

2011 STAM – CCPRC Meeting  
Workshop A1  
November 16, 2011, 10:00-11:15 am

## **Meeting Parents’ Needs and Supporting Children’s Development: Cross-Systems Initiatives**

### **Description**

This session focused on two innovative collaborative initiatives—Illinois’ Action for Children’s Community Connections Project and the Early Head Start for Family Child Care Project—that aim to support parents in their use of home-based child care arrangements and improve positive outcomes for children. Through a facilitated discussion, the session presented findings from two evaluations that examined the implementation of these two efforts with a particular emphasis on the benefits and challenges of cross-system collaboration. Among the issues that were highlighted were strategies for building collaboration between and among systems, policies that facilitated or impeded implementation, and perceived benefits and challenges for home-based providers, Early Head Start programs, and pre-k teachers who participated in these initiatives.

### **Facilitator**

Dawn Ramsburg, Office of Child Care

### **Presenters**

Patti Banghart, National Center for Children in Poverty  
Patricia Del Grosso, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.  
Tom Layman, Illinois Action for Children  
Judith Rosen, Fairfax County Early Head Start for Family Child Care Project  
Linda Saterfield, Illinois Department of Human Services

### **Scribe**

Laura Rothenberg, Child Trends

### **1. Documents in Session Folder**

- “Linking Home-Based Child Care and State-Funded Preschool: The Community Connections Preschool Program;” Tom Layman, Patti Banghart and Nikki Forry (Handout)
- “The Early Head Start For Family Child Care Project;” Patricia Del Grosso (Handout)
- “What Do These Partnerships Look Like?” Patricia Del Grosso (Handout)

### **2. Summary of Presentations**

- **Summary of Presentation #1:** Patricia Del Grosso and Judith Rosen
  - Patricia discussed the Early Head Start (EHS) for Family Project which aimed to support the delivery of EHS services in home-based care. ZERO TO THREE developed the framework for the project and recruited 22 partnership teams which

- included a child care representative; these teams worked to develop processes and infrastructure to support EHS in home-based care.
- Judith explained that in 2002, there were children in the subsidy program that needed comprehensive services, which led to them combining EHS and CCAP (subsidies) to respond to the needs of families and children. Through this, they could expand Early Head Start, because both EHS and CCAP were together as part of the county agency. One difficulty in collaboration was the different rules and regulations attached to Head Start vs. those attached to CCAP. These were important issues to address along with meeting the needs of families that did not speak English as their first language.
- **Summary of Presentation #2: Tom Layman and Linda Saterfield**
    - The basis of Community Connections was valuing providers and considering them a community asset while also building school readiness by providing transportation to classrooms in schools.
    - Community Connections is an example that partnerships are possible. When the State implemented Preschool for All, the prek administrator asked for Linda’s help to involve children in home-based care in public prek. By not cutting the State reimbursement to the provider, providers have an incentive to have children attend prek. Tom has an infant and toddler specialist who is funded through the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF), to help improve the quality of care for infants in home-based care. This project looks at the principles of collaboration and partnership, it is child-focused so that the child can get the best education possible, it is family friendly because the parents get their choice of providers at no increased cost, and it is fair to providers because they are not disadvantaged for collaborating.
  - **Presentation #3: General Themes, Findings and Questions**

*Partnerships*

    - EHS for Family Child Care Project: Each community developed a work plan for their community. They set goals at the local and State levels to increase quality. Teams built infrastructure, e.g., training and communication that allowed providers to learn from each other and alignment of standards and benchmarks. Comprehensive support was offered: made sure providers are meeting the standards, made sure children receive the services they needed, etc.
    - Community Connections: People in Community Connections were in “their boxes,” so providers were worried that if children went to centers, they wouldn’t come back. Centers were worried about not getting child care funding for classrooms. There was a lot of discussion about context and building trust, because people didn’t know each other.
    - EHS for Family Child Care Project: People realized that the issues were bigger than their community, e.g., issues about ratios, eligibility, and provider education. Over the course of the project, many people increased their collaborations with State agencies (CCDF, Head Start collaboration, Education, QRS, etc.).

