the family had problems with service or other aspects of Early Steps. However, few family members when asked directly, could recall specifically where or who to call, though many did indicate the information was "probably" made available as part of the initial IFSP meeting.

Topic: Services

The Services discussion that took place during each Conversation was designed to elicit family perception of adequate services and service delivery, the extent to which families receive training and/or participate in service delivery decisions, and the prevalence of services delivery in the natural environment.

Standard questions included:

- Did you have the chance to participate in determining the services for your child and your family?

- Are you receiving the services listed in your plan?
- Do you feel that the services you receive are meeting your specific needs?
- Do you think that services and supports provided to your family and your child are helping you and your child with the activities you do every day?
- When you received services, did your team of professionals deliver those services in a variety of settings?
- When you receive services, where do they take place?
- Are there better ways, better times, or better places to get services that can help your family and your child with everyday activities?
- Do you have suggestions for improvement in service?

Most families reported receiving the services they believed were appropriate, that services were received in a timely manner, that services received were helping their child, and many families reported receiving services in "natural environment" settings.

The Committee also heard, however, comments that suggested families believed there were "not enough" providers since there were delays in service delivery. In areas where services were not routinely provided in natural environment settings, families expressed a desire to receive services "at home" or in child care settings – a desire voiced especially by families with an autistic child. Many affected families expressed the need for additional services to treat children with autism or autism spectrum disorders.

Topic: Transition

The Transition discussion that took place during each Conversation was designed to evaluate how these families were informed about and prepared for transition out of the birth-to-three services Early Steps.

Standard questions included:

- If your child is almost 3, what have you been told about transition?
- Do you believe you have the information you need to best prepare you and your child for a new set of services?
- If more information is needed, what kind of information would best help you and your family?
- Do you know about the services available to your child after age 3?
- Do you have any suggestions for improvement?

Families going through transition planning reported receiving timely notification and receiving assistance to prepare for transition.

Many families expressing the wish to have Early Steps continue to age 5, were concerned about what services would be available in the traditional school vacation months, the scope of services that might be available, and if services would be delivered in a natural environments setting. Some families leaving Early Steps expressed concern about losing services, service coordination and the absence of family supports. The Committee heard comments in several geographic areas that suggested families were uncertain about transition to the Pre-K disabilities programs where services and family supports would be different than those of Early Steps – and that families would benefit from better communication between Early Steps and the local school system.

Topic: Closing Questions/Early Steps Overview

The closing discussions were used to assess overall satisfaction with local Early Steps and to collect group impressions/observations about services received from Early Steps.

Standard questions included:

- Do you have any other questions?
- Are there other ways in which the Early Steps has positively impacted you, your family and/or child?
- Do you have any other suggestions for improvement?

The repeated comment that families wanted Early Steps to be extended to age 5 was clear evidence that most families believed their child had received important benefits from early intervention services and is testimony to the overall sense of satisfaction of and support for local Early Steps expressed by families who participated in the Conversation meetings held in 2006-2008.

Families perceive the need for additional funding of Early Steps – to expand services, make more kinds of services available, and to deliver services in natural environments. It appears there may be a growing need to strengthen liaison with child care centers, Pre-K Disabilities, and Early Steps.

Most all family members participating in the Conversation events expressed gratitude for Early Steps staff, providers, and family resource specialist assistance. There were comments indicating the appreciation for Early Steps efforts to provide education about options for additional services in the local communities and for the operation of family support meetings, play dates, and other opportunities to lessen the isolation of coping with the challenges to their children.

Families suggested that some local area programs could benefit other families – specifically, the concept of “toy lending libraries” and, by extension, libraries with information related to specific medical conditions and diagnoses for children in Early Steps. Some families requested that an “acronym” dictionary be made more easily available.

Family Resource Specialists were uniformly praised for assistance rendered to Early Steps families. Some family members suggested that Early Steps needs to be able to hire providers on a temporary basis when service capacity is full.

Logistics

The Conversation with Family activity involved a significant involvement investment by the Committee and its Chair. Prior to each Conversation meeting, the Committee Chair contacted the local Early Steps director and FRS staff, provided an outline of the Conversation meeting event, an outline of how the local Early Steps could assist with the logistics of the meeting, the division of responsibilities between the local Early Steps and Committee members, and a sample set of letters, surveys and/or flyers for distribution among families.

