

# **Southern Regional Forum on Collaboration and Coordination Across Early Care and Education Programs**

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# SOUTHERN REGIONAL INITIATIVE ON CHILD CARE

## Southern Regional Forum on Collaboration and Coordination Across Early Care and Education Programs

### INTRODUCTION

To improve the quality of care, many states in the Southern region are actively engaged in collaborating across early care and education programs by undertaking initiatives in early literacy, universal pre-kindergarten, comprehensive professional development systems and building a strong infrastructure for ongoing collaboration. This message came across loud and clear at the third regional child care forum hosted by the Southern Institute on Children and Families. Support for the Southern Regional Initiative on Child Care is provided by The David and Lucille Packard Foundation. More information on the Initiative is located on the Southern Institute's Web site at [www.kidsouth.org](http://www.kidsouth.org).

The Southern Regional Forum on Collaboration and Coordination Across Early Care and Education Programs, held in Washington, DC, in June 2003, was designed to address issues related to Goal 1 in the ***Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education***. Goal 1, shown below, calls upon government to coordinate across programs for families and young children.

**Goal 1:** All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.

**Action Step 1.1:** Public policy at the federal, state and local level will require planning and coordination across major systems to improve quality, including Head Start, state pre-kindergarten, subsidized child care and licensing.

**Action Step 1.2:** Public policy at the federal, state and local level will support families by linking early care and education programs to health coverage, physical and mental health care, nutrition, economic support, transportation and parenting education services.

**Action Step 1.3:** Federal, state and local policies and systems will ensure coordinated, seamless transitions for children moving among early care and education programs and into kindergarten.

To showcase promising practices in collaborating across early care and education programs, the forum agenda included presentations on

collaboration initiatives by state and federal representatives and concluded with a discussion among representatives of early care and education professionals. This report provides summary information on the presentations. The Forum participant list, containing presenter contact information is located in Appendix A.

Invited participants included members of the Southern Regional Task Force on Child Care and the Staff Work Group, federal officials, state child care administrators, state Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) administrators, Head Start state collaboration directors, state representatives from Title I and pre-kindergarten programs, maternal and child health representatives, child advocates and representatives of foundations and the business community.

## **EARLY LITERACY**

Representatives from Arkansas and Tennessee were selected to present their collaborative initiatives in early literacy. Arkansas developed a curriculum framework and Tennessee adopted a commercial curriculum.

### **Arkansas**

Janie Huddleston, Director of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, and Tonya Russell, Head Start Director, described how Arkansas' child care, Head Start and public education programs worked together to develop early literacy curriculum frameworks for the Pre-K Early Literacy Learning in Arkansas (Pre-K ELLA) initiative. As a result of this collaborative, the frameworks are aligned with Head Start performance standards and with the kindergarten through second grade curriculum framework. The goal of the comprehensive training for the frameworks is to provide child care professionals with the knowledge and skills to implement developmentally appropriate experiences that promote emergent literacy skills for children (ages three through five). The training is provided to all partners by a diverse group of training entities, including two- and four-year institutions of higher learning.

The biggest obstacle the collaborative overcame was achieving consensus among the partners' front line teachers on age appropriate practice. Key leaders of the collaborative facilitated and mediated discussion and compromise, keeping the focus on the common goal, and provided training to achieve consensus. As a result of this collaborative early literacy effort, Arkansas has been invited to work on national efforts in social/emotional

curricula for young children and in infant and toddler curricula. Sharing lessons they learned, Huddleston and Russell communicated to forum participants that initially the collaborative group should weed out those who are not actively and positively engaged, identify a core working group of leaders and commit to mediation and compromise. Huddleston warned that collaboration is hard and takes a great deal of time and asked that federal officials allow states sufficient time to form successful collaborations.

