



Iowa General Assembly

2007 Committee Briefings

Legislative Services Agency – Legal Services Division

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EARLY CARE BEST PRACTICES STUDY COMMITTEE

Meeting Dates: [October 31, 2007](#) [November 26, 2007](#)

Purpose. *This compilation of briefings on legislative interim committee meetings and other meetings and topics of interest to the Iowa General Assembly, written by the Legal Services Division staff of the nonpartisan Legislative Services Agency, describes committee activities or topics. The briefings were originally distributed in the Iowa Legislative Interim Calendar and Briefing. Official minutes, reports, and other detailed information concerning the committee or topic addressed by a briefing can be obtained from the committee's Internet page listed above, from the Iowa General Assembly's Internet page at <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/>, or from the agency connected with the meeting or topic described.*

EARLY CARE BEST PRACTICES STUDY COMMITTEE

November 26, 2007

Co-chairperson: Senator Becky Schmitz

Co-chairperson: Representative Cindy Winckler

Overview. The Committee received testimony from national experts provided through the auspices of the National Conference of State Legislatures, and from area education agency staff, Department of Education staff, and Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County staff.

National Trends in Family Support. Dr. Deborah Daro, Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago, discussed national trends in family support programs to nurture children and strengthen families. In the past 30 years the focus has shifted from building public awareness to emphasizing supportive communities and integrated systems. Quality programs depend on effective interventions, effective staffing plans with low caseloads, and effective organizations. Desirable characteristics include building up programs in stages, having integrated data systems that widely share information, and having local services where the providers "own" the product. Evidence-based decision making should be utilized.

Area Education Agency (AEA) Staff. Mr. Wayne Haddy, AEA Government Relations Specialist, discussed the responses he received from a survey commissioned to provide follow-up information to Committee members after the October meeting. According to Mr. Haddy, the information indicates that mandated federal programs, particularly those associated with special education, have the most consistent availability due to the consistent funding source and necessity of complying with federal requirements. Other programs may or may not be offered around the state, depending upon whether there is funding available.

Department of Education (DE). Ms. Penny Milburn, Early Childhood Consultant, DE, discussed five family support programs receiving funding through DE: Shared Visions Family Support Grants targeting low-income families with children ages 0-5; Even Start Family Literacy Program, targeting low-income families with children ages 0-8; Head Start (18 programs) and Early Head Start (13 programs), targeting low-income families with children ages 0-5 and pregnant women; and Early ACCESS, targeting infants and toddlers with special conditions or developmental delays.

Even Start Program. Ms. Sue Freeman and Ms. Ladiester LeMaster, Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County, described the Even Start Program as it is used with Hispanic and African-American families. The program is integrated with other programs operated by the centers to assist low-income families.

National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). Ms. Steffanie Clothier, Program Director, NCSL Children and Families, discussed the implementation of family support programs among the states. She noted that many states are dealing with the challenges of operating multiple programs with state and local roles and shared authority, multiple funding sources, data needs, and expanding based upon effectiveness. She described methods used by various states to focus services, such as providing for a universal home visit followed by targeted services.

Next Meeting. The co-chairpersons proposed holding a meeting in January to discuss what has been learned and possible recommendations.

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EARLY CARE BEST PRACTICES STUDY COMMITTEE

October 31, 2007

Co-chairperson: Senator Becky Schmitz

Co-chairperson: Representative Cindy Winckler

Overview. The Committee heard testimony from state and local staff describing family support and parent education programs, services, and financing.

Early Childhood Iowa. Ms. Ruth Krueger, Mid-Iowa Community Action (MICA), and Ms. Gretchen Hageman, Department of Public Health (DPH), described the Early Childhood Iowa Initiative and its strategic plan. The initiative is an alliance of stakeholders in early care, health, and education that affect children ages 0-5. Staffing is provided through DPH. The initiative has an annually updated strategic plan involving six stakeholder groups. Discussion focused on the recently adopted leadership agenda and the Quality Services and Programs Stakeholder Group. The group has developed many written products to support evidence-based practices.