For the years 2007-2008, Committee Chair Lou Ann Long received two important corporate contributions for each Conversation meeting. The Kaplan education firm provided five \$25.00 gift certificates for educational materials and a sheet cake for each meeting. The gift certificates were used as “door prizes” for families who attended. Each meeting was held after 5:00 p.m. in that local area, and local Early Steps arranged for local contributions of food, juice and soft-drinks for families in attendance.

In the hours preceding each Conversation meeting, members of the Committee gathered at the meeting site to work with local Early Steps staff to set up the meeting rooms, lay out materials, and generally assist with on-site logistics.

Local Early Steps staff in each location also made provision for on-site child care. If children and parents were comfortable in separation, the children had a nearby room in which to play while the parents were in the Conversation event. In other cases children remained with parents and generally contributed to the informality of the discussion environment.

The Conversation meetings opened with a general presentation of FICCIT, its role with the state Early Steps office, and the purpose of the Conversation meetings. Families were assured of confidentiality, Early Steps directors were not in attendance, and if there were local FRS or service coordination staff in attendance, they did not participate in the meeting event, and in many instances were not physically in the meeting room.

In each local area where mailed surveys were returned to the local Early Steps and transmitted, in turn, to the Committee where mail survey information was incorporated into each meeting summary. Each Director and participating staff was then invited to attend the next day's FICCIT Family Leadership Committee Meeting for a period of discussion about the Conversations event.

Finally, Committee members also spoke individually with any family member interested in serving as a family representative on the FICCIT. While the Committee did not track the results of these conversations, we believe that several applications for membership were later forwarded to the state Early Steps offices.

Conclusion

It is important to repeat: The Conversation events were not designed to collect statistically valid results, but rather to engage families in an informal dialogue, in a family-friendly environment, to encourage families to talk about the experience of participation in Early Steps.

It is hoped the collation of family comments will serve to "snap shot" how Early Steps families perceive local area organizations and the services provided.

The Committee would express its sincere appreciation to each Early Steps Family Resource Specialist, to local Directors, to the Kaplan Company for its charitable contributions, to the families who took of their time to talk with us, and to Lou Ann Long, the 2006-2008 Chair of the FICCIT Family Leadership Committee.

For The Record

This report was based on text created by and edited by members of the Family Leadership Committee.

As of this date, June 1, 2009, this summary was created and any errors or omissions herein are solely the fault of the compiler.

*-- Cynthia Fuller, Member
2006-2008, Family Leadership Committee*

FICCIT

Executive Committee Meeting Notes

June 23, 2009 4:00 PM - 5:00 PM

In Attendance:

Janice Kane
Judy Corso
Lorraine Allen
Roni Bader-Tables

New Committee – Outreach and Collaboration

- No Chair selected
- Lorraine was selected to report to Executive Committee
- 6 FICCIT members are members of this Committee
- Action Plan developed and typed
- Reviewed Activities of Committee
 - Annual Report
 - Conversations with Families
 - Palm Cards
 - New document – possibly on web – continuum of care time-line (Birth-five)

PDAT

- Reviewed Action Items
- Looked at Provider Recommendations
- Reviewed Recommendations from ASD Workgroup

Correspondence from Member

- Delegation of Voting Rights

Pending Action Items Reviewed

PERSONNEL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING COMMITTEE
FLORIDA INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL FOR INFANTS AND TODDLERS
June 23rd 2009
Tallahassee, Florida
Meeting Notes

Participants: Roni Bader-Tables, Pat Grosz, Carole West, La'Tasha Dullivan, Judy Corso, Brittany Birken, Alice Kay Emery, Gail Underwood, Louise B. Llorente, Lourdes Quintana, Haylie Smith, Lois Maroney, Deborah Russo

Action Item Update

Recommendation for the statewide meeting in August to include 1.5 days, at a minimum, focused on Early Steps operational issues. La'Tasha Dullivan reported that this recommendation was accepted, with a half day on August 27th and a full day on August 26th to focus specifically on operational issues. La'Tasha shared some initial topics planned for the meeting, including time for local program directors/managers to share ideas.