## **Tennessee**

Deborah Neill, Director of Adult and Child Care Programs, described Tennessee's early literacy initiative. She said Tennessee's Head Start State Collaboration Director worked collaboratively with child care, education and Tennessee State University on the early literacy initiative. Adopting the Heads Up! Reading curriculum, Tennessee established two training paths. College credit is offered via live feed or taped version, and in-service training provides a more in depth presentation with the taped version of Heads Up! Reading. Training is provided in every area of the state at alternate times for easy access. The most difficult part of this initiative is convincing all community colleges to incorporate early literacy as part of their curriculum. Tennessee continues to work with them to encourage their participation.

## **QUALITY UNIVERSAL PRE-KINDERGARTEN**

Representatives from Georgia and West Virginia were invited to showcase their universal pre-kindergarten initiatives. Georgia began its effort 10 years ago, while West Virginia began developing their program in 2002. Each state acknowledged the invaluable assistance received from the United States Department of Health and Human Services regional offices, IV and III, respectively.

## **Georgia**

Robert Lawrence, PhD, Assistant Director of the Office of School Readiness, credited Georgia's success and longevity to a stable governmental structure. Georgia has been fortunate to enjoy stability in state leadership that is supportive of the program, in funding streams and in the political popularity of the program. With the passing of the lottery, Georgia moved from serving at-risk children in their public school pre-kindergarten program to making the program universally available to any child four years of age. The strategic plan for this initiative was developed collaboratively and is followed every day. Strategic alliances are a major

objective of the plan. The pre-kindergarten strategic plan is interfaced with the Georgia Head Start strategic plan and with standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). To enhance quality, Georgia also engaged collaboratively in an initiative to establish standards of care for quality in classrooms. These standards are followed by all providers, public and private.

## **West Virginia**

Kay Tilton, Director of Child Care Services, and Cathy R. Jones, EdD, Coordinator for Early Childhood/Even Start, acknowledged learning from Georgia in developing West Virginia's universal pre-kindergarten program. The catalyst for West Virginia was the passage of legislation creating an unfunded mandate for universal pre-kindergarten under the joint authority of the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Resources. These two lead agencies also staff the state advisory council, Partnership Implementing the Early Care and Education System (PIECES). Community Action Agencies, Head Start, local education and health and human service agencies, child care licensing, parents of pre-school children, the business community and many other local agencies collaborate to craft a strategic plan and the associated policies for PIECES. Reaching consensus among the separate programs of the early care and education system was a challenge the group met successfully.

West Virginia will implement their program through a collaborative county planning process with formal guidance and technical assistance provided to counties by the State. Grants are distributed to counties upon approval of a county plan, and a database is being established to reflect information collected in county plans. Fifty percent of pre-school classrooms are required to be in community programs and all programs must meet licensing standards. Content standards will align with Head Start outcomes and kindergarten content standards. While refining and implementing the county plan process, PIECES will begin work on public awareness, a professional development system and the infant and toddler system.

## **COMPREHENSIVE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

Representatives from North Carolina and Kentucky shared presentations on their professional development systems. Both systems are well defined, comprehensive and well integrated into the overall early care and education system, including child care, Head Start and pre-kindergarten.

## **Kentucky**

Nancy Newberry, Principal Assistant in the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development, described Kentucky's professional development system as part of an overall strategic plan to enhance early care and education, Kentucky Invests in Developing Success (KIDS). Recent information on brain research, an interest in economic development, education reform and the state of Kentucky's children were the catalyst for KIDS NOW. The State recognized the correlation between quality and the education and training of staff in child care and early education settings and made the decision to change their approach to professional development. KIDS NOW is research based and data driven. The level of training achieved by staff is integrated into STARS for KIDS, a quality rating system for child care which offers a system of incentives and rewards associated with achieving quality characteristics. Kentucky's professional development system is composed of five component areas: core content, credentials, training, articulation and scholarship. The policies and standards for each component are based on recommendations from workgroups composed of more than 150 stakeholders, including child care, Head Start and pre-kindergarten.

