

Healthy North Dakota Early Childhood Alliance (HNDECA)
Early Care and Education Subcommittee
Thursday, May 20, 2010

Meeting Summary

Proposed Meeting Goals:

- To receive an update from the HNDECA Steering and Stakeholder Committee meetings;
- To review and refine strategic planning goals;
- To discuss 2011 early childhood legislative messaging; and
- To identify next steps in implementation of goals.

Meeting Participants: Cheryle Masset-Martz, Laci Ginger (phone), Roberta Lein (phone), Bobbe Shreve (phone), Helen Danielson (phone), Richard Rathge (phone), Julie Quamme, Roxane Romanick, Heather Lee, Vanessa Hoines, Suzie Godsell, Linda Ehreth, Jennifer Barry, Linda Lembke, Theresa Olin and Linda Reinicke.

Facilitated by: The Consensus Council, Inc.

Welcome, Introductions, Process and Agenda Review: Participants were welcomed to the meeting and provided self-introductions. The meeting process, ground rules and agenda were confirmed. Participants were directed to review the meeting summary from 11/10/09 and advise the facilitator of any corrections.

Cheryle provided an overview of the recommendations made by the HNDECA Steering and Stakeholder Committees regarding the subcommittee goals and indicated that the federal ECCS project officer is seeking more specific details relative to project funding. There was also information shared regarding Dr. Rathge's recommendations/ideas for potential HNDECA surveys.

Participants also reviewed the priority goals that have been developed as a result of the Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Title V needs assessment. She also provided an update on the work of the Governor's Early Learning Education Council (ECEC) noting that her invitation to Rep. Rae Ann Kelsch to attend the national meeting was declined due to a previous commitment for Rep. Kelsch. It was recommended that Brandi Pelham or Kayla Effertz from the Office of the Governor be invited to attend and Cheryle will follow up. Rep. Lisa Meier has also expressed an interest in serving on the ECEC and attending the national meeting.

There is some clarification needed about the connection of the ECEC to the Governors Commission on Education Improvement. There is some question about whether the ECEC is a subcommittee of the larger group and it isn't clear to whom

the ECEC recommendations will be given. Cheryle agreed to follow-up to seek clarification on this question.

Review and Refinement of Strategic Plan Goals: The subcommittee members reviewed each of the goals and recommended the following:

Goal #1: To educate the leadership and membership of the North Dakota ECEC about early childhood care and education.

- The goal remains a sound approach but should focus on offering an overview of early childhood in ND, rather than the previously suggested full-day training
- It is necessary to develop a brief (2-page) document that outlines the key points and critical messages that HNDECA wants to give about early learning
- This document should also create the desired definition of early learning/Pre-K and how the terms are used
- The document should identify the many models of early learning delivery (one size does not fit all) and should include a strong parent partnership
- The document should be clear about what the needs of children are, and perhaps be developed from a child's point of view
- There is potential for various members of HNDECA to "lead" future discussions with members of the ECEC subcommittees, based on shared interest and expertise
- The concept of "Pre-K" is clearly popular language but messages must include the breadth of early learning with a greater focus on ages 0 to 8
- There is value in including members of the Governors Office in vetting the document to build relationships and encourage early buy-in of the concepts
- The future outcomes for such a process may be another Pre-K Summit (need to determine what follow-up and next steps are, if any, by the Head Start State Collaboration Office) and/or Academy initiative for community teams to implement Pre-K

New Action Step: To develop a foundational document that describes/promotes appropriate early learning opportunities in North Dakota.

- A volunteer writing team was established to prepare an initial draft document (Cheryle Masset-Martz, Roberta Lein, Roxane Romanick and Linda Reinicke); this team will meet on June 7 at Lutheran Social Services in Bismarck
- Vanessa will contact Judith Konerza at UND to assess whether her PhD work could inform this process
- The first draft of the foundational document will be sent to the Early Care and Education Subcommittee for initial review (with a very short turnaround time)
- A larger group will be convened before the end of June to refine and finalize the document; the invitees will be the Early Care and Education Subcommittee members, select ECEC members, representatives from the

Governors office (Effertz, Pelham) and Department of Public Instruction (DPI) staff (Marback, Matzke)