Recommendation for the ESSO to consider adding a specific number of hours of work in exchange for use of Part C dollars to fund ITDS coursework. The Early Steps State Office (ESSO) has agreed to add a requirement that ITDS applicants who utilize the coursework funded by Part C need to provide 500 hours of early intervention services per course completed.

Recommendation regarding the development of a Provider Enrollment Handbook modified to state: The Early Steps State Office will work with Local Early Steps (LES) offices to develop a checklist/guide to assist with enrolling providers, with specific instructions related to the different enrollment categories: Infant Toddler Developmental Specialists, Licensed Health Care Providers and Non-Licensed Providers.

ITDS Preparation

An additional \$200,000 dollars has been allocated to Virtual ESE program for ITDS students. It is projected that 40 students will utilize these funds. As part of this process, applicants will be required to sign a statement agreeing to work as an ITDS for 500 hours for each course funded by Part C.

Conversation with Providers

One local provider attended the meeting on June 22nd, 2009. The provider generally shared positive comments about the local program, including the use of teams to provide services to children in the natural environment. Some concern was expressed about the end of the fiscal year with budget constraints, regarding the possibility of risk share.

State Office Update-La'Tasha Dullivan

Statewide Meeting

The Statewide Meeting will be held on August 25, 26 and 27, 2009 at The Vinoy in St. Petersburg. The meeting will include 1.5 days devoted to Early Steps operational issues. The meeting will focus on specific topics suggested by the LES offices.

Information will be provided from NECTAC on autism spectrum disorders. A representative from AHCA has been asked to present during the meeting. Gail Underwood requested that local offices send her questions that they may wish to ask the AHCA representative during the meeting. These questions should be emailed to Gail Underwood. The Weekly Memo will include instructions on registration for the meeting.

ARRA

The application for funds will be distributed sometime this month to the LES Offices. Local program directors/managers will have the opportunity to request funding in specific areas.

Provider Issues Sub-Committee

Several recommendations from this sub-committee of the Service Implementation Workgroup were reviewed by the committee members, with the committee members in agreement with the suggestions regarding equivalent degrees for ITDS applicants.

Gail Underwood did report that the federal response to the initial application for the ITDS needs to be reviewed to ensure that the clarification regarding the ITDS equivalent degree meets the federal guidelines. Gail will review the documents and provide feedback to the group.

Autism Spectrum Disorder Guidance Workgroup

The recommendations from the workgroup were reviewed by the PDAT committee members, with the following suggestions made:

A track of training for parents/caregivers/families is strongly recommended, with a focus on strategies to address behavioral concerns.

Also, the committee members will be provided with the document regarding the Autism Assistant position being proposed by this workgroup. Committee members will be asked to provide input, based on discussion that occurred during the meeting.

FICCIT Outreach and Collaboration Committee
Meeting Notes
6/22/09

Committee Members Present:

Sharon Paul, Lorraine Allen, Laurie Blades, Lucy Morillo, Karen Hartz, Frank Platt

Guests Present:

Aimee O'Sullivan, Dawn Lynch, Cynthia Fuller

1. Cynthia Fuller gave a report on the previous Family Leadership Committee, highlighting the "Conversations with Families" meetings, the process, and what the committee learned from them. She offered to send all forms and processes that they had developed for the "Conversations with Families" meetings. Possibilities for continuing the "Conversations with Families" at a state level at the annual Family Café were discussed.
2. Election of a committee chair was postponed until further discussion of what will be the committee's work.
3. Committee discussed how the annual report would be completed and timeline (see following Action Steps). Last year 500 copies were made and distributed to state legislators and others. The suggestion was made to send via email to appropriate distribution lists for environmental and cost purposes.
4. Committee members discussed possible options for the "Conversations with Families" meetings (see following Action Steps).
5. Lorraine Allen agreed to report to the Executive Committee and the full Council on the committee activities and action steps.

