



CT Office of Early Childhood Parent Cabinet Meeting Minutes June 23, 2025

Time & Location: 6pm-7pm , Zoom

Facilitators: Tricia Hamlin, Parent Cabinet region 4, Stephanie Thompson Parent Cabinet region 6

Members' Present : Jenny C. (region 1), Shannon, Raquel (region 2), Tiffanie, Jessica and Christina (region 3), Tricia, Kelly S. (region 4), Stephanie (region 6)

Meeting Purpose (*Why is this meeting needed?*):

- To continue to strengthen relationships and communication amongst members
- Ensure members have tools and information needed to succeed

Intended Outcomes (*What do we want to achieve by the end of this? What will success look like?*):

- Members have questions on the legislative bills passed answered
- Members reflect on past 6 months and plan for the next 6 months
- Members inform on the feedback loop process with PAs

Agenda Item/Topic	Facilitator	Notes	Key Takeaways and Implications for Parent Cabinet Members
Welcome & News	Chenae Russell, OEC	Shout-outs to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cris for participating in a fatherhood panel video for the Federal Government with Jen Wilder from the OEC Family	

		<p>support division, highlighting Chris's contribution of his experiences as a father</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tricia for presenting on a webinar this past Friday with Third Sector, alongside two other states, discussing their cabinets and the effectiveness of their feedback, specifically highlighting Tricia's presentation on Connecticut's parent cabinet work • Christina for attending and speaking at the governor's press conference on the early childhood endowment bill passage, noting that Christina did a wonderful job • All who attended the Parent Leadership Learning Community earlier in the month, expressing happiness for their attendance • Jen St. John and Amber on their PLTI graduation also acknowledging Jenny Canepa, a PLTI alum, and Regan, a facilitator, for their involvement with PLTI as well as PC alum Josh who is a facilitator and Design member Janine who works for National Parent Leadership Institute. 	
OEC / Commissioner Office: Legislative Q & A	Commissioner Beth Bye and Deputy Commissioner Elena Trueworthy, OEC	<p>→ Clarity on timeline- What is effective this July 1st, July 1, 2026 and July 1st 2027?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Clarified that the early start programs would significantly expand by July 1st, 2027, serving thousands more children in more programs and communities. ○ Around 1100 more spaces would be added between smart start and early start with endowment dollars, starting right away with the 	Tricia suggested highlighting current options for families in a one-page document or FAQ to address confusion, especially after the bill passed and there was so much confusion.

