

Infancy Policy Leadership Circle Meeting

June 26, 2008

Summary

Our first meeting was attended by 40 people in person at Child Care Inc. in New York City and about 35 on the phone in the seven child care licensing regions of New York State. Many others said they wanted to join in the fall.

It was a very special evening for us and we hope, the start of a really important opportunity to bring the issues for infants and toddlers forward in the state as well as in the regions.

A number of ideas for the future were suggested by participants that are detailed below. We will also be developing a work plan and timeline for the next six to nine months and will be seeking your input.

General Discussions/Suggestions

Among the things suggested to do are making sure we have the right people at the table: e.g., the geographical, cultural, and discipline diversity we need to be truly representative—including adding more pediatricians and other medical people such as Medicaid managed care plans, lawyers, child welfare personnel, home visitors, occupational therapists, special needs, fatherhood workers, librarians, business community, faith-based organization representatives, more government officials, media people, and housing and disability experts. Should we also add foundation people?

Also, we need to find out what parents want. They are the best advocates for their children. We may not really know their priorities. One person suggested we hold parent focus groups across the state using the same questions. Another idea is to design a simple survey form to hand to parents for their feedback.

One issue raised was that everyone has their own agenda to promote and we need to develop an I/T agenda everyone is comfortable with and be sensitive to differences in emphasis. Also, are we going to focus on issues others have already worked on or new issues? And how can we best work with the wonderful resources already developed by Winning BeginningsNY and NY CAN?

It would also be helpful to have a diagram of the relationship between the Leadership Circle, Winning BeginningNY, and NY CAN. A preliminary diagram was prepared by our national Zero-to-Three consultant.

We also need to set up a mechanism for sharing ideas such as a listserv and/or bulletin board.

Most immediate steps are to see who we were able to attract and assess gaps; start to engage in person-to-person dialog about issues and next steps; collect financial commitment to join NYZTT; prepare the NYZTT web site for the Circle work and statewide and regional membership; and development electronic communications.

Technical Issues

A few technical issues we need to deal with for the next meeting:

- Assigning someone to greet people as they come on the phone, and as they come in the door
- Reminding phone callers to use their mute buttons
- Providing a microphone so folks on the phone can hear those in the room better
- Providing meeting dates further in advance to allow programs to stay open for phone use

Presentation Summaries

During the June 26 meeting, we had the following presentations:

- *Leadership Circle Vision*: Jackie Jones, New York State Advocacy Leader from Buffalo reviewed the development, purpose, and framework for the Infancy Policy Leadership Circle. Its primary goal is to become a strong voice for babies. By using a cross disciplinary approach, the members hope to promote an agenda for improved public policy and expanded state investment for young children and their families, using communication across all regions of New York.
- *History of the Infancy Movement* Evelyn Efinger, New York State Infant/Toddler Coordinator, traced the infancy movement in New York State from its' start in the 1990s with the Better Baby Care Campaigns to the present, highlighting the two statewide conferences and the ongoing infancy summits. .
- *Existing Advocacy Efforts* Carol Saginaw, Director of the New York State Child Care Coordinating Council, described the work over the last several years of two coalitions: Winning Beginnings New York (www.winningbeginningny.org/) on early care and education issues and the New York Children's Action Network (NY CAN) on children prenatal to age 21. NY CAN is convened by the Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy (scaany.org). Both groups are hosted by staff at SCAA and have experience in promoting children's needs with the NY State Legislature and state government agencies and mobilizing grass roots action through field captains and formal advocacy activities. They are excited to have the leadership circle add a special emphasis on infant and toddler policy and help them set priorities. An upcoming joint project is the Sept. 16 "Step Up For Children" rally in Albany to demand that all policymakers—local, state, and national--put child policy at the top of their agendas.
- *New York Zero-to-Three Network (NYZTT) Check-Up Report: Unequal from the Start*. Evelyn Blanck, co-president of NYZTT, highlighted some of the findings from this recently published report and the set of recommendations, using the framework healthy children, strong families, and early learning. Full text and summary as well as press release and talking points are at www.nyzerotothree.org. NYZTT has been charged with organizing the Infancy Policy Circle and guiding its work by the WinningBeginningsNY Build Initiative.
- *Establishing an Infancy Policy Agenda – Process and Tools* Julia Travers, Infant Toddler Coordinator for New York City and Co-Chair of the NYZTT Policy and Public Education Committee presented the Zero-To-Three Initiative Vision Statement—"A Winning Beginning for All Children," which is a collective vision culled from numerous State. It is based on the same three core principles used in the NYZTT report: Healthy Children, Strong Families and Early Learning. This vision statement will be our guide to a strategic approach to align existing funding, make wise new investments, and create a comprehensive system to address the critical needs of children from the prenatal period to age 3 within a broader context of 0-5.

The NYZTT Check-up prescription for an equal start is a good base to start making this vision a reality. We highlighted three recommendations in each category at the meeting, some of which other groups are working on, for example, a Quality Rating and Improvement System to improve program quality and help parents evaluate child care programs—a Winning Beginnings goal, and making home visiting universally available (goal of new Home Visiting Coalition). Other highlighted recommendations are: ensure a medical home for all families starting at birth, promote the American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations for regular standardized screening for developmental delay and provide support to parents from initial Early Intervention screening to receipt of services, improve access to available services and supports to families and streamline enrollment, routinely screen for maternal depression; raise standards for training and supervision for infant and toddler child care professionals to best practice standards; and continue to expand availability of proven infant and toddler programs.

Next Steps

Please give us your feedback and thoughts and tell us how you want to participate: e.g., help draft the work plan, host a meeting, prepare a parent survey, host a focus group, think about processes, serve on a committee for particular issues or activities, recruit additional members to fill gaps, help with communications, take minutes, suggest activities, etc. Please contact Carole or Jackie and let us know your ideas and interests.

Our job in September is to begin to describe a comprehensive policy agenda for infants and toddlers and families using the WinningBeginningsNY vision statement and the NYZTT Check-up to start. All of these materials are at the NYZTT web site at: <http://www.nyzerotothree.org/media/policyresources.html>

Our next meeting will be on Tuesday September 16, 2008. We will be meeting in three locations: New York City, Albany, and the Rochester/Buffalo area, to give more people a chance to meet in person (phone lines will also be available). The timing will be mid afternoon (probably 2-4 pm) to give folks coming to Albany for the Step up for Kids Day a chance to attend the rally on the capital steps from 11 to 1 pm. More information on details of the agenda, timing, and locations to follow first week of September.

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