

PERMANENT LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION ON CHILD CARE IN RI  
MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 10, 2010

Senator Elizabeth Crowley

Kathie Sandberg

Heidi Collins

Blythe Burger

Michele Palermo

Charlotte Boudreau

Laura Mason Zeisler

Paul Harden

Joseph Morra

Maryann Finamore

Pam Hall

Tracy Cheney

Khadija Lewis Khan

Ray Choiniere

Kim Maine

Alex Arnold

Leanne Barrett

At a regular meeting of the Legislative Committee on Child Care in Rhode Island was held in the State House, Room 313, on Monday, May 10, 2010 at 2:30 p.m. Senator Crowley informed the commission that Representative Diaz was in Washington on Child Care business and is unable to be here today. The Co-Chair, Senator Elizabeth Crowley, asked the commission to read the previous meeting's minutes and requested a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. Blythe will send Roberta the information that should be included in the minutes from the Department of Health and comments made by

Mike Burk that should also be included in the minutes. After three amendments to the April 12, 2010 minutes, the motion to accept the minutes was approved.

Co-chair Crowley called for new business to be discussed by the committee. Michele Palermo of the Rhode Island Department of Education reported that the legislation they developed for funding formula that the Department of Education developed was submitted by Representative Constantino. She stated that Representative Diaz should have a copy. Discussion regarding the piece of legislation between the Co-chair and Michele Palermo continued, where the importance of early childhood interventions and its funding was conferred. Palermo also reported the bill's pre-kindergarten funding inclusion. There is some funding for early childhood in it. Early intervention is important. It does include Pre-K funding. Following the report, Co-chair Crowley asked for additional new business items for discussion. There was no response and the commission was directed to bring attention to old business.

After opening the floor for old business, a question arose regarding the supplemental and/or final budget statuses, since the proposed temporary 5 percent rate cut for child care providers was not included in the proposal by the House Finance Committee. Co-chair Crowley clarified that the Senate sent the budget back to the House for budget revisions and their progress has not been disclosed. She expressed her concern for the non-approved budget, noting that there is a \$400 million deficit in the new budget, where entitlements will be identified and considered to remain or be removed from the budget. Leanne Barrett stated that there was a three-month time period, where the rate cut would continue into Fiscal Year 2011, there was a little bit of money, proposed to be saved by the Governor in FY11 and some in FY10. It wasn't clear. She noted that the commission should advocate funding for child care to deliver the services to constituents without compromising quality of life. Co-chair Crowley emphasized the need for child care service advocacy, since it contributes to the workforce directly and indirectly. Funding keeps people working.

Blythe Berger from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDH) reported updates on health care services provided to infants. In her report, she provided the commission with progress since April, which included data collection utilizing the data collected by RIDH for a future service model creation. Initially, the data was broken down by number of centers serving infants. In a partnership with Department of Children, Youth, and Families, the department has been able to subcategorize the capacity of centers serving infants, as well as the capacity of centers not serving infants. In addition, there have been categories such as up to 20, 20-35, 35-50, and 50 or more kids (which most centers fall into 50 and up) added to the data. A fee schedule will be provided and if addition demographic data is required, the department will assess and provide these needs.

She also informed the committee that one of their members is using the national training core elements to make it adaptable and easy-to-understand by any person that is supposed to complete the two-week training. Bradley is creating a pre- and post-test to assess increased knowledge and program evaluation. DCYF will be the regulatory authority regarding this venture. Reporting requirements, as well as quality assurance

elements are being considered. Presentations to different child service agencies are ideal to assist with professional development implementation and core elements identification for the curriculum.

Three-day training session in October is being planned but feedback is requested from the entire commission. Is that a good time of year? Blythe would like some feedback about the training being in October and asked that members contact her.

Although information was provided regarding the Child Care Consultation service (available from 12 p.m. to 1 p.m.), they received no phone calls from agencies affiliated with the commission. Leanne offered to have this resource on Kids Count eNews and other internet- and paper-based marketing sources. It was presented at their last meeting of Family Child Care Homes of RI and they are going to put it in their newsletter. The commission asked if they can leave a message and will the call be returned? Blythe wasn't sure. It does not provide Spanish interpreters at this point. The concern from the commission is the time in which the service is provided. One possible solution is to provide the consulting service during nap time to alleviate periods where child care providers are busy. As a result, a time change to 1 p.m. to 2 p.m. is being considered for possible implementation in the future, provided that information has not been disseminated to a broad audience.

