

Early Learning NH
Strengthening Families Centers & Center-based Network Meeting
Thursday, January 14, 2010
1:30 - 3:00 PM
Two Delta Drive, Concord

Attendees:

Susan Cloutier – Gorham Community Learning Center (via conference call)
Lisa Ranfos – CFDC at NHTI
Jesse Ransom – Easter Seals CCR&R Manchester
Jeanne Agri – SNHS Head Start/Child Development
Laurie Conrad – UNH CSDC
Tara Stowell – Dover Children’s Center
Carol Garhart – Holy Cross Early Childhood Center
Robin Hendrex – Belknap Merrimack Head Start/EHS/CC
Edna Coates – Monadnock Community Early Learning Center
Amie Patterson – Monadnock Community Early Learning Center
Sally Wood – First Start Children’s Center
Julie Sackett – Belknap Merrimack Head Start
Christine Mathieu – Girls Inc of NH
Julie McConnell – NH Community Loan Fund
Heather Coburn – Milton Children’s Center
Stacie McCoy – Rochester Childcare Center
Christina Tarness – VNA Community Services
Karyn Yeatman – VNA Community Services
Marianne King – Ossipee Concerned Citizens Childcare Center
Jan Richards – Easter Seals CCR&R
Suelaine Poling – Keene Day Care Center
Dawn Collins – Somersworth Early Learning Center
Susan Wall – Southern NH Services
MaryEllen Schule – White Birch Community Center
Bobbie Gaudette – White Birch Community Center
Ellen Edge – Keene Day Care Center
Cindy Wallace – Easter Seals CCR&R Bow
Celeste Horan – Marguerite’s Place Inc.
Tammy Labonte – Farmington Children’s Center
Marti Ilg – Lakes Region Child Care Services
Julie Rothmund – Lakes Region Child Care Services
Tricia Patten – Lakes Region Child Care Services
Kim Bruneau – Lakes Region Child Care Services
Carol Michael
Katie Brissette – Early Learning NH
Jackie Cowell – Early Learning NH

1. The meeting began at 1:30 with welcome and introductions.
2. Background and Update - Jackie Cowell, Early Learning NH
 - A. We decided to hold this as a combination meeting of Strengthening Families Centers and our Center-based Network to streamline the message we had planned to give regarding the changes to the child care scholarship system. Unfortunately, we are unable to make the anticipated announcement because it has not yet been approved.

- B. What we can talk about is that Commissioner Toumpas has been in the media stating that an additional \$38 million has to be cut from the DHHS budget and that some areas such as child care have been over budget consistently each month.
- C. Due to the economic downturn there are many more families needing assistance than originally predicted and even though no cuts were made to the child care budget, the funding is not sufficient to serve all needy families. There are more families qualifying for assistance, there has been a 300% increase in infants, there are more families needing full-time childcare, there are more children in licensed programs and there is an increase in the neediest families (step 1 & 2).
- D. Some changes were made to help offset the deficit including the suspension of the Licensed Plus and Accreditation awards, suspension of the Strengthening Families Centers stipends, and the October 2009 start of the wait list. On average 200 children are placed on the waitlist for every hour the district offices are opened. Even with all of these changes there is still a huge deficit and all line items need to be balanced.
- E. The typical process is departments make their recommendations for where to cut and then the head of each department chooses and presents it to the Governor's office and Legislature. In this case, the Child Development Bureau has been very open and invited many community partners to the table to offer feedback on which plan would be the least harmful to the least number of people. The plan that was recommended has not yet been approved by the Governor's office and Legislature so it can not be discussed publicly.

3. How is it Going?

- A. In Somersworth, after 18 years, the infant room has been closed due to low enrollment and in Monadnock the school-age enrollment is very low.
- B. Programs would like more notice about when a family is going off assistance or is up for re-determination so they can help. It was suggested that the 778 Authorized Representative Form, which gives the program permission to receive all notices of decision, could be a helpful tool. After the meeting however we learned that this form is not yet approved to be used by all child care programs.
- C. Many feel an appeal process is necessary for families who are closed without just cause.

4. Mobilizing Strategy

- A. Early Learning NH will be collecting stories that show how these changes are affecting families. A good example is a family that now needs assistance due to the economic downturn or a family who can not work because they are on the waitlist and don't have child care assistance.
- B. Senators and Representatives will need to receive calls by board members, directors, teachers, and parents who are their constituents.
- C. We will be mobilizing at the federal level too. Senator Shaheen cares deeply about the issue and with the reauthorization of CCBG coming up we have the chance to get some more federal money.

5. Meeting Adjourned