		<p>help of endowment dollars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ healthcare for child care workers would begin a year from now, on July 1st, 2026. ○ \$11.8 million in facility money would be available this fiscal year to help programs expand in preparation for 2027, potentially changing rooms from preschool to infant-toddler care. <p>→ What supports for families now before the legislation is in effect? 1 pager possibly?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The new legislation expands the state-funded system, increases reimbursement rates, and makes child care free for families at \$100,000 a year, significantly improving affordability. ○ Noted that there are still public school spaces that are free now, early start spaces that are reduced cost, and Care for Kids for some families (about 23,000 kids or 18,000 families), highlighting existing options for parents. ○ The endowment grows each year, allowing for more children to be served over time, as the 10% allocation becomes larger. ○ Elena added that they are considering local governance partners and how to continue to support and stabilize them as the expansion is planned for 2027, ensuring that those local governance partners are strong and the parent ambassadors are strong. ○ LGP's are launching July 1 of this year. <p>→ Concerns about the Care for Kids waitlist and how to respond to parents, as she frequently encounters parents asking about the OEC's plan for the waitlist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commissioner Bye explained that this year's budget was predicated on 17,500 children on Care for Kids, 	<p>Parent cabinet to have more follow up on the One Point Portal as the work is beginning on conversations this summer 2025</p> <p>OEC to work on communication efforts based on PC input and get their input</p>
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		<p>but there are now 23,000, costing an additional \$34 million due to an 11% rate increase negotiated through the union.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The plan is to try to stay at 23,000 and add new families as others come off the program, emphasizing the commitment to maintaining the current level of service. ○ It was noted that only about eight families per month are coming on to the program. <p>→ Are daycares being informed that families with low income may not be able to get on the Care for Kids list for a while?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ clarified that state-funded childcare programs cannot require families to apply for Care for Kids, but private programs can, as a matter of policy. ○ Elena explained that some families need Care for Kids for night and weekend care, so it is not required as an added payment to early start, to ensure it's available for other needs. <p>→ when current families receiving early start will see the change from 10% to 7% of income?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ July 1st, 2027 <p>→ For the ECE Endowment Advisory Board, will parents be included as representatives?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ confirmed, including a parent cabinet member by the House speaker and Parent or guardian of a child receiving birth to three services by the House Majority leader <p>→ If the income considered for the endowment is household or family income and if it is gross income, particularly for single-parent households?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It was clarified that it is gross family income, and both parents' income will count in a two-parent household. 	
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		<p>address their specific questions and concerns. She highlighted the need for individuals to assist families in navigating the available programs and determining the best fit for their children.</p> <p>→ Besides PC and PA members, what is the plan for outreach to let families know about Early Start? I still meet families all the time who don't understand which options in Stamford are Head Start, which are sliding scale, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hopefully Early Start CT will reduce confusion by combining funding streams for school readiness, child daycare, and state Head Start, but acknowledged that confusion would still exist and that families would still need assistance navigating the system. ○ Suggestion of a statewide marketing outreach campaign and hoped the portal would help define programs and options for families, emphasizing the importance of clear and accessible information for families seeking early childhood services. <p>→ Mallory wanted to know if the Head Start needs assessment could be used as a tool for the LGP's to gain data.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Karen confirmed that the Head Start needs assessment is a basis for what the local governance partners will be doing for the community needs assessment. ○ Elena underscored that Head Start is a valuable partner and that the community needs assessment should be a community engagement tool. <p>→ Members contributed to a Slido to share feedback on how OEC can strengthen its communication to families, particularly around the new early childhood endowment, the One Point Portal, and LGP's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Suggestions included texting services, one-pagers 	
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		<p>at various locations, parent sharing, social media, updated flyers, newsletters, Facebook groups, and radio ads.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ There was a discussion about the importance of clear and effective communication, especially regarding key announcements. ○ Chris mentioned that radio ads are how he found out about the parent cabinet. ○ Tricia emphasized the need to reach parents where they already are, such as pediatrician offices and transportation, rather than adding more things for them to read. 	
Parent Cabinet Involvement and Implementation	Chenae, OEC	<p>→ asked how the parent cabinet would like to be involved with the implementation and communication around the endowment, the One Point Portal, and other initiatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tricia suggested sitting in on local meetings to understand confusion and questions. ○ Kelly proposed that subcommittees work on specific pieces, such as developing language or user-friendliness, and provide feedback. ○ Christina suggested a text message system for parent cabinet members to share information and gather input from their communities. ○ There was support for a text-based communication system, similar to Parent Square or seesaw used by schools. ○ Tricia cautioned against relying solely on digital communication, as some parents still prefer physical flyers 	Continue to have PC a part of implementation and involved through subcommittees and monthly meetings but also explore other ways based on PC input.
Subcommittee	Coral Wonderly, OEC –	→ Coral co-chair of Data subcommittee, shared the subcommittee	Ensure all members get