*Evaluation*

    - EHS and Family Child Care Project: the focus was primarily on partnership/systems-level work. The main data sources were administrative data, telephone interviews

- with subset of partnership teams, and consultants. Anecdotally we heard that providers were coming to training at rates that were atypical of those communities. They also expanded, such as using assessments or curriculum that they might not have otherwise used. Relationships were incredibly important to this project.
- Community Connections: For the first phase, they looked at implementation as well as key challenges, benefits and improvements identified by participants. Home-based providers bought into the program and reported personal benefits from participating. Some parents talked about how they learned of activities that home-based providers were using and reinforced them at home. Community Connections used a program called Building Language for Literacy, which has materials related to themes. This facilitated the connections between teachers and providers.

#### *Challenges Surrounding the Partnerships*

- Community Connections: some teachers struggled with aspects of home-based care, such as times to schedule the visits and uncertainty about what should be covered during visits (including issues related to infants and toddlers). They learned that problems are not insurmountable, but take creativity and resources to address. It is important to keep an open mind to barriers that might arise as the project continues. It is beneficial to create a model of partnership that we can expand upon in the future. It's important to have a joint goal, flexibility and intentionality.
- EHS and Family Child Care Project: It often took the commitment of high-level individuals to work through issues. Also, relationship building takes time, so it took time to get to a common language, common goals, etc. Additionally, there were barriers to implementation, including the number of children a provider could care under State licensing vs. under Head Start performance standards. Inconsistencies need to be anticipated and addressed.

#### *Questions from the Group*

- *What kinds of supports were provided to the specific communities or teachers in those communities?* Tom: There were not specific supports in place for the teachers, so we had to make do. Patricia: The role of the consultant was really important in these communities. They served as the neutral third party that could facilitate the relationship between the EHS and the child care entity (often resource and referral). Judith: Support staff operated as part of the EHS program, so that didn't need to be created (but needed to be extended to people who weren't already part of EHS).
- *How did you deal with the issue of the EHS Performance Standards with home providers? Also, with Community Connections, how did you deal with the expectations of the Preschool for All in terms of the partnership?* Patricia: EHS agencies were working with and supporting providers to meet the standards. Other communities were just starting and thinking they may do this someday, so they used the performance standards as a best practice guide. Patti: One of the benefits of the implementation study was to identify those aspects of the program that were unclear. Teachers were pretty clear on Preschool for All Standards, but confusion did arise about Community Connections.
- *Can you talk about effective approaches to improving quality? Are you bringing quality to the homes or are you bringing it from the homes?* Patricia: Some teams

were doing training in the community and offered supports such as substitutes, etc. Many teams also offered follow-ups; so, if they had group training, then they would have peer mentors go into the home and support that piece. Tom: We want the trainers, mentors, teachers, etc. to go into homes with the providers and actually listen and respond in a useful way when they've heard something significant.

### **3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants**

- This session highlighted two research initiatives that aimed to meet parents' needs while supporting children's development through the formation of partnerships across systems. The first partnership was the EHS and Family Child Care Project, which aimed to improve quality for early childhood in homes by leveraging comprehensive services with a partnership between EHS and CCAP. The second partnership was the Community Connections project, which was an initiative that partnered home-based settings with public school teachers by transporting students from the homes to classrooms for a portion of the day.
- The presentations explained several challenges involved in the partnerships, including: different rules and regulations for the partners, such as Head Start standards vs. licensing regulations, and differing schedules. As one panelist noted, partnership challenges were never insurmountable but rather took creativity to overcome.
- One main theme from the presentations was that building relationships takes time. People approach issues from their personal perspectives, so context discussions and trust building is required before partnering systems can understand how to coordinate their priorities (instead of viewing them as competing demands). One benefit to these projects was doing implementation research that allowed the projects to identify those aspects of the programs and partnerships that were unclear or not working as well as others.