Policies and standards are approved by Kentucky's Early Childhood Professional Development Council and the Early Childhood Development Authority, a public agency attached to the Governor's Office of Early Childhood and empowered to make expenditures from the early childhood development fund. Enabling legislation requires that programs funded by the Early Childhood Development Authority shall be implemented by the appropriate agencies within the Cabinet for Health Services, the Cabinet for Families and Children, the Education, Arts and Humanities Cabinet, the Finance and Administration Cabinet or other appropriate administrative agency. In creating the Early Childhood Professional Development Council, the General Assembly sought to create a seamless system to upgrade the professional development of persons who are employed or provide training in child care or early childhood settings.

## **North Carolina**

Sue Russell, President of Child Care Services Association, described North Carolina's professional development system, which is guided by a voluntary organization, the North Carolina Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development. With considerable State support, North Carolina established a comprehensive and well-funded professional development and compensation system with its T.E.A.C.H. (Teacher Education and Compensation Helps) Early Childhood<sup>®</sup> Project (\$4 million), T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood<sup>®</sup> Health Insurance Program (\$2.25 million) and



its Child Care WAGE\$® Project (\$7.7 million). These three efforts support continued formal education with increased compensation. Russell described the Institute as a statewide collaborative effort to create a dynamic system that works on articulation helping child care teachers create their own professional development plans, increasing public awareness and developing online courses within the community college system. The collaborative professional development system is well integrated into North Carolina's overall early care and education system. In addition to the work of the Institute, the State has woven professional development through college coursework into its star licensure system. Russell indicated that one of the greatest challenges is to maintain a consistent system focus. She acknowledged that progress seems slow at times. Russell advised other states creating professional development systems to envision a broad system, focus on outcomes, be political and invest in sufficient resources to support a comprehensive professional development system.

## **A CASE STUDY OF A STRONG STATE COLLABORATIVE**

The state collaborative team from Arkansas shared their thoughts and impressions on forming and maintaining a strong, working state collaborative infrastructure. Arkansas team members included Dee Cox, Program Manager in the Department of Education, Janie Huddleston, Director of Child Care and Early Childhood Education, Ann Patterson, Director of the Head Start State Collaboration Project, Tonya Russell, Head Start Director, and Susan Underwood, Program Coordinator for Grant Initiatives and Early Childhood Education in the Department of Education. The team reported that the Arkansas legislature was the catalyst for the early care and education collaborative group.

A legislative committee told representatives of early care and education programs that they must achieve consensus on their requests if they expected to get any additional funding or new legislation. In addition to this directive, legislation was enacted requiring children to be assessed, programs to use assessment results as a tool for individualized instruction and common indicators to be established across geographic and program areas. Another catalyst was a change in leadership at the state level. The Arkansas team advised states that want to form a collaborative infrastructure to include all programs serving children, know the history of the partners and their past attempts at partnerships, keep a focus on children as the purpose of the collaborative and to look for partners not usually invited, such as the sheriff's office. Lessons Arkansas learned include:

- Rely on a core group of leaders willing to work.

- Don't let regulations be a roadblock.
- Understand and respect the baggage each partner brings to the table.
- Create a win-win scenario for each partner.
- Keep the focus on children.
- Develop a strategic plan and work the plan.
- Be political.

Arkansas acknowledged that in the beginning they had many meetings. Team members used these gatherings to talk about what it took to build trust and set about building strong relationships to support collaboration. Once trust among the partners was achieved, meetings were less frequent. Presently the team does not have formalized meetings. Instead each brings the others into initiatives and issues in which they are involved. Huddleston stated the infrastructure has demonstrated sustainability in that it has survived the loss of two of its three key leaders, and their replacements are now actively engaged in the effort.

## **FEDERAL INITIATIVES**

The United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS) and the US Department of Education were invited to make presentations on federal early care and education initiatives and collaboration efforts at the federal level.