- The document will be HNDECA-driven, give a history of HNDECA and its accomplishments and will include a preferred definition of early childhood; there may be opportunity to use existing resources or best practices as a model while making the document “local” to ND needs
- The document should offer options for service delivery and include clarification of facts related to often heard myths
- The document should include the developmentally appropriate practice (DAP) statement and be clear about the research/evidence-based nature of any recommendations
- The document should outline current services, data and resources as well as identify challenges in service delivery
- The document should support community decision-making, community grants and parental involvement
- The document should identify the essential components of a good, comprehensive system that allows the minimum of disruption to children and families through periods of transition
- The document, and its reception by policy makers, will help to determine the next steps in terms of a Summit or other such effort; when planning such an event, it was noted that, often times, local speakers/trainers are better received than those from out of state (Sharon Hansen from Head Start was mentioned as a skilled “local” speaker)

Goal #2: To promote the principles of appropriate early learning.

- There was discussion about the development of a DAP and it was agreed that Cheryle will contact Al Ekblad for his expertise in this area
- It was further agreed that a small committee would be convened by Cheryle to complete the writing of a draft DAP; in addition to Cheryle and Al, the team will consist of Linda Lembke, Jennifer Barry (for the initial effort) and Ellen Anderson (Linda Lembke will ask her)
- There is agreement that this process could help to inform the work of the ECEC Subcommittee on Professional Development

Goal #3: To assure that childcare nurse consultants are part of the infrastructure of childcare settings.

- This goal remains as a sound goal; however, it was recommended that Action Step “d” (creation of a white paper/report documenting the lack of availability of nurses) should be completed prior to or parallel to other steps being undertaken
- It was also agreed that additional research is needed in the form of a new action step, as follows

New Action Step: To identify the needs of childcare providers in relation to children’s health issues.

- Cheryle will explore a contract with Dr. Rathge to conduct a focus group to identify the general themes/topics for a broader provider survey
- The focus group invitees will include the child healthcare consultants, Head Start nurses, Early Childhood Consultants, school nurses, MCH, DHS and DOH staff, parents, tribal and ND Integrated Services representatives
- The provider survey will be conducted during the summer of 2010, also under a contract with Dr. Rathge and may be modeled, to some degree, after the dismissal study (although more specific information/questions were thought to be important)
- It was agreed that this effort will be important to connect to the ongoing planning meetings of the School Health Integrated Workgroups (SHIW) that are lead by the Coordinated School Health Program

2011 Early Childhood Messaging: It was agreed that holding an “Early Childhood Day” at the Capitol (informational and educational booths) is not the best way to reach legislators. As an alternate idea, it has been suggested that a “photo frame” project be utilized with the following elements:

- Heavy stock paper would be used to design a frame that will hold a photograph (similar to the type used for holiday greeting cards)
- Families would be contacted by advocacy groups (Children’s Defense Fund, Family Voices North Dakota, Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health, ND Head Start Association, NDAEYC, LSS/CCR&R, NDSU Extension, Pathfinders and others) to write a short, personal story about how a program and/or piece of legislation has positively impacted them; multiple agencies will be used in order to assure a good mix of families, situations and issues
- The family would then include their family or child’s photo on the face of the card and it would be intended for receipt by the legislators serving from their voting district; all to be delivered on the same day to all legislators, near the beginning of the 2011 session
- The inside of the card would contain a few quotes or facts about early childhood issues as well as a pocket to hold the personal letter
- It is hoped that each legislator would get at least one letter but there will be no upper limit
- Cheryle will gather information about the HNDECA members thoughts about this project and then review the information with the ND Department of Health Public Information Officer for approval
- Releases of information may have to be signed by parents; it will be important to get an early start on this initiative
- If approved at the DOH level, Cheryle will convene the “Messaging Subcommittee” (Cheryle, Vanessa Hoines, Roberta Lein and Helen Danielson) to begin drafting of the product/messages

Participants were excited about the project and believe that it will be impactful in connecting constituents to legislators. It is a very personal approach that will be

hard for legislators to ignore or disregard. Cheryle will provide ongoing updates as progress is made and as approval for moving forward is received from the NDDOH.

Participants were thanked for their time and talents and the meeting was adjourned by consensus of the group.