Blythe asserted that there have been several marketing methods favored; however, due to lack of funding and resources, they have not come into fruition. Laura expressed concern about the lack of resources by Hispanic child care providers, as a significant percentage of the demographic does not have computer access. Blythe requested information from the commission regarding appropriate methods in which this information could be provided to the Hispanic child care providers taking into account language and resource barriers. What is the best way to reach Spanish speaking providers, mailings, flyers, word of mouth? What is the best way to reach them? Laura will go back and ask. Another suggestion was to send out post cards or flyers that identified available services to child care providers and families approved to utilize these services. This marketing tactic could be passed out by bilingual workers during visits in several communities. There is a cost to this, but they would get the information. It was suggested that Blythe send the information to Roberta and she could send it to the members who in turn could send it to others. Blythe suggested utilizing this service gradually and disseminating information internally.

There are health care policy plans for child care that is going to be utilized throughout the state (that abide by the national standard) and a template is available to be tailored by respective centers.

Co-chair Crowley requested to move to the next topic on the agenda: reports from agencies.

Joseph Morra of the Rhode Island Afterschool Plus Alliance reported that the Summer Learning Taskforce Program will be submitting a bill that is chaired by Representative Pacheco and Senator DeVall. This bill will provide funding for a high-quality summer learning program for Rhode Island youths. They are writing a report as a result of Bill 5967, which was passed last October. National Summer Learning Association is helping write that report. The Bill is being submitted in the 2010

legislative session. Hands on, curriculum based. Brings students back on target. One consideration from Leanne was that it includes children that are transitioning from pre-kindergarten programs to kindergarten schooling, which could provide additional funding for the program.

Leanne Barrett of Rhode Island Kids Count reported that there was an event in April to release the Rhode Island's 2009 Child Care Center and Preschool Quality Study, which was well received and publicized. A hard copy of the report will be mailed to all commission members and it is available online at

<http://www.rikidscount.org/matriarch/documents/RI%20Quality%20Report.pdf>.

Recommendations to ensure that reimbursement rates for providers to serve low-income children are adequate to enable them to provide quality services. Laura posed the question regarding whether or not there was data that investigated the relationship between the money we're receiving from families, the outgo, and the level of quality. Leanne Barrett did not have data that detailed this relationship but did assert that the research primarily focused on the quality portion of the aforementioned relationship. Future research may be conducted regarding cost of quality.

Another question arose from Senator Crowley regarding a listing of child care facilities in order of quality of care. There is a list of 45 voluntary participating facilities and some of them are accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). Nationally, this standard is being paved to provide parents with the necessary tools to make informed decisions regarding child care. This is available on BrightStars web site. Accreditation is more than just paying a fee but rather a series of standards that must be met and evaluated by this national organization. According to the commission, the quality of Rhode Island's child care programs is in good standing in comparison to other states. The rate of child care is standardized, however, despite quality. Co-chair Crowley was concerned with the quality of care being compromised by funding availability. For example, if a person is not financially robust and is unable to afford an accredited facility, would they automatically be subjected to substandard care, as a result? Leanne clarified those policies regarding subsidy eligibility and rate structures are key to ensuring quality and access to quality. Right now, everyone gets the same rate.

A member congratulated the Rhode Island AEYC for a successful conference that hosted over 400 participants that included workshops and professional development sessions. Laura stated that Representative Grace Diaz received a Special Friend of Children Award at the event.

A question arose regarding the school funding formula. There are several versions of this formula (one by Representative Ajello and the other by Senator Gallo) but the bill that includes the strongest case for the Early Childhood Education initiative is chaired by Representative Constantino. There will be a coalition call by the group Rhode Island is Ready to advocate the bill. A hearing has not been posted. The bill chaired by Representative Constantino includes a 10-year phase and has the support of Rhode Island Department of Education and its commissioner. Co-chair Crowley provided guidance for commission members regarding the outcomes of funding for respective district,

encouraging everyone to be proactive in communicating with their representatives and senators to vocalize the importance of child care.

Following this discussion, a commission member motioned to adjourn, the motion was seconded and Co-chair Crowley adjourned the meeting, noting the next meeting would occur on Monday, June 14, 2010 at the State House in Room 313.