### **US Department of Health and Human Services**

Shannon Christian, Associate Commissioner for the Child Care Bureau, Administration on Children, Youth and Families (ACYF) in the USDHHS, described the collaboration efforts of ACYF.<sup>1</sup> She stated the No Child Left Behind Act was the compass heading for ACYF efforts and that the outcome for the federal initiative, Good Start, Grow Smart, is school readiness.

Christian described several efforts to collaborate with other programs and with the states. Within ACYF the Child Care Bureau collaborates with Head Start, regional offices and ACYF contractors. The ACYF collaborates with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in USDHHS and with the US Department of Education. The ACYF invites state administrators to their offices for discussions with federal staff and researchers to learn from states' experiences. Staff members from the ACYF also participated in Regional Early Childhood Educator Academies hosted by the US Department of Education. These regionally located academies were held to deliver scientifically-based research on cognitive development and highlight practical ideas to pre-kindergarten teachers and child care providers.

In setting standards for state plans, the Child Care Bureau requires collaboration in the implementation and design of guidelines for early literacy and encourages collaboration in state planning and professional development and coordination across funding streams. To further encourage collaboration, the Head Start Reauthorization Act proposes states have an option to administer Head Start funds so they can better integrate these funds in their early care and education system. The intent is that states develop a collaborative plan for preschool that includes a system for accountability and professional development.

Christian indicated states have a long history of collaboration in early care and education. She said while there is an early childhood-Head Start task force that reports to the White House, ACYF needs a staff work group as recommended in ***Collaboration Among Child Care, Head Start, and Pre-Kindergarten***.<sup>2</sup> The collaboration report prepared by the Southern Institute presents results of a telephone survey of child care administrators and state Head Start collaboration directors in eight southern states. A section of the report details advice for federal officials. An excerpt from this section is provided below:

*The following programs at the federal level should get together on the issue of early childhood and family support, collaboratively examine policies, reduce inconsistencies, and create flexibility: Head Start and Child Care Bureaus, Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Department of Education, Early Childhood and Adult Learning. Health and Mental Health need to join this process, along with senior grandparents program in the Office on Aging, Developmental Disabilities, Paternity and Child Support, Housing and Urban Development, and the Department of Labor.*<sup>3</sup>

## **US Department of Education**

Jill D. Stewart, Education Program Specialist for Early Reading First in the US Department of Education, presented information on federal early care and education initiatives, including Title I, Even Start, Early Reading First and Early Childhood Educator Professional Development.

The purpose of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, the largest federal education program, as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 is to ensure that all children have an opportunity to succeed in school. Twelve percent of Title I children are in kindergarten and preschool. Local education agencies are allowed to use Title I funds in a Head Start program, an agency operating an Even Start or Early Reading First program or another comparable public early childhood development program. Local education agencies using Title I, Part A funds for early childhood for low-income children must comply with Head Start performance standards.

Even Start programs address literacy for parents and children through unified family literacy programs. Even Start programs are required to integrate four program components, including early childhood education, parenting education, adult education and interactive literacy activities between parents and their children. Even start programs are also required to form partnerships to deliver these four program components and are required to coordinate with other early childhood programs, including Head Start.

The purpose of the Early Reading First program is to prepare young children, especially those from low-income families, to enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive and early reading skills to prevent reading difficulties and to ensure school success. Grantees include preschools operated by Head Starts, Even Starts, Local Education Agencies and private agencies and organizations. The Early Reading First funds are available to improve early childhood programs through professional development, language and reading activities developed from scientifically based reading research, high quality language and literacy rich environments, screening assessments to identify children at risk of reading failure and scientifically-based reading research applied to improve all aspects of the program.

The purpose of the Early Childhood Educator Professional Development program is to improve the knowledge and skills of early childhood educators who work in communities with high concentrations of children living in poverty. Applicants must represent partnerships between institutions of higher education and public agencies/Head Start/private organizations and, if feasible, an entity that can train educators to identify and prevent behavior problems or work with abused or neglected children. Eighteen grantees serve children from birth to five years of age in programs such as Head Start, public pre-kindergarten, day care and community centers.