2008-2009 Annual FICCIT Report			
Action	Person(s) Responsible	Date Due	Outcome
Gather new family stories and photos for 2008-2009 Annual FICCIT Report with a representation of families from across the state and send to report editor. Contact Sue Cannon and Lou Ann Long to find out process from previous year. Ensure consent forms are signed by family. Determine word limit for family stories.	Aimee O'Sullivan	8/25/09	
Council chairperson write letter for the beginning of the annual report.	Council Chair	7/30/09	
Determine report format.	Lorraine Allen Lucy Morillo	7/30/09	
Coordinate committee conference call to review and make any changes before presentation to full Council.	Laurie Blades	9/10/09 2:00 pm	
Update 2007-2008 annual report with 2008-2009 data. Report editor will email request for data. DOH will provide the following data to report editor: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of children served by county • Funding sources • Services provided by Local Early Steps (LES) • Funding per child • Comparisons to previous years Note: Request data at least ten days before data are needed.)	Karen Hartz	9/08/09 (data requested) 9/17/09 (data received)	

2008-2009 Annual FICCIT Report

Action	Person(s) Responsible	Date Due	Outcome
Submit any requests for additional data to report editor such as "Number of children who continue needing services at age 3." Report editor contacts state office to request data.	Karen Hartz	9/08/09 (data requested) 9/17/09 (data received)	
Send draft Report to Tameka Davis.	Karen Hartz	9/18/09	
Print draft Report for Council Members' meeting handouts.	Tameka Davis	09/18/09	
Present draft Report to full Council.	Committee Chair	09/22/09	
Create distribution plan for annual report.	Committee Members	9/22/09	
Receive bids for printing and submit purchase order for printing.	State Office of Early Steps	10/09	
Send final draft Report to Tameka Davis to send to Council members for comments and editing.	Karen Hartz	11/09/09	
Send final draft Report to Council members for comments and editing.	Tameka Davis	11/09/09	
Comment and edit final draft Report.	Council Members	11/23/09	
Send e-mail to Council members to vote via e-mail for final approval of Report.	Tameka Davis	12/7/09	
Vote via e-mail on approval of Report.	Council Members	12/7/09	
Send final version to state office.	Karen Hartz	12/11/09	
Ensure contact information is updated prior to printing.	State Office	12/14/09	
Send report to printer.	State Office	12/14/09	
Distribute final report to Council at January meeting.	State Office	January 2010 Meeting	
Distribute report to legislators and others.	Committee Members	2/4/10	
Publish report on FICCIT website.	State Office	1/10	

"Conversations with Families"

Action	Person(s) responsible	Date Due	Outcome
Contact and submit call for proposal for two "Conversations with Families" sessions at the 2010 Family Café. Find information on securing an exhibition booth.	Sharon Paul	09/22/09	
Contact local Early Steps offices near meeting sites in addition to LES in the city where the meeting is being held to set up "Conversations with Families" for future meetings.	Committee Members	09/22/09	
Look at other options for hosting "Conversations with Families", such as Early Head Start sites, homeless services sites, etc.	Committee Members	09/22/09	
Analyze information gathered from "Conversations with Families" and make recommendations for collaborations with other agencies to close gaps in services and highlight best practices and benchmarks.	Committee Members	09/22/09	
Research work of other state entities and coordinate with other state agencies to develop a Continuum of Care	Committee Members	09/22/09	

“Conversations with Families”			
Action	Person(s) responsible	Date Due	Outcome
timeline document for services from ages 0-5 to share with parents.			
Recommend that the PDAT group collaborate with Early Head Start providers to train Early Head Start staff as Infant and Toddlers Developmental Specialists.	Lorraine Allen	06/24/09	

FICCIT Palm Cards			
Action	Person(s) responsible	Date Due	Outcome
Distribute remaining 2009 FICCIT palm cards. Ask Jane Wills about how many have been printed.	Committee Members	09/22/09	
Update FICCIT palm card for 2010.	Committee Members	09/22/09	

**Department of Education (DOE)
Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services (BEES)**

**Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers (FICCIT)
Tallahassee, Florida**

June 23-24, 2009

1. BEES Update

The Bureau's Program Development and Services section has advertised a Program Specialist IV position to focus on the provision of technical assistance for programs serving students with autism spectrum disorders and physical impairments, including orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, and traumatic brain injury. For more information, please contact Joyce Lubbers at joyce.lubbers@fldoe.org or by phone at (850) 245-0478 or Cathy Bishop at cathy.bishop@fldoe.org or by phone at (850) 245-0478.

