

**Meeting Minutes**  
**CT Kids Report Card Leadership Committee Meeting:**  
**Tuesday, January 28, 2014 Quarterly Meeting**  
**2:00PM in Room 2B of the LOB**

**1. Welcome and Co-Chairs Remarks**

- a. The meeting was called to order at 2:10PM
- b. Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman provided introductory remarks and then requested members introduce themselves.
- c. David Nee noted the continued efforts of the Leadership Committee to be at the forefront of identifying the status of children in Connecticut.

**2. Project Status Report**

- a. Data Gathering and Reporting Process
  - i. Jill Jensen noted the difficulty of gathering data in a timely manner due to the Report Card team being largely volunteers. However, due to newly provided funding to the CT Data Collaborative, they have hired an executive director who has expressed an active interest in working with the Report Card to have the data imported into the website at a faster pace. Jill Jensen discussed the overall structure of the leadership committee, working group members, and identified the development of Strategic Action Groups (SAGs).
- b. Data Workgroup plans
  - i. Rep. Diana Urban noted the various issues brought up by Jill Jensen and other project members regarding the data collection process. She noted areas in which suppression or other data policies can impact the comprehensiveness of the data presented to the public. Rep. Urban then spoke about the establishment of the governor's CT Data Portal, which has a lot of potential to streamline the data needed to populate the Report Card's various indicators.

**3. Selected Indicator Updates**

**a. Are Connecticut children growing up in a stable living environment?**

- i. Latest Chronic Absenteeism data
  1. Marquelle Middleton provided a brief introduction about the importance of tracking and identifying chronic absenteeism over general student attendance rates. He highlighted the ongoing disparities among students who receive free or reduced lunch, Black or African American and Hispanic or Latino youths, and English language learners (ELL) compared to other populations. He stated that they found through their research that chronic absenteeism plays a direct role in on-time graduation rates.
  2. Morna Murray asked whether suspension data is incorporated into the chronic absenteeism rate and how much of an impact penal-based absences play into the total rate. Marquelle Middleton responded that, suspensions are counted by the schools as a part of absenteeism.
  3. Sen. Dantè Bartolomeo asked for clarification on the difference between the attendance rate and the chronically absent rate. Marquelle Middleton clarified that a youth a school district could have a district-wide high attendance rate, but fails to recognize that the missed days could be represented mostly by sub-groups of students instead of assuming every student missing a few days. These students that are missing enough days to be considered chronically absent are then not properly identified by the school district as needing additional attention or support by the school district.
  4. Elaine Zimmerman noted a concern that was raised at the last SAG meeting that chronic absenteeism data does not include Pre-K. She added the issue of chronic absenteeism has a further effect on the achievement gap between various groups of students in testing and likely plays a factor in other indicators from other domains in the Report Card.
  5. Ellen Shemitz asked about the Alliance Districts in Connecticut and whether those districts have been broken down by the other subgroups Marquelle brought up as statewide disaggregations. Marquelle Middleton responded that they have not disaggregated per district at this time.
  6. Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman asked when they are tracking for cohort graduation rates, are they tracking the specific child, or is it based upon the entire population of an on-time graduation year. Additionally, Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman asked if the correlation between the graduation data and chronically absent data is following the child consistently. Marquelle Middleton the data is at the student level so it is tracking the student's progress from when they enter high school to when they receive their diploma.
  7. David Nee highlighted the national standard that is applied in Connecticut is a student who has missed 18 days of school or more out of a 180 day school year have effectively lost that year of growth/progress due to absences. In addition, if that rate of absenteeism occurs for two consecutive school years, their rates of success in a number of areas drop dramatically.
  8. Elaine Zimmerman reiterated the importance of identifying suspensions as a barometer of the total population that is indicated as being chronically absent. Morna Murray stated that a lot of the behavioral and emotional/mental health problems youth have can stem from household economic/social difficulties.
- ii. Strategic Action Group Progress Report
  1. Charlene Russell-Tucker provided a brief overview regarding the status of developing the Chronic Absenteeism SAG. She noted they held their first meeting to define goals and areas of concern on January 21<sup>st</sup>.