## **PANEL DISCUSSION ON COLLABORATION**

The final session of the forum was a discussion of collaboration in early care and education, to address the following:

- Emerging issues in quality early care and education that can be addressed collaboratively, e.g. assessment, professional development, funding and quality settings.
- State and federal barriers to collaborations that seek to improve the quality of early care and education.

- Actions by federal authorities to facilitate states seeking to weave together multiple funding sources to provide early care and education, transferring successful state collaborations to the local level.

Panel members included:

- Sarah Shuptrine, President and CEO, Southern Institute on Children and Families, moderator;
- Fred Boothe, Commissioner, Bureau for Children and Families, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources;
- Shannon Christian, Associate Commissioner, Child Care Bureau, US Department of Health and Human Services;
- Barbara Ferguson Kamara, Executive Director, Office of Early Childhood Development, District of Columbia Department of Human Services;
- Ramona Paul, PhD, Assistant State Superintendent, Professional Services Division, Oklahoma State Department of Education;
- Ann Segal, President, Action Strategies;
- Sheila Skiffington, Project Director, Education Development Center, Quality in Linking Together (QUILT) Project;
- Jill D. Stewart, Education Program Specialist, Early Reading First, US Department of Education;
- Phyllis Stubs-Wynn, MD, MPH, Branch Chief, Infant and Child Health, Maternal and Child Health Bureau; and
- Linda Zang, Director, Maryland Head Start Collaboration, Governor's Office for Children, Youth, and Families.

Stimulated by questions from Shuptrine and from the audience, panelists covered a range of topics related to collaboration, Goal 1, action steps 1.1 – 1.3 of the ***Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education***. A summary of the issues raised and discussed follows.

## **WHAT ACTIONS CAN STATE AGENCIES TAKE TO SUPPORT COLLABORATION ACROSS HEAD START, PRE-KINDERGARTEN AND CHILD CARE IN THE AREAS OF:**

### **Assessment**

Ramona Paul, PhD, Oklahoma State Department of Education, acknowledged that assessment is one of early care and education's most controversial subjects. Hesitation in using assessments centers on what criteria and measurements best represent results. However, the federal government has mandates for assessments. States, therefore, need to move forward on measuring and reporting results. Oklahoma mandates curriculum standards for kindergarten through the twelfth grade. In 2003 a decision was made to address assessments

for the four-year-old programs. The state early care and education leaders used the US Department's Early Childhood Educator Academies to develop early learning standards for the four-year-old program.

### **Professional Development**

Linda Zang, Maryland Head Start State Collaboration Director, reported that Maryland has many professional development programs underway but that State budget cutbacks have hindered their progress. Maryland's credentialed and tiered reimbursement system has been the catalyst. Training is only one part of professional development. Higher education is the second component. Maryland has worked hard to integrate higher education into their professional development system. Zang stated the federal government could assist states by building more articulation standards in legislation and regulation and by providing technical assistance to programs in weaving together the professional development mandates, standards and funding.

### **Funding**

Fred Boothe, Commissioner, Bureau for Children and Families, West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources addressed the issue of what the federal government can do to improve collaboration in funding for early care and education. Boothe said that absent additional funding, the federal government should clearly and consistently express a common vision for Head Start, child care and pre-kindergarten. This vision should guide common objectives, guidelines and outcomes. With a common federal vision, objectives and outcomes for early care and education programs, states could be given authority to administer funds that follow the vision and achieve the objectives and outcomes.

### **Quality Settings**

Barbara Kamara, District of Columbia child care administrator, stated that collaboration in monitoring would improve quality in early care and education settings and efficiency in administration. Collaboration at both the state and federal levels should occur not only across early care and education funding sources but also across related programs such as disabilities, food program, transportation, etc. Guidance to the states should be collaborated at the federal level. States should be briefed on important issues and provided a checklist of areas of concern.