2. Smart Options: Investing the Recovery Funds For Student Success

In the coming months, funds provided under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the fiscal year 2009 appropriations bill will provide an unprecedented amount of funding – more than \$4.5 billion – to states and school districts to provide extra assistance to schools that have failed to meet achievement targets under the No Child Left Behind Act. To learn more about ARRA, please visit the following Web site:
<http://www.gatesfoundation.org/united-states/Documents/investing-the-recovery-funds-for-student-success.pdf>.

3. Education Department: American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 – Overview of the Recovery Act

The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has posted new ARRA guidance at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/index.html>. Information regarding the new ARRA-Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may be found at <http://www.fldoe.org/ARRA/arra-idea.asp>. The IDEA Part B Federal Guidelines and the Guidance Modifications documents specifically address the Local Educational Agency (LEA) determination issue. For your convenience, the link can also be accessed from the BEES homepage at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/>.

4. A Legislative History of Florida's Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Program, Revised 2009

This updated document (ESE 312980) provides a historical overview of Florida's ESE program from 1874 to 2009. It is available on the BEES Web

site at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/ese-home.asp>. For additional information, please contact the Clearinghouse Information Center at cicbiscs@fldoe.org or by phone at (850) 245-0477.

5. 2009 LEA Profiles

The 2009 LEA Profiles including the State Education Agency (SEA) Profile are now available on the BEESS Web site at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/datapage.asp>. For additional information, please contact Marie LaCap at marie.lacap@fldoe.org or by phone at (850) 245-0475.

6. *A Resource Manual for the Development and Evaluation of Special Programs, Volume I-B: Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules – Excerpts for Special Programs, Revised 2009*

The Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services is pleased to announce that *A Resource Manual for the Development and Evaluation of Special Programs, Volume I-B: Florida Statutes and State Board of Education Rules – Excerpts for Special Programs, Revised 2009* is now available online at <http://www.fldoe.org/ese/pdf/1b-stats.pdf>. On January 21, 2009, the State Board of Education adopted Rule 6A-6.03018, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), Exceptional Student Education Eligibility for Students with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). This rule became effective on March 23, 2009; however, since the rule was unavailable when this edition went to print, a copy of the rule appears in the Appendix on page 321. Additional copies of this publication may be obtained from the Clearinghouse Information Center, Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services, Florida Department of Education, Turlington Building, Room 628, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400; by phone at (850) 245-0477; by Fax at (850) 245-0987; or by email at cicbiscs@fldoe.org.

7. State Efforts to Meet the Early Childhood Transition Requirements of IDEA

The purpose of this in-brief analysis document, located on the Web site at <http://projectforum.org/docs/StateEffortstoMeettheECTransitionRequirementsofIDEAfinal.pdf>, is twofold. The first purpose is to summarize the recommendations included in the national transition initiative's document that was created as a resource for improving state and local performance on State Performance Plans related to early childhood transition. The second purpose is to highlight some of the policies and practices adopted by six states including Florida that were undertaken to meet the early childhood transition requirement. Common themes and concluding remarks are provided.

8. **Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) Teacher Toolkit: Language and Vocabulary Folder**

The Department of Education is pleased to announce the availability of the VPK Teacher Toolkit: Language and Vocabulary Folder. This new online resource is available free to all VPK teachers, assistants, and directors and is designed to support early learning in the VPK classroom. The information in the language and vocabulary folder, the first of five folders, aligns with the Florida VPK Education Standards and provides guidance that connects instructional needs with professional development. The memorandum and flyer introducing this resource is available on the Web site at <http://info.fldoe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Document-5368/dps-2009-069.pdf>. Please visit the VPK Toolkit at <http://www.flvpkonline.org/teachertoolkit> and follow the steps to visit the Language and Vocabulary Folder. For additional information, please contact Shan Goff, Office of Early Learning, at Shan.Goff@fldoe.org or by phone at (850) 245-0445.

