

Head Start Reauthorization Bill & State Advisory Councils
12/6/07

Speakers:

- Danielle Ewan, Director of Child Care and Early Education Policy, Center for Law and Social Policy
- Anna Lovejoy, Program Director, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices

Danielle Ewan

- This call just about state advisory councils (SAC) on care, and covers an early understanding of what the bill says about the advisory councils. The bill has not yet been signed by President Bush, but is likely to get signed, and we will have a new Head Start bill for next five years. The bill is effective as soon as it's signed, but new sections will have different due dates. [Note: The President did sign the bill on Dec. 12.]
- SACs are in section 642b. They can be new or existing entities. There are questions about whether the councils are mandatory. The legislation says "states shall" create a council, but there is no penalty if they do not, and the money to fund them may not be appropriated in FY 2008.
- The state governor appoints members but the bill says members must include representatives from the following agencies: child care, state education, local education, higher education, local early childhood education provider, state Head Start (including Migrant and Seasonal HS, and Indian HS), State Director of HS Collaboration, state Part C, health or mental health care, office of the governor, and others at the discretion of the governor.
- 2 step process: Create advisory councils on early childhood education and care. Then apply for grant to office of Head Start, for amounts not less than \$500,000. Once funding is in place, enable activities.
- There are substantial requirements and responsibilities associated, including a periodic statewide needs assessment around quality and availability and high quality preK for low-income kids. It is not clear yet what "high quality" means or how it will be measured.
- The Council will identify opportunities and barriers to collaboration and coordination among child development, child care, early care and education, including both state and local agencies. The Council will also work on unified data systems and collecting data for people throughout the state. Recommendations are not yet available.
- Professional development: the Councils will be charged with developing recommendations around statewide professional development and career development, including addressing the capacity of higher education in the state by articulation agreements; career advancement; practicums and internships for higher education students.
- The Councils will have quarterly meetings and will develop statewide strategic reports on these issues. They must be funded by the states, and the strategic reports must be completed before states apply for money to implement the

- findings. The application must include substantial pieces such as the report, plan for use of the federal funds to create an EC system, early learning standards, who will be responsible at the agency level for implementation, a sustainability plan for the end of the grant.
- The grants (not less than \$500,000 per state) will be three-year implementation grants that will promote school readiness, promote child development, enhance child care programs, among others; will be specific.
 - Many questions remain. States that want to move forward can start by developing their advisory councils across EC programs. The grant seems to be a step to bring systems together.
 - Biggest question—will there be enough new money in the HS appropriation to fund the councils? The amount appropriated for HS was minimal, the President vetoed it, and negotiations continue. Even the highest possible increase is not enough to move forward with new initiatives. To do anything new is tied to new money for FY 08.
 - Timeline is also unclear. The strategic reports will need to go through a public comment period, the councils will need to be formed (but can be based on existing councils).
 - There is also ambiguity around the funding amount: seems to say \$500,000 grant, and that the Federal share of implementation will be 30%--does that mean states will be asked to put \$1 million into early care and education? Some states, especially small states, may not be able to do that. This will be clarified in the regulations and guidance in the coming year; may mean over time.

Anna Lovejoy

- NGA (National Governors Association): 100 years old. There are two sides to the organization:
 - a lobby side responsible for bringing the collective voice of the governors to Congress. Any policy produced by NGA must have the unanimous consent of all members. Activities are supported by states, include annual meetings.
 - Center for Best Practices: a 501c3 that supports governors and their advisors to assist in implementing a policy agenda. Serve as consultants, sources of information, etc. Planning to work on advisory councils. Currently have funding from the Buffett Early Childhood Fund through the Birth to Five Policy Alliance. The Center will support leaders of state advisory councils to accomplish two things: interpret and apply new regulations in law, and help understand and apply different requirements.
 - NGA Center promotes collaboration, systems building, etc.
- NGA Center is doing a few simple activities around these SACs:
 - create a list serv, with participation from directors/co-chairs of the councils.
 - share best practices in quarterly conference calls
 - hold a 2-day policy retreat for leadership and governors' advisors to learn/share learning around councils.