## **WHAT REAL OR PERCEIVED BARRIERS MUST BE ELIMINATED TO ACHIEVE STATE AND FEDERAL COLLABORATION?**

Ann Segal, President of Action Strategies, said she worked in federal government for 32 years and ran a child care center. Acknowledging that states have serious budgetary problems, Segal said the greatest barrier for states is insufficient resources. Another significant barrier is lack of a common vision. At the federal level, the purpose of child care is primarily seen as a support to allow parents to work. The purpose of Head Start and education is to educate children. Segal said snobbery exists among the profession, with child care on the bottom of the totem pole. She said programs are often reluctant to work together because they are afraid they might lose funding. She advised states to refocus their attention on children birth to age three.

Sheila Skiffington, project director for QUILT, a provider of technical assistance to states, acknowledged that programs are often reluctant to work together because they are afraid of losing their identity and their funding. Segal advised states to revise policies and align standards so that local agencies can blend funds. Skiffington said just because federal programs have different standards, this does not prevent states from raising standards and establishing a common set of standards. She said that the federal initiative, Good Start Grow Smart, is setting the stage for more collaboration.

Addressing barriers to assessment, Segal advised federal and state governments not to wait for research to give us all the answers before addressing assessment. She stated that when assessing and using assessment information, it is important we compare disadvantaged children who have services with disadvantaged children who do not. We should avoid comparing disadvantaged children who have services with middle class children who do not have services.

## **WHAT CAN FEDERAL AUTHORITIES DO TO MAKE IT EASIER FOR STATES TO WEAVE TOGETHER MULTIPLE FUNDING SOURCES?**

Fred Boothe, Commissioner from West Virginia, said multiple eligibility requirements and transportation regulations are the biggest barriers in West Virginia to blending funds. The federal government could provide technical assistance to states on unique ways to blend funds for training and professional development. Establishing common standards at the state level is a good way to pool money.

Barbara Kamara, District of Columbia child care administrator, reported that regional offices have been helpful to states in blending funding. The federal government should use the model of the Mott Foundation on school age care for early care and education. States can use Good Start Grow Smart as an opportunity to extend the dialogue among programs.

### **WHAT DOES IT TAKE FOR STATES TO TRANSFER COLLABORATION TO THE LOCAL LEVEL?**

Sheila Skiffington responded that states can promote local collaboration best by modeling good collaboration at the state level, including speaking well of one another, giving consistent messages, requiring collaboration when distributing funds and expecting the bar for quality to be raised when programs blend funds.

Linda Zang, Maryland's Head Start State Collaboration Director, advised states to develop common assessment guidelines and implement those with ongoing training and technical assistance. She advised that people in authority have to put the wheels in motion.

Phyllis Stubbs-Wynn, MD, MPH, Branch Chief for Infant and Child Health, advised states to involve the local level in planning. She said cultural competence is a barrier when involving the local level and asked states to work harder to break down these cultural barriers using advances in telecommunications technology.

### **WHAT OTHER ACTIONS ARE NEEDED TO ADDRESS COLLABORATION?**

#### **Collaborating with the Health Care System**

Phyllis Stubbs-Wynn addressed collaboration and health care. She acknowledged that during the last 10 years there has been a major shift in how the early care and education system does business. As policy makers we understand the need to collaborate and to be accountable. She stated collaboration among partners is best served by following the child. This also is a good way to look for evidence that collaboration works. In developing a collaborative system of care, look for all the hands that touch the child and develop partnerships among all providers of care. The Maternal and Child Health Bureau has made a grant available to states to encourage collaborations and partnerships to support families and communities in their development of children healthy and ready to learn at school entry.



Shannon Christian, Associate Commissioner of the Child Care Bureau, reported that Head Start also has a 10-steps model that states can use. She indicated she had been taking notes during the forum and that she would begin working on some of the things she had heard. She said she has seen states use quality funds for consultants and take advantage of waivers, partnerships and pilot projects to loosen eligibