

Home Visiting Consortium Special Meeting

December 21, 2015

**Minutes**

**In attendance:** Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor, Karen Foley-Schain, Grace Whitney, Nordia Savage, Rosa Biaggi, Darcy Lowell, Merrill Gay, Crista Marchesseault, Janet Storey, Sherry Linton-Massiah, Heather Spada, Gina Beebe, Linda Harris, Noraleen Dunphy, Kathy Bleacher, Melissa Mendez, C. Wesley Younts, Maggie Adair, Linda Goodman, Arietta Slade, Connie Heye, Lynn Skene Johnson, Isabelina Rodriguez, Catherine Lenihan

Karen Foley-Schain opened this special meeting of the Home Visiting Consortium and introduced Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor acknowledged the efforts of the Consortium and the numerous topics being looked at by the group. The focus of the special meeting is the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) grant, specifically to discuss the thoughts and suggestions that were shared at the December 2<sup>nd</sup> Consortium meeting.

The December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting was to solicit feedback to address the \$1.3 million reduction for the MIECHV grant application. In response to the suggestions to restructure and re-appropriate funds, Commissioner Jones-Taylor shared that the current program is operating very well.

In addition, Commissioner Jones-Taylor shared the following:

The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services moved to the new formula funding in order to ensure continuity and sustainability of funding for programs that have been developed over the past three years. The funding is not for new or expanding programs.

All of the MIECHV program sites are using evidenced-based models, and have met the HRSA benchmark and model specific affiliation requirements. All but two sites met annual and point in time capacity requirements per their models and their contracts.

HRSA was very pleased with the components and performance of the CT program following a three-day comprehensive site visit that took place last month.

HRSA did not require or request a new needs assessment or proposal to reorganize the program and has not provided the time to do so before this grant is due.

Reallocation of funds now would mean closing programs, laying off staff and terminating services for families. These services have shown to be effective in one or more randomized control studies and are meeting HRSA benchmark and model developer affiliation requirements. To consider restructuring the program, a thoughtful, objective and well informed process must be put in place.

Since 2007, Connecticut has offered father-focused home visiting using state funds and more recently using federal funds through the MIECHV program. OEC is committed to the father-focused home

visiting component and is willing to give the program some time to continue to develop, show results and if needed do a course correct. HRSA is also very interested in father-focused home visiting and is asking the OEC to present as a promising practice in the future.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor also addressed feedback from the December 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting to reduce administrative costs, training and program evaluation costs, reduce funding where there is underutilization, reassess need and the allocation of funds to program models not included in the original funding for the program, and where there is more documented need.

To address both the reductions and other considerations the OEC will make reductions in administration, training and evaluation and related costs and make programmatic reductions whenever possible based on service utilization.

Second, OEC will propose to HRSA that Connecticut conduct a thorough and objective review of the CT MIECHV program. Under this review the OEC will re-assess the needs of the children and families in state, and examine the match between programs, families and outcomes. To accomplish this the OEC will hire an independent evaluator who has no previous experience with the current programs in the state but is familiar with home visiting and the various models. Unspent funds will be used to pay for the evaluation.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor looks forward to the opportunity to come together to expand home visiting services and secure additional resources instead of competing over too few resources.

The meeting was opened up to a question and answer period.

Co-chair Melissa Mendez stated that just because HRSA likes what they see it doesn't mean they know that we have 300 children on waitlists for various programs.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded that we need an action plan to move forward using data.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor hopes that the Home Visiting Consortium and the co-chairs can move this effort forward.

Rosa Biaggi asked if we have thought of using the Home Visiting Consortium group or a subgroup to work on the evaluation with the evaluators and review before submitting to HRSA.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded that we have not gotten that far in the development but thought it was a good idea.

Melissa Mendez commented that there was a data subgroup within the Home Visiting Consortium.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor asked for clarification on the subgroups.

Melissa Mendez stated that there are five priority areas of the Home Visiting Plan.

Karen Foley Schain clarified that there is not a working data subgroup of the Home Visiting Consortium.

Rosa Biaggi stated that the more rigorous the evaluation the more costly the evaluation will be and asked if there was other funding available.

Commissioner Jones Taylor suggested looking at large foundations like PEW, and suggested that the group could work on this in the future.

Karen Foley Schain shared that the OEC is looking on the national level for evaluators that are not aligned to any one model. Data from the OEC unmet needs study could inform the evaluation. The OEC unmet needs study for the birth to 5 populations is looking at quality desserts, working with information from Child Trends and statewide data.

Merrill Gay asked how much unspent funds is available.

Karen Foley Schain estimating about \$150,000 in unspent funds

Renee Coleman Mitchell asked what's been the discussion on sustainability

Karen Foley Schain responded that the OEC is looking at Medicaid funds for Child First and looking at social impact bonds. She also stated that the proposed study will be very helpful in terms of sustainability.

Commissioner Jones Taylor also shared that Washington State is looking at using TANF funds for home visiting services.

Grace Whitney shared that Early Head Start got expansion funds and that having data would allow us to apply to expand Early Head Start. Also there could be the opportunity to re-purpose Head Start funds for Early Head Start. Grace also noted that Connecticut is not targeting pregnant women who are homeless. Arietta Slade asked if there was any money for Minding the Baby (MTB) within the MIECHV grant.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded that the MIECHV grant application is not for expansion so there is no money for Minding the Baby.

Grace Whitney said some families need more intense services than a parent educator.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded that the evaluation will be helpful moving forward. She restated that this is not an expansion grant and if it were, it would make sense to fund Minding the Baby. At this time to fund new programs would mean shutting down current programs that are performing well.

Arietta Slade inquired as to what support Ming the Baby could get from OEC.

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Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded that Minding the Baby can be part of the evaluation.

Darcy Lowell stated that the major home visiting models are designed for specific populations. She said it is a mistake to think that models can serve everyone and therefore that we need a continuum.

Melissa Mendez stated that moving forward, the Consortium wants to have a discussion earlier.

Rosa Biaggi stated that it seems like we are committed to the evaluation but she stated that HRSA has already established the effectiveness of the models and she feels it's a waste. Instead, we should update the needs assessment.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded that the Home Visiting Consortium could take that on. She also stated that the evaluation will look at the Connecticut context to see if we need a different constellation of services. She is aware of the urgency for programs and funding but we also want to address both primary prevention and secondary.

Isabelina Rodriguez shared her support for the Commissioner's decision to move forward with an evaluation. The information from the evaluation may position Connecticut to attract private funds for home visiting.

Elaine Zimmerman shared that she does not understand doing an evaluation but she respects the commissioner's decision. She stated that for various reasons Connecticut has had a difficult time creating a continuum of home visiting and it might take an evaluation to break the padlock.

Commissioner Jones-Taylor concluded the meeting at 12:00.