

CT Early Childhood Cabinet

Meeting Minutes

August 17, 2022, • 1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Via Teams – Virtual Meeting

ATTENDANCE

Member Name	Statutory Designation	Present
Adam Joseph, Chief of Staff, OBO Susan Bysiewicz <i>Lieutenant Governor</i>	Lieutenant Governor, or Designee Cabinet Co-Chair	X
Beth Bye <i>Commissioner, Office of Early Childhood</i>	Commissioner of Early Childhood, or Designee Cabinet Co-Chair	X
Holly Williams <i>Section Director, Office of Policy & Management</i>	Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, or Designee	X
Deidre Gifford <i>Commissioner, Department of Social Services</i>	Commissioner of Social Services, or Designee	
Shelly Nolan <i>Director of Women's Services, Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services</i>	Commissioner of Mental Health and Addiction Services, or Designee	
Michael Williams <i>Deputy Commissioner, Department of Children and Families</i>	Commissioner of Children and Families, or Designee	X Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes
Seila Mosquera-Bruno, <i>Commissioner, Department of Housing</i>	Commissioner of Housing, or Designee	X And Chante Hanks
Jordan Scheff <i>Commissioner, Department of Developmental Services</i>	Commissioner of Developmental Services, or Designee	X
Charlene Russell-Tucker <i>Commissioner, Department of Education</i>	Commissioner of Education, or Designee	
Manisha Juthani, MD <i>Commissioner, Department of Public Health</i>	Commissioner of Public Health, or Designee	
Terrence Cheng <i>President, Board of Regents</i>	President of the Board of Regents, or Designee	X Alice Pritchard
Elena Trueworthy,	Director of the Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office	

<i>Director, CT Head Start State Collaboration Office, Office of Early Childhood</i>		
Steven Hernandez, Esq. <i>Executive Director, Commission on Women, Children & Seniors, and Equal Opportunity</i>	Executive Director of the Commission on Women, Children & Seniors, or Designee	X
Julie Giaccone <i>CCDF Administrator, Office of Early Childhood</i>	Administrator of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990	X
Andrea Brinnel <i>619 Part B Coordinator, State Department of Education</i>	Responsible for administering grants received under Section 1419 of Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	
Louis Tallarita <i>State Coordinator, Bureau of Health, Nutrition, Family Services, and Adult Education, State Department of Education</i>	Responsible for coordination of education services to children and youth who are homeless	X
Marlene Padernacht <i>Title I Coordinator, State Department of Education</i>	One who is responsible for administering the provisions of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Ac	X
Karen Pascale <i>Early Head Start Director, United Way of Greater New Haven</i>	Representative from the Head Start Association	X
Eva Bermudez <i>CSEA/SEIU Local 2001</i>	Representative of the Connecticut State Employees Association	X
Eliot Brenner <i>Executive Director & Trustee, Klingenstein Philanthropies</i>	Representative from the philanthropic community	
Patricia Bryant-Beausoleil <i>Director & Early Childhood Coordinator, Putnam Family Resource Center</i>	Representative from a public elementary school with a prekindergarten program	
Karen Rainville <i>CT Association for the Education of Young Children</i>	Representative of an association of early education and child care providers	X
Edie Reichard <i>Director, Sleeping Giant Day Care</i>	Representative of a state-funded child care center	X
Caroline Austin <i>Parent</i>	Parent of a child attended a school in an education reform district	X
Kimberly Oliver <i>Director, Dept. of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation, City of Hartford</i>	Member of a Board of Education for a town designated as an Alliance District	X
Cathy Battista <i>Director, Meriden Family Resource Center</i>	Representative from Family Resource Centers	
VACANT	Representative from the business community	

VACANT	Parent of a child attending or attended a School Readiness program	
VACANT	A representative of a local provider of early childhood education	

A. Welcoming Remarks and Introductions

Commissioner Bye opened the meeting, recognizing that members of the Early Childhood Cabinet and the public are attending. Lt. Governor Bysiewicz welcomed the Cabinet members. The Lt. Governor outlined the Governor's Council on Women and Girls priority issues to include workforce pipeline, access to child care, and equity. The Lt. Governor encouraged that the Cabinet and Council on Women and Girls collaborate on issues of mutual interest. She welcomed new General Counsel, Christine Jean-Louis, formerly in the Attorney General's office.

B. Updates from Cabinet Members

Steven Hernandez, Executive Director of the CT Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, and Equity and Opportunity provided a framework about 2Gen work underway in CT. Commissioner Bye introduced Madri Hall-Faul, the state's newly hired 2Gen State Coordinator.

Shelly Nolan, Director of Women's Services at the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, announced a free all-day conference on women in recovery.

Karen Rainville, Executive Director of the CT Association for the Education of Young Children (CAEYC) announced the annual fall conference. Scholarships are available.

Caroline Austin, a 2Gen parent leader, welcomed Madri. Austin announced a Parent leadership summit taking place September 17. This second annual summit is free.

Commissioner Bye announced that an OEC parent survey was sent out to parents last week. OEC is seeking input from parents and early care and education opportunities and will share results when they are available.