Family Support Coordinator. Ms. Janet Gartin, Family Support Coordinator, Office of Community Empowerment, Department of Management, provided an update on efforts so far with this recently created position. She noted that the community empowerment initiative began with a high degree of local control and many programs were developed without research-based information. Her position is intended to improve the quality and consistency of programming. Currently, it is estimated that out of the 227,062 children in the state ages 0-5, 13 percent, or 29,756, are involved in various publicly funded family support programs. The office is pilot testing and will soon make generally available the Iowa Family Support Credential, initially targeting programs without another sort of credential. She provided an overview of the major types of family support programs that were covered during the panel presentation held in the afternoon.

Fiscal Information. State Empowerment Facilitator Shanell Wagler, and LSA Fiscal Services Division staff Ms. Lisa Burk and Ms. Robin Madison, discussed a spreadsheet describing federal, state, and county or other local funding for family support and parent education programs. The spreadsheet identifies the department or local government involved, service or program, numbers and ages served, program location, and funding sources involved for FY 2005-2006 and FY 2006-2007. Ms. Madison provided additional information concerning the new funding appropriated through the community empowerment initiative for early childhood programs for FY 2006-2007, FY 2007-2008, and FY 2008-2009.

Major Family Support Programs Panel. Ms. Gartin moderated a panel which included the following:

- Family Development and Self-Sufficiency (FaDSS) Grant Program. Ms. Danielle Leaser, Four Oaks, explained that her program covers Dubuque, Delaware, Jones, Washington, Johnson, Linn, Benton, and Iowa Counties. The program is statewide and targets parents involved in the Family Investment Program who are at the greatest risk of long-term dependency on public welfare.
- Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program. Ms. Betsy Moritz, Prairie Lakes Area Education Agency (AEA) located in north-central Iowa, described how the program operates. The PAT model is a national model used in many programs in the state. The program begins at birth and continues until a child enters kindergarten using home visiting by certified parent educators, group meetings, and includes developmental health, vision, and hearing screenings.
- Healthy Opportunities for Parents to Experience Success - Healthy Families Iowa (HOPES-HFI). Ms. Mary Odell (Muscatine), Lutheran Services in Iowa (offered by LSI in nine counties), described how this program operates targeting at-risk, low-income families with a nationally tested home visiting model with high quality standards.
- Early ACCESS—Special Needs Children. Ms. Cheryl Jones, Child Health Specialty Clinics, Ottumwa, described Early ACCESS as a system of care approach applying all available programs and services to families with young, special needs children. AEA service areas are used for service delivery engaging many agencies.
- Local Community Empowerment Coordinator—HOPES-like Program. Ms. Cindy Duhrkopf, Audubon, Carroll, Greene, and Guthrie Counties, explained how this program differs from the HOPES model for cost reasons and because the program is used with higher income levels in order to prevent stigma from attaching to the families involved in rural areas.
- Prevent Child Abuse Iowa—Parent Education in a Group Setting. Ms. Brenda Ristvedt, Volunteer Cooperative in Buchanan County, described how the Nurturing Parenting Program has been integrated into programming using home visits and group sessions with parents. The program is research-based and is recognized by national substance abuse, mental health, and child welfare organizations as an effective approach to address prevention of child abuse

and neglect.

- **Early Head Start Program.** Ms. Kim Young-Kent, Tri-county Child and Family Services serving Black Hawk, Buchanan, and Grundy Counties, focused on the Early Head Start Program by providing national and local outcome information. She emphasized the importance of local collaboration to ensure that families are served by the program and discussed the grant writing and multiple-funded sources secured to provide necessary services.

Iowa Public Television (IPT). Mr. Dan Miller, Executive Director and General Manager, IPT, described the Ready to Learn Program, an early literacy effort providing eight sessions over the course of a year at the local level for parents and children and for providers of care and children. The program seeks to increase regular reading and discussion of books and involves many partner organizations, volunteers, and coordination with IPT programming. An appropriation of \$100,000 was provided for FY 2007-2008.

Loess Hills AEA. Ms. Valerie Jensen, Associate Director, Loess Hills AEA, described the Fathers and Mothers Improving the Lives of Young (FAMILY) Children Program, which has been operating with no charge to families since the early 1990s in the Council Bluffs/Pottawattamie County area. The program combines home visiting, nutrition, screening, group meetings, and provision of resources to parents.

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