**b. Are Connecticut Children Safe?**

- i. Latest Abuse/Neglect Data
  1. No discussion was had at this time

- ii. FAR Initiative Progress Report
      - 1. No discussion was had at this time
  - c. **Are Connecticut Children Healthy?**
    - i. Latest Childhood Obesity Data
      - 1. Marcia Maillard provided a summary of the various sources the CT Department of Public Health (DPH) utilizes to collect childhood obesity data and the standards for identifying youth who are clinically obese. She then briefly discussed the various data points and information from the surveys they utilize to calculate the aggregate obesity rate for children in the state.
      - 2. Sen. Bartolomeo asked how the oral health survey provided obesity information. Marcia Maillard responded that they collected the height and weight of the child during the survey process so they were able to establish a BMI.
      - 3. Judith Meyers asked if the overweight and obese data are combined or separate. Marcia Maillard responded that the data is separated by the two categories. Judith Meyers asked if the task force is looking into this topic for children under the age of five years. Marcia Maillard responded that observing obesity trends and data for children less than five years of age is difficult due to a lack of data. Currently they can only rely upon getting data for that age group through the Women and Infant Children (WIC) program.
    - ii. Obesity Task Force Progress Report
      - 1. Marcia Maillard stated the task force started investigating specific indicators that could be compiled to produce a comprehensive look at childhood obesity in the state.
  - d. **Are Connecticut Children Prepared to Lead Successful Lives?**
    - i. Office of Early Childhood (OEC) Progress Report
      - 1. Commissioner Myra Jones-Taylor provided a brief overview of the ongoing efforts of the OEC since it was established in July of 2013, including initiatives the OEC plans to undertake. She stated these items both system-building plans and actionable initiatives. The system-building plans include the creation of a universal developmental screening and referral system, a coordinated home-visiting system, the development of an integrated technical assistance system that coordinates all services currently available, and a coordinated birth-to-five early care education system. Commissioner Jones-Taylor then provided a brief set of data points regarding the various services and programs children are enrolled in across Connecticut.
      - 2. Morna Murray asked Commissioner Jones-Taylor her thoughts on the current age range defined for the OEC. Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded she is a firm believer that early childhood extends to eight years of age. That being said, the OEC has authority over issues covering children age birth to five years.
    - ii. Latest School Readiness Data
      - 1. David Nee asked about the data regarding children not enrolled in Care 4 Kids, CDC, or Head Start programs and whether it was an unduplicated count. Commissioner Jones-Taylor responded that it is not unduplicated, which she impressed is an important reason why the development of an early childhood information system is critical. There are a number of children who would be duplicated if they are in more than one of these programs, but is getting closer to being 100% accurate.
4. **Children's Behavioral Health Developments**
- a. Implementation of PA 13-178
    - i. Judith Meyers provided an overview regarding the increasing interest and policy focus on children's mental health. She highlighted the fact PA 13-178 encompasses all children in Connecticut and gave examples of where the law will impact them. Judith added that the law does require RBA implementation and a data driven quality assurance program.
  - b. Data development plans for behavioral health indicators
    - i. Ellen Shemitz noted that there seems to be an ongoing struggle to identify a population-based indicator that gauges the status of mental health for children in the state. Judith Meyers responded that there are system measures and program measures that could be applied, but it is not effective to go after those if we do not have population level data. Christine Dauser noted the closest, most current indicator used by the Report Card is under the Healthy domain, high school youths who have seriously considered suicide. Anne McIntyre-Lahner added that the implementation of PA 13-178 may be the catalyst towards developing a larger, population-based mental health indicator.
    - ii. David Nee noted the public health aspect to mental health needs by children. Elaine Zimmerman responded by noting an effort by the Secretary of State's Office participating in a nationwide civic health survey and there may be a way to adapt that survey model for mental health.
5. **Discussion**
- a. Indicator trends: Overall, are our kids doing better, worse, or about the same?
    - i. No discussion was had at this time.
  - b. Priorities for strategic action: Where is the most need for improvement?
    - i. No discussion was had at this time.
  - c. Leadership Committee next steps
    - i. David Nee indicated the next quarterly meeting would be held in May after the legislative session had concluded.
6. **Adjourn**
- a. The meeting was adjourned at 3:50PM