C New Early Childhood Statutory Appointments

Maggie Adair, Director of Government & Community Relations at the OEC, gave an update on newly created Early Childhood Cabinet statutory appointments. The two new additions created in statute in the OEC agency bill, P.A. 22-100 adds 1) a licensed family child care home provider who is also a member of a Staffed Family Childhood Care Network; and 2) a member of the OEC Parent Cabinet. The Lt. Governor noted there are other vacancies, and OEC is working on filling those seats.

F. COVID Guidance

Commissioner Bye said OEC will supply tests and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) in September, working with DPH. These will be directly mailed to providers – there is no need to travel to a distribution site as has happened in the past.

New COVID guidance has been issued by SDE and OEC. The vaccine is still the first line of defense. Under 10% of young children are vaccinated and there is a lot of hesitancy for children aged 3 and under. Lt Gov. Bysiewicz said that the administration will focus on early childhood programs and vaccinations as we get ready for back to school. Commissioner Bye noted this serves as guidance, it is not mandatory.

D. Head Start on Housing

Commissioner Mosquera-Bruno introduced the presentation about the Head Start on Housing Pilot, an initiative of DOH, OEC, CT Head Start Association, and the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare. This Pilot seeks to prioritize rental assistance housing for Head Start families who are risk of homelessness.

The presentation can be found at <https://www.ctoec.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/8-17-22-Cabinet-Meeting-Presentation.pdf>

Commissioner Mosquero-Bruno said this Pilot allows agencies to work together to provide permanent housing and access to child care. DOH is excited to help Head Start families at risk for homelessness. 25 housing turnover vouchers will be set aside to make it sustainable. DOH anticipates 50 to 75 families will be supported on an annual basis.

Steve Dilella, Housing Program Coordinator at DOH, said collaboration is key to the success of the Pilot. OEC came to DOH with concept in collaboration with Ruth White, Executive Director of the National Center for Child Welfare.

Karen Pascal, Head Start Director of the United Way of Greater New Haven, identified the Pilot participants: LULAC, New Haven; ACES, Middletown; Stowe Early Learning Center, Enfield, and Alliance for Community Empowerment, Bridgeport.

White provided one story coming out of the Pilot. A father with full custody of a 2-year-old was living in a rooming house in Middletown and he now has a section 8 voucher. This housing made the rent affordable for the family. White noted that this is very prudent use of state dollars, and in the end, this will save CT money.

OEC staff working on the project are Elena Trueworthy, Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office, and Jennifer Jones, Early Care and Education Consultant.

DCF Commissioner Dorantes said this is a great partnership. This is a prevention strategy. When services are put in place, CT prevents children presenting to DCF.

G. OEC Commissioner Updates

Outreach - OEC is hosting meetings with child care directors, one virtual, two in person. OEC received great feedback and it is important to hear what is happening on the ground. This is an extremely difficult time for child care providers.

Workforce Pipeline – This pilot is designed to address recruitment of people with credentials and train people who do not have the credentials. OEC is funding 8 programs to pilot ideas for a workforce pipeline.

Service Navigation – OEC now has 5 staff to help child care programs access training, supports, and pathways to accreditation.

Wage Supports – OEC has \$70M in funding for child care wage supports. The program will open in September with the first phase of funds with the second phase of funds coming in January. This is a wage enhancement to help early care and education programs retain staff.

Infant and Toddler Rates and Expansion – The state budget included \$25M to increase infant and toddler rates to \$13,500 per child and increase by 1,300 infant and toddler slots.

Infant and Toddler Care Study – The state budget included \$20M to study an infant and toddler care model. That is in process.

Care 4 Kids Caseload – Care 4 Kids funding has increased from \$127M to \$194M due to the availability of one-time federal COVID funds. As a result, there is significant caseload growth: 21,763 children and 15,435 families enrolled. Care 4 Kids is now serving people in higher education and job training and income eligibility was increased to 60% of the State Median Income. OEC is planning for a Care 4 Kids wait list in the future.

Care 4 Kids Rates – In 2020, Care 4 Kids infant and toddler rates were increased to 50% of market rate. PreK still at about 20% of market rate, and school age is at 70% of market rate. The OEC CCDF plan has been submitted and Care 4 Kids federal administrators have indicated that Connecticut needs to raise its child care subsidy rates.

Care 4 Kids Accreditation Bonus – OEC allocated \$8M for Care 4 Kids accreditation bonus of 25%, which encourages programs to get accredited.

Care 4 Kids Service Challenges – Care 4 Kids has experienced a summer rush and caseload growth. Call wait times are too long, and United Way of CT has a plan to bring the calls times down. One strategy is increasing call hours for evening and weekends.

D. Public Comment

Christie Balka asked if there is emergency housing funding for child care providers who face potential eviction. White responded that she would be happy to help with the eviction and mortgage foreclosure solutions for providers. Commissioner Mosquera-Bruno highlighted that there is down payment assistance for first-time buyers, My Home CT, which is helping to prevent foreclosure due to the pandemic.

Roberta Travers thanked the OEC for workforce pipeline.

Merrill Gay asked if there were any discussion about moving the Birth to Three program to a Birth to Five program.

D. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 pm. The next Cabinet meeting will be held November 7, from 1 to 3 pm.