9. ***First Steps: A Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities***

The revised edition of one of the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council's most popular publications, *First Steps: A Guide for Parents of Children with Disabilities*, is now available in English and Spanish. The revised edition of this guide covers such topics as acceptance, services, and the rights of people with disabilities. You can download copies of this guide from the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council's Web site at www.fddc.org in the resources section, or you can order copies by contacting the Council at fddc@fddc.org or by phone at (850) 488-4180 or toll free at (800) 580-7801.

10. **2009 Summer Conference - One Goal: Building the Future Together, "Putting Families and Children First"**

The 23rd One Goal Summer Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency in Tampa, Florida on July 22-24, 2009. The conference will feature more than 90 workshops, informative keynote presentations, exhibits, and fun activities. The eight-page conference brochure and registration form are available on the conference Web site at www.onegoalsummerconference.org. In addition, the brochure includes information related to hotel, keynote speakers, special activities, and general conference information. Conference registration and hotel reservations may be completed online. **The registration fee of \$45 will be accepted through July 16, 2009.** Beginning July 17, 2009, the registration fee of \$75 will be accepted onsite. For additional information, please contact Frankie Allen, Conference Coordinator, at frankieallen_2000@yahoo.com or by phone at (850) 893-6270 or Carole West at carole.west@fldoe.org or by phone at (850) 245-0478.

11. **The Florida Council for Exceptional Children (FCEC) Registration 2009**

The FCEC is pleased to announce that registration information is now available for the FCEC conference to be held October 8-10, 2009 at the Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort at Ocean Walk Village. Pre-registration forms, postmarked by **September 15, 2009**, will receive the pre-registration rate. This conference is always a great opportunity to share expertise and learn from others. The opening evening session will feature Bambi Lockman, Chief, BEESS, as the keynote speaker. The topic of her presentation is the **“Hot-off-the Press”** latest news of actions and events at Florida DOE with ESE. Please feel free to share this information with other colleagues and stakeholders. The cut-off date for a hotel reservation at the discounted room rate is September 17, 2009. For additional information, please visit the Web site at www.floridacec.org/8daytona.htm or contact Paula Evans, FCEC Program Chair, at cec.paula@gmail.com.

12. **Division for Early Childhood (DEC) International Conference on Young Children with Special Needs & Their Families**

The DEC invites you to celebrate their 25th conference anniversary in Albuquerque, New Mexico on October 15-18, 2009. The entire conference program is available in an easy-to-use interactive format. You can search session by presenter name, topic and keywords or personalize your conference by choosing the mix of session, workshops and roundtables that you want. Please start by using [DEC's Interactive Conference Program](#) now. In addition, you can also view the [Conference at a Glance](#) or download a copy of the [Conference Preliminary Program](#). DEC members and early birds can take advantage of the best conference and workshop registration rates. Plus, those who register before August 1, will automatically be entered to *win a hot air balloon ride*, courtesy of DEC, Albuquerque and Rainbow Ryders. For airport information, hotel links, registration, and lots of other great information to help in the planning for your trip to the 'Ballooning Capital of the World', please visit the Web site at http://www.dec-sped.org/index.aspx/Conference/Travel_and_Fun.

**Department of Education (DOE)
Bureau of Student Assistance
Homeless Education Program**

**Florida Interagency Coordinating Council for Infants and Toddlers (FICCIT)
Tallahassee, Florida Department of Education
June 23-24, 2009**

1. CS/HB 597, Engrossed 2 – An Act Relating to Homelessness was sent to the Governor's office for signature. The effects of the bill on education are:
 - o Changes to state law by amending definition for homeless children and you to be more closely aligned with McKinney-Vent definition. The differences between the two are that the new bill adds "travel" before "trailers" and omits "substandard housing."
 - o Addition of the Commissioner of Education or his designee as a member of the Council for Homelessness.

The bill creates Housing First and encourages Continuums of Care to adopt Housing First as an approach to homelessness. Housing First provides housing assistance, case management, and support services responsive to individual or family needs. It also creates Section 420.628, Florida Statutes, relating to foster care. It encourages the Department of Children and Families, its agents, and community-based care providers to develop and implement procedures designed to reduce the number of young adults who become homeless after leaving the welfare system.

