



FINAL REPORT

Early Care Best Practices Study Committee

January 2008

MEMBERS

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Senator Nancy J. Boettger
Senator Robert E. Dvorsky
Senator Dave Mulder
Senator Amanda Ragan

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AUTHORIZATION AND APPOINTMENT

The Early Care Best Practices Study Committee was created by the Legislative Council for the 2007 Legislative Interim and charged to review best practices for Iowa's early care system of programs, services, support, or other assistance made available to a parent or other person who is involved with addressing the health and education needs of a child from birth through age five.

The Committee was initially authorized for two meeting days and requested and received approval to hold a third meeting. The meetings were held on October 31, 2007, November 26, 2007, and January 14, 2008.



Early Care Best Practices Study Committee

I. October 31, 2007, Meeting

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 from birth to age five. 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.

Fiscal Information. State Empowerment Facilitator Shanell Wagler and Legislative Services Agency, 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.

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 from birth to age five, 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.

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 overall 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 and 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. Cheryll 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. The 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 to 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.



Early Care Best Practices Study Committee

II. November 26, 2007, Meeting

Overview. The Committee received testimony from national experts provided through the auspices of the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and from AEA staff, Department of Education (DE) 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 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. 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 birth to age five; Even Start Family Literacy Program, targeting low-income families with children birth to age eight; Head Start (18 programs) and Early Head Start (13 programs), targeting low-income families with children ages birth to age five 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. 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.

III. January 14, 2008, Meeting

Overview. Committee members met to discuss the testimony heard during the previous two meetings and reviewed draft recommendations to the General Assembly. Many positive



comments were made concerning the high quality of the presentations made by the early care program representatives who testified and the information provided by Dr. Daro of the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago and Ms. Clothier of NCSL.

Recommendations. Co-chairpersons Schmitz and Winckler distributed draft recommendations which were discussed and amended. The recommendations were unanimously approved.

IV. Recommendations

Recommendations to the General Assembly approved on January 14, 2008:

1. The Joint Appropriations Subcommittees on Education and Health and Human Services should support the work of the Community Empowerment Office to accredit programs that make home visits to families with newborns and other family support programs using research and evidence-based practices.
2. The Community Empowerment Office, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Public Health, Early Childhood Iowa, and other interested parties shall collaborate to provide recommendations to the Governor and General Assembly for developing and implementing a data system that can be used with all early care programs receiving public funding.
3. The Community Empowerment Office, Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Public Health, Early Childhood Iowa, and other interested parties shall collaborate to provide a recommendation for implementing a common application form for families applying to participate in publicly funded early care programs and services.
4. The Community Empowerment Office, Department of Public Health, Iowa Hospital Association, and other interested parties should be requested to provide a proposal to the Joint Appropriations Subcommittees on Education and Health and Human Services for implementation of a system in which Iowa hospitals secure permission from parents for making a referral for a newborn home visit and for a state office to serve as the clearinghouse for making the referral to a local program in the area where the parents reside.
5. In order to ensure consistent availability of early care programs and services statewide, the state should identify sustainable, regular funding sources to support early care programs and services.

V. Materials Filed With the Early Care Best Practices Study Committee and on File With the Legislative Services Agency

The following materials were distributed to members of the Committee and are filed with the Legislative Services Agency. The materials may be accessed from the <Additional Information> link on the Committee's Internet web page:



Early Care Best Practices Study Committee

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us/aspx/Committees/Committee.aspx?id=215>.

October 31, 2007, Meeting Materials

1. Committee Rules of Procedure.
2. Background Information Memorandum — Mr. Pollak, LSA.
3. Definition for Family Support, Early Childhood Iowa, 2/4/05.
4. Effective Family Support Programs: Issue Brief #5 from Early Childhood Iowa (2/14/2007).
5. Early Childhood Iowa Presentation Slides — Ms. Krueger and Ms. Hageman.
6. Early Childhood Iowa Leadership Agenda.
7. Early Childhood Iowa Organizational Overview.
8. Ms. Gartin, Family Support Coordinator, Presentation Slides.
9. Ms. Gartin, Family Support Coordinator, Summary of Family Support Standards.
10. Ms. Gartin, Family Support Coordinator, Number of Children Served Age 0-5 Chart.
11. Major Family Support Programs Panel — Family Development & Self-Sufficiency (FADSS) Grant, Danielle Leeser, Four Oaks.
12. Major Family Support Programs Panel — Parents as Teachers (PAT) Program, Ms. Moritz, Prairie Lakes AEA.
13. Major Family Support Programs Panel — HOPES-HFI Programs, Ms. Odell, Lutheran Services in Iowa.
14. Major Family Support Programs Panel — Early ACCESS Programs — Ms. Jones, Child Health Specialty Clinics.
15. Major Family Support Programs Panel — HOPES-like Program, Ms. Duhrkopf.
16. Major Family Support Programs Panel — The Nurturing Parents Program, Ms. Ristvedt.
17. Major Family Support Programs Panel — Prevent Child Abuse Iowa Annual Report 2007.
18. Major Family Support Programs Panel — Early Head Start Programs Kim Young-Kent Waterloo.
19. Iowa Public Television — Ready to Learn Program.
20. Area Education Agency Programs, Ms. Jensen, Loess Hills AEA.



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21. Early Care Fiscal Information Spreadsheet (8.5 x 14).

November 26, 2007, Meeting Materials

1. Dr. Daro, Chapin Hall, Presentation Slides.
2. Dr. Daro, Paper on Home Visitation Programs, published by Chapin Hall and the Ounce of Prevention Fund.
3. Dr. Daro, Chapin Hall Issue Brief on Implementation of Home Visiting Programs by States.
4. AEA Information Survey Responses (32 pages).
5. Neighborhood Centers of Johnson County Brochure.
6. Early Care Fiscal Information Spreadsheet — revised.
7. Steffanie Clothier, NCSL, Presentation Slides.
8. Ms. Milburn, Department of Education, DE early childhood programs information.

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