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## Office of Early Childhood Parent Cabinet

### Meeting Minutes

May 28, 2024

5:15pm - 7:15pm

Virtual on Zoom

**Mission:** *To build strong connections, listen intentionally, and partner with Connecticut families of young children, communities, and OEC to incorporate the expertise of all parents throughout the early childhood system to ensure family-driven equitable policies and programs.*

#### 1. April meeting follow ups/Upcoming events.

##### a. Elevate

- i. The parents gave input around Elevate talking points which they found to be helpful and no changes were advised.
- ii. Also, some shared interactions with families using the talking points created about Elevate for families. Caitlin shared at a school readiness council meeting where most at the meeting did not know about it yet so they were able to introduce it to them and encourage to look at it before next meeting. Also talked to a parent using child care and encouraged to talk about it with her provider since she was not aware of it.
- iii. The biggest question received from parents was understanding the different levels and what they mean and what to look for. If they are at the member status does that mean they are not good enough? So explaining what the levels means.

- b. upcoming events, including the New Britain School Readiness Summer Palooza on June 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2 Gen Parent Academy on June 8<sup>th</sup>, were announced.

- c. Shared the upcoming [Behavioral Health Webinar: The Air We All Breathe: The Essence of Mental Health and How We All Have a Connection to It.](#)

#### 2. Share outs/ updates from recent conferences and presentations.

- a. Parents shared experiences from the Smart Start conference and a workshop hosted by Third Sector were shared.

- i. Attended session at Smart Start around Circle of Security training and looking into possible training for Parent Cabinet.



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- b. The group also discussed their takeaways from the recent Protective Factors training and proposed strategies for disseminating the content.
  - i. Follow up meeting with Marinda, Maria, Malissa to think about ways to implement.
  - ii. Possible future training on specific pieces for Parent Cabinet members and Parent Ambassadors

### 3. Third Sector

- a. Gave an update on the work they are doing related to recommendations developing and an action plan for improving the structures and processes of subcommittees and external advisory committees for parent cabinet. Parent cabinet members to be a part of this process.

### 4. Legislative / Blue Ribbon Plan on Childcare Updates

- a. Updates on the end of legislative session on May 8<sup>th</sup> and OEC bills passed were shared.

### 5. Early Start: Local Governance and embedding parent/community voice in structure

- a. Elena highlighted Public Act 2478 related to what was passed from in the Blue Ribbon 5-year plan, focusing on early care and education with Early Start CT. This is the new state funded early care and education program, combining 3 funding streams (Child Day Care, School Readiness, and State Head Start Supplement) into a single state funded program.
  - 1. This will help to streamline system, reduce burden on providers, simplify programs available to families and center families and community needs.
  - ii. Kimberly Paluska, the division Director for Early Care & Education, outlined the transition to Early Start Connecticut, emphasizing the role of local governance partners in centering family and community needs. Gave an overview to the parents and heard feedback from those connected with school readiness councils.
  - iii. Various team members shared their experiences and concerns, with a focus on low parent involvement and ineffective communication.
  - iv. The team agreed on the need for standardized approaches to parent engagement, including the creation of a procedural handbook and increased funding for liaison positions. They also discussed the importance of making family engagement a priority and the need for equal parent input in decision-making processes. The team agreed to gather more input from parents and council members to guide the development of the program.

### 6. Mentorship



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- a. There was a discussion about mentorship model and what the parents would like that to look like.
  - i. Members stepping down in June would mentor the 1<sup>st</sup> cohort of new members joining in July in September-November 2024.
  - ii. Members stepping down in December would mentor the 2<sup>nd</sup> cohort starting in January 2025 through January -March 2025.
- b. Questions asked of the group.
  - i. Reflecting on when you started in this role- What worked well and made you feel prepared? What would you like to have?
  - ii. How would you like the mentorship structure to work? Is 3 times a month during that time frame, ok? Available if they have questions? What do you need from us?
- c. The team discussed the importance of strategic planning, resource utilization, and effective communication. Marinda suggested the use of a visual tool for new members, while Caitlin emphasized the value of warm handoffs and regional introductions, even quick 15-minute phone calls before big meetings and after to check in. Symone noted the need for clarity around expectations and having job description, and the group agreed on the structure of an onboarding retreat to facilitate introductions and role-sharing. Setting up virtual meet and greet for all the contacts PC members have made in the region to introduce new PC member .
- d. Time commitment :
  - One parent said monthly Check in and available for questions.
  - First 3 months September -November - create an updated chart around number of hours for mentorship for each month and A section of there's a mentor meeting and if any flex hours able to use .
  - Another suggested being flexible and seeing what the needs of the parents are like if they prefer text over phone calls. So, a timeframe of hours per month to officially mentor them and be reimbursed.

**7. Public Comment – no public attended.**