Below is the link to the bill:

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov/Sections/Documents/loaddoc.aspx?FileName= h0597er.xml&DocumentType=Bill&BillNumber=0597&Session=2009>

2. The DOE will receive over \$3.1 million of American Recovery and Reinvestment funds to award to 68 local educational agencies to use to facilitate the identification, enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth.
3. The DOE will help sponsor a homeless education track at the Florida Supportive Housing Coalition and the Florida Coalition for the Homeless host the 3rd Annual Statewide Conference, Changing Times: Creative Vision for Housing and Services. The conference will be held October 26-27, 2009, at the Hilton Clearwater Beach, Florida. The registration cost for members is \$250 for members and \$375 for non-members of the coalitions.

Below is the link to the conference information:

<http://conference.flshc.net/>

Department of Children and Families
FICCIT Report
June 23 -24, 2009

Children's Mental Health

Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation in Child Care/Centers

- Children's mental health will post a Request for Information related to early childhood mental health consultation in child care settings. The scope of the project will include a statewide survey of current early mental health consultation models, funding sources, outcome measures, assessment tools used and other items specific to effective implementation.
- In addition, a white paper and a summit with key early childhood staff are anticipated to identify effective practice models and funding streams to support mental health consultation in child care settings.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) System of Care Annual Conference

- Laurie Blades, Chief of Children's Mental Health will attend the annual SAMHSA System of Care meeting in Anaheim, California during the last week in July. This annual meeting brings together the SMHSA system of care grant sites from around the country to provide technical assistance and facilitate the sharing of best and effective practices in the area of children's mental health.
- Sarasota Florida has a system of care grant that focuses on integrating early childhood mental health into the early childhood system of care.
- During the annual meeting, grant sites focusing on early childhood mental health come together to share effective practices and discuss the progress and barriers experienced in implementing their grant.

Child Care Program Office (regulation)

- One July 6th, the Child Care Program Office will be releasing two on-line training courses for child care providers. One course is specific to school-age programs regarding quality standards for afterschool programs. The second course of significance to providers of all age groups is entitled, Fire Safety and Emergency Preparedness. This course has been developed to provide child care professionals with information and best practices about fire safety and emergency preparedness to ensure the safety of children in their care at all times. The course includes how to plan, prepare and respond to a variety of emergencies and disasters and will be used for in-service as well as corrective action.
- On June 22nd and 25th, the Child Care Program will host public hearings on rules 65C-20, Family Day Care Home Standards and Large Family Child Care Homes, and 65C-22, Child Care Facilities. Some of the proposed changes will include fire and emergency preparedness requirements to correspond with the new training, stronger progressive enforcement requirements for Gold Seal providers, as well as health issues related to sanitizing/disinfecting, napping/sleeping and medicine storage. It is anticipated the rule will be finalized in the fall.

Statewide Dependency Summit

- This annual conference is designed for Advocates - Attorneys - Child Investigation Professionals - Child Protection Professionals and Stakeholders from the local judicial circuits - Community Based Care Providers - Guardians Ad Litem - Judges, Juvenile Justice Professionals - Law Enforcement Professionals - Mental Health and Medical Child Welfare Providers - as well as any other affiliated parties.
- Dates are August 26th through the 28th in Orlando. Summit and registration information can be obtained at the Department of Children and Families web site.



Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning Comprehensive Systems Developments

The Agency for Workforce Innovation's Office of Early Learning (OEL) works to ensure that Florida's children have quality early learning opportunities so that they can reach their full potential and so that families can fully participate in our workforce. OEL provides state-level oversight and direction to 31 early learning coalitions for the administration of early learning programs and support services in local communities including the Child Care Resource and Referral program, the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) program, and the School Readiness child care subsidy program.

Under the leadership of Director Cynthia Lorenzo, the Agency is dedicated to continually enriching the early learning system to support Florida's children, families, providers, early learning coalitions, and other partners. As part of this commitment, the Agency is engaged in three comprehensive system development projects.

EARLY LEARNING INFORMATION SYSTEM (ELIS)

During the 2009 Legislative Session the Agency secured the funding necessary to begin the development of the Early Learning Information System (ELIS) to implement a centralized system for providing critical information to early learning parents, partners, and providers. ELIS will be an improved technology system that will provide enhanced services to children and families and replace an outdated seventeen-year-old decentralized technology system. Implementation of the ELIS system will result in a \$28 million annual cost savings that could be used to fund 7,000 more children every year in the School Readiness program.