- help inform the states about the clarifications and rule-making coming out of the administration—will be an ongoing process.
- NGA Center just conducted and is finishing up a survey of states to see who has similar advisory councils, what they're doing, and who is on the councils. Preliminary findings (report to be released soon):
 - 36 states responded
 - 31 have some sort of coordinated, collaborative council type body.
 - About half have existing stand-alone entity, or one in the state human services
 - Over half established after 2000.
 - Of the groups, most common members are: state child care administrator, health care administrator, professional development provider/organization, state preK administrator, Head Start Collaboration director.
 - Funding: combine various streams from agencies, grants, in-kind services such as staffing or meeting space. About half funded at below \$500,000 per year.
 - Typical activities: coordinating multiple program services, assessing availability of high quality ECE, identifying barriers to coordination of state and federal services, seeking to improve coordination with/among health, mental health, home visiting, early intervention, special education, for a comprehensive approach to early childhood.
 - Most have standards for outcomes, professional development, career ladders; most are assessing availability of high quality preK and childcare, and identifying barriers to services.
 - Most coordinate with state early childhood comprehensive systems initiatives.
 - These groups are an important policy shaping body in the states.
 - Challenges and TA needs include: governance and coordination, , ECE assessments, increasing quality, professional development.
 - States that have these councils are on the right track, and if the SACs are mandatory, it will not be difficult for them to comply.

Q&A with the Speakers (please note all responses are from Anna Lovejoy and Danielle Ewan except where noted; they do not represent Project THRIVE)

Is there an opportunity for review or an update of the data you included in the NGA report? Who did you poll?

Anna: NGA contacted the governors' offices and asked who would be best to respond. We are going with the data we have, all data released now will be aggregate, not state-specific. When we release future publications with state-specific data, NGA will be checking it. Contact Anna Lovejoy (alovejoy@nga.org) to find out who replied to the survey for particular states.

Can you elaborate on the NGA list serv? Who will be/is participating?

Anna: NGA contacted the governors' policy advisors for education, health, and human services, as well as governors' Washington D.C. office directors, to ask them to designate someone to participate. The list may include more than one person per state. NGA just

sent out the announcement to designees, and let advisers know about it, inviting them as well. If you have interest and have not heard from NGA, contact your governor's office and ask to be involved, or contact Anna to find out who represents your state.

Any thought on including HSSCO directors?

Anna: We thought about it, could've surveyed half dozen people in every state. We know states have a lot of entities. In order to do this survey quickly, we thought it was best to go through the governor for one person per state.

Any feeling about how governors are considering this legislation? Opportunity or money issue?

Anna: We don't have a sense of it. It will be come more clear as bill is signed and becomes effective.

Is the Office of Head Start on this call, or are they planning their own call?

Helene Stebbins: This call was planned for the ECCS grantees to keep them up-to-date, and it took advantage of a pre-scheduled call time slot provided by THRIVE. A broader audience was invited after the call was planned.

What is the federal authority to comply if there is no penalty or mandate? What are the incentives? Will we be able to bend the required members, if it's not appropriate or applicable for our state?

Danielle: The way the bill is written, it seems to call for a 30/70 match, which is not great. It is unclear. There are a lot of questions that will have to be answered, we will need written guidance from HHS. I think the best thing to do is build on a current entity using the language in the bill as a lever. Look at the list, get something in place, start to move forward now.

You talked about an appropriation—as far as things are going, what do you think?

Danielle: I think we have very little hope of getting more than \$158 million that President Bush just vetoed. It will be the high water mark. We could just have continuing resolutions, which means no new funds. There are not going to be substantial increases.

Everyone should write to their own legislators about their concerns, but who should we copy letters to, or is that a waste?

Danielle: The opportunity for advocacy around the appropriations is now. Folks should be writing letters to those on the appropriations committee. The names and addresses are available on line. Try Labor, Health and Human Services, Education subcommittees. Say how important new investments are at this time. After the appropriations process, comments to HHS on the guidance and rules coming out of the new law are also important.