<p>e & Advisory Committee Feedback</p>	<p>Data</p> <p>Christina Pace, Region 3, Access & Affordability</p> <p>Tiffanie, Region 3, Children with Special Needs</p> <p>Mallory, region 5, OEC External Steering Advisory Committe</p>	<p>reviewed short-term and long-term outcome goals in the logic model and is outlining how to collect data to meet these goals. They are also considering how to incorporate these metrics into the monthly reports.</p> <p>→ Christina reported on the access and affordability subcommittee, noting discussions about the One Point Entry portal and features they would like to see added. The subcommittee also discussed Elevate, the quality improvement program in Connecticut, and its implications for families, including new family one-pagers.</p> <p>→ Tiffany gave an update on the Children with Special Needs subcommittee, They discussed transitioning from birth to three into special ed or a 504 plan, highlighting the challenges parents face during this transition. Becca from Birth to Three gave an overview of the program, and Lisa Opert from CPAC and Nicole Cassette from OEC talked about CPAC and its offerings. The subcommittee aims to educate, empower, and engage families, providing them with courage, hope, and support.</p> <p>→ Mallory provided an update on the External Steering Committee, discussing the LGP's, the transition from school readiness to early start CT, and the roles within the LGP structure.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ She emphasized that the LGP's are a steady moving system to make everything cohesive for early childhood. ○ The committee discussed the expectations for the first six months, the roles of the fiduciary organization, the liaison, the parent ambassador, and the community table. ○ Shine Early Learning and its role in providing data for the LGPs to meet community needs. ○ The LGP needs assessment, to be conducted next 	<p>access to items from subcommittees- possibly a Padlet just for this?</p>
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		spring, will gather data to understand community needs within each LGP.	
Reflection and Future Goals	Breakout	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chris shared his shift towards advocating for fathers, noting that being the only dad on the cabinet has led him to focus on this area. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He expressed his goal of getting more fathers engaged at all levels within the state and highlighted the Connecticut Fathers Initiative's work, particularly in advocating for incarcerated fathers. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> He mentioned learning about changes within the state to support fathers, such as asking men at intake if they are fathers, a practice that previously only applied to women. Kelly and Raquel discussed facilitation training and their goals for the next six months, with Kelly noting Jessica's nervousness about facilitation and encouraging her and Stephanie, highlighting their existing skills in communication and preparation. Mallory raised the question of what to say to parents with older children who might ask for resources, prompting a discussion about available resources and partnerships with sister agencies to address the needs of older children, including after-school care. 	
Parent Ambassador Feedback and LGP Transition	Malissa Griffith, Parents Connecting Parents Program Manager, OEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → The group discussed parent ambassador feedback and concerns about their role in the transition to LGP's. → Tricia hoped that parent ambassadors would still have the opportunity to collaborate and that their expertise would not be lost. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Emphasized the importance of their role and the need 	<p>Members to be updated on communication improvements on LGPS and PAs through website etc.</p> <p>Melissa and Chenae will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meet with Parent

		<p>for support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent ambassadors will play a key role in the future and that the goal is to have them in every community. <p>→ Simone raised concerns about the two-year term limit for parent ambassadors and the lack of LGP's in some towns.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Melissa clarified that the term limit is more about accountability and that the goal is to have parent ambassadors elevated and on an equal playing field. ○ Melissa emphasized that the decision to renew or transition parent ambassadors will be up to the local communities. 	<p>Cabinet members by region or individually to address questions about LGP's.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● create a focus group with Parent Cabinet members and Parent Ambassadors to gather feedback on the LGP framework
Next steps		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Chenae to share the fatherhood panel video featuring Chris when it is available <input type="checkbox"/> Creating a one-page document or FAQ to address confusion about available options for families. _ bring to Access & Affordability subcommittee. <input type="checkbox"/> Sinead will share information from Birth to Three and flyers and information about CPAC (Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center) <input type="checkbox"/> Melissa and Sinead will meet with Parent Cabinet members by region or individually to address questions about LGP's. <input type="checkbox"/> Melissa and Sinead will create a focus group with Parent Cabinet members and Parent Ambassadors to gather feedback on the LGP framework <input type="checkbox"/> Chenae will send out a form to gather thoughts on the best days and weeks in July for an in-person gathering. <input type="checkbox"/> Chenae will provide assistance to Parent Cabinet members who need help navigating the new community outreach input form 	