Benefits of ELIS Include:

- Streamlining administrative processes including attendance tracking, eligibility processing, and provider payments;
- Reducing potential fraud and overpayments;
- Tracking child outcomes;
- Creating data sharing capabilities between educators, parents, providers and state agencies; and
- Providing parents with easy on-line access to child care resource and referral information along with a wealth of child development and early education information.

AMERICAN RECOVERY AND REINVESTMENT ACT OF 2009 (ARRA)

As part of the Recovery Act the Agency received \$105 million dollars under the Child Care and Development Fund for the School Readiness program. The Agency will distribute \$80

million of the Recovery Act funds to the Early Learning Coalitions and Redland Christian Migrant Association to maintain or create an estimated 20,000 slots for children of low-income families. The federal government has targeted \$13.5 million of these funds to support Quality Initiatives.

The Agency will use Recovery Act Quality funds to fund infrastructure activities that include:

- Identifying and implementing a single statewide child assessment so that the state may begin to analyze a child's short-term and long-term developmental and academic growth, help calculate the states return on investment, and inform local and statewide policy decisions;
- Planning and deploying statewide program assessment supports to allow for statewide comparisons and analysis of needs as well as identify areas where providers may need on-going training and technical assistance; and
- Creating and providing a comprehensive professional development system that will ensure that high quality professional development opportunities are available to the early childhood workforce.

QUALITY INITIATIVE

Beginning July 1, 2009, the Agency for Workforce Innovation will directly administer the statewide Quality Initiative, renewing a commitment to quality early learning environments for all children. Florida's Quality Initiative is dedicated to ensuring the quality of early learning services for Florida's children and families. The Agency is focused on developing strategies that will build and sustain a strong statewide system.

Quality Initiative projects include:

- **FLORIDA'S BIRTH TO FIVE LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS**
To support the implementation of the newly revised comprehensive early learning standards, the Agency will develop and implement training opportunities and online resources. The standards are a developmental continuum for children from birth to five years old across five domains: physical health, approaches to learning, social-emotional development, language and communication, and cognitive development and general knowledge. The standards support positive interactions between adults and children through examples of observations and expectations, environmental considerations, and other information that will be helpful when using the standards in the classroom or in the home.
- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**
Dedicated to enriching opportunities for the early learning workforce, this initiative continues to lead the development of the Florida Core Competencies for Early Care and Education Practitioners, which are knowledge and skill standards that define what early care and education teachers should know and be able to do. This project also includes the development of a career lattice and both formal and informal pathways to higher education for Florida's early childhood teachers. **The Agency invites input on the draft version of the competencies at www.flready.com**

➤ **INCLUSION/WARM LINE NETWORK**

Early learning coalition inclusion specialists continue to support providers through their training and technical assistance regarding the disability and special health care needs of children in early learning programs. Inclusion specialists partner with local agencies to assist families with the referral process, and share strategies with teachers to effectively include children with disabilities in their programs.

➤ **INFANT/TODDLER SPECIALISTS NETWORK**

Designed to support infant and toddler specialists housed within early learning coalitions, this professional network will continue to deliver training and opportunities for a collaborative exchange of ideas related to improving the quality of infant/toddler care in Florida. Training, technical assistance, and resources will be geared toward coalition and contracted service provider staff, addressing and meeting the needs of trainers and caregivers, and connecting the core competencies to the work of infant/toddler teachers and trainers.

➤ **FAMILY SUPPORT CREDENTIAL**

This credential will give family service specialists, teachers and administrators the training they need to identify a family in crisis, understand family and child development and be able to navigate systems to help Florida's families who are on the path to economic self-sufficiency.

➤ **RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

Continuing the commitment to support the local delivery of early learning services, the Agency has created an on-line bulletin that translates cutting edge research into user-friendly, applicable support materials that enable effective communication with stakeholders and policymakers. The Agency will also provide results-based training and technical assistance to early learning coalitions and service providers.

Agency for Workforce Innovation / Office of Early Learning
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