



State of Connecticut

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

STATE CAPITOL

HARTFORD, CONNECTICUT 06106-1591

CT Kids Report Card Leadership Committee

MINUTES

Quarterly Meeting: Wednesday, October 23, 2013

Members Attended: David Nee (WCGMF) co-chair, Rep. Diana Urban, Sen. Dante Bartolomeo (by telephone), Comm. Joette Katz (DCF), Myra Jones-Taylor (OEC), Terry Edelstein (CT Nonprofit Liaison), Sarah Eagan (Child Advocate), Ellen Shemitz (Voices for Children), Jim Horan (CAHS), Morna Murray (CCPA), Marilyn Calderon (CT Parent Power), Martha Stone (Center for Children's Advocacy), Rep. Catherine Abercrombie, Rep. Kim Fawcett, Rep. Mae Flexer, Rep. Whit Betts, Rep. Terrie Wood, Rep. Tim Ackert, Elaine Zimmerman (COC)

Members Absent: Lt. Governor Nancy Wyman (co-chair), Comm. Stefan Pryor (SDE), Comm. Roderick Bremby (DSS), Comm. Jewel Mullen (DPH), William Carbone (Judicial Branch), Ron Cretaro (CAN), Judith Meyers (CHDI), Sen. Art Linares

The meeting was called to order at 2:14 pm.

Co-chair David Nee welcomed everyone with opening remarks.

Rep. Urban stated there is a full agenda today with several informational presentations. She announced that Sen. Bartolomeo, who could not be at meeting in person due to her child's illness, is conferencing in via telephone. Rep. Urban also noted most executive agency members and the Lt. Governor would be late or unable to attend due to a conflict with a commissioners meeting in the governor's office.

Jill Jensen, temporary project manager for the children's report card project, gave an update on the CT Kids Report Card website, highlighting the new and improved features of its upgraded software (RLG Scorecard Version 3.0) that will be available to the public soon. Using the headline indicator of Chronic Absenteeism, she demonstrated the easier ways to access and filter outcome data as well as the "drill down" capabilities of the website (e.g., the story behind the data, critical partners, what works and best practices, strategies and specific actions that can improve results). Ms. Jensen also stated that links to related websites and electronic documents (e.g., research studies, task force reports, policy papers) can be easily added to the report card website to make it a centralized information resource.

Rep. Urban reviewed next steps for the project which includes establishing strategic action groups (SAGs) through the Leadership Committee to move forward on achieving our desired results for all Connecticut children. Their main purpose is to promote communication and collaboration and serve as a coordinating mechanism for information and action. She stated having outcome data on existing and new state strategies in one place with easy access is critical for strong accountability.

The SAGs will be made up of volunteers from relevant partner agencies and organizations and co-chaired by a state agency and a community representative. They will meet as needed to: review available data and develop additional information on results; identify what's being done now and what are promising practices to improve results; and make recommendations about effective statewide strategies.

Rep. Urban announced that Charlene Russell-Tucker from the State Department of Education has agreed to serve as a co-chair for an action group on Chronic Absenteeism and the report card project team leader for stability matters, Erica Bromley (Manchester Youth Services Bureau), will help coordinate its activities. David Nee stated he will announce a co-chair for Chronic Absenteeism who represents the community organizations actively working on this issue soon.

Elaine Zimmerman (COC) pointed out that youths and parents should be invited to participate in the discussion of chronic absenteeism strategies. Rep. Urban stated they should be considered critical partners. Jim Horan (CAHS) asked if recommendations from the action groups would include strategies for the local and state levels. Rep. Urban responded she would like to see both addressed by the report card strategic action groups.

Regarding additional strategic action groups, the leadership committee discussed building on the work of the existing task forces on Childhood Obesity and Children's Mental Health to address report card indicators within the health domain.

Formation of a strategic action group for the DCF Family Assessment Response (FAR) initiative, which impacts report card safety indicators, will also be explored by the department and the leadership committee. Fernando Muniz (DCF) briefly explained the new approach, noting there are two responses now when a call comes in to the agency's abuse and neglect hotline: investigation and referral for assessment of family needs if safety is not compromised.

Rep. Urban noted many state efforts aimed at preparing young children to lead successful lives are now under the purview of the new state Office of Early Childhood. She suggested the committee consider forming a strategic action group to oversee selected activities of the early childhood office. This group could also follow the work of a Hartford Foundation for Public Giving pilot project involving a tool called the Early Development Instrument (EDI), which is aimed at improving kindergarten readiness assessments.

Rep. Urban reported she has been meeting with various groups in the state that gather, analyze, and report on data related to the well-being of Connecticut children. She asked several to come to today's meeting to discuss their achievements and challenges.

Bennett Pudlin (Charter Oak Group) gave an overview of the Connecticut Data Collaborative, a public-private effort to improve the quality of and access to policy-related data in the state. It is developing CTData.Org as a central portal where anyone can access a wide range of data from federal, state, local and private sources relating to health, well-being and economic condition of Connecticut residents. At present, the site carries data for about 2,000 indicators including most of those incorporated within the CT Kids Report Card. Mr. Pudlin noted getting data from state agencies and other sources in a timely manner is an ongoing challenge for the Data Collaborative. Data quality also can be a problem in some areas.

Sheryl Horowitz from the Connecticut Association of Human Services gave a presentation on Kids Count, a national project supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. The goal of Kids Count is to enrich local, state and national discussions by providing policymakers and citizens with timely, accurate, and meaningful benchmarks of child well-being. Ms. Horowitz stressed the importance of reliable, relevant data and urged formation of a data advisory committee composed of key stakeholders who work on or with children's data. The advisory committee could monitor concerns and issues with data tracking, quality, and relevance and work on ways to improve access, coordination, consistency and reliability.

Orlando Rodriguez from Connecticut Voices for Children described his organization's current community indicator project. He stated there is a lot of data out there and the key is figure out what is the best, most important and most communicative indicator. The challenge is what we do with the data we have and how to focus on what is actionable.

Elysa Gordon and Scott Gaul from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving gave a presentation about their organization's Early Development Instrument pilot project. The EDI is an on-line tool administered by kindergarten teachers that assesses five key development domains (e.g., health, social competence, emotional maturity). The assessment data is combined with information about the community to create maps that help identify at-risk children.

David Nee summarized the issues raised by the presenters and asked if a data workgroup should be formed to try to address them and to advise the leadership group on data matters. No objections were raised and the decision was made to create a CT Kids Report Card data workgroup.

Bennett Pudlin volunteered to serve on the workgroup and stated it should be coordinated with the work of the Data Collaborative and the current efforts of the Governor's Non-Profit Cabinet to improve health and human services data quality and access. Orlando Rodriguez and Sheryl Horowitz also volunteered to be members of the data workgroup. Ellen Shemitz from Connecticut Voices stated the charge of the workgroup should be very clear, focused on a limited number of specific indicators, and include a set time table. Marilyn Calderon of Connecticut Parent Power stated parents and community people should be involved in the workgroup.

David Nee asked if there was any other business. Elaine Zimmerman invited everyone to the Chronic Absence and Achievement Gap Forum with Hedy Chang on November 12th.

David Nee asked for a motion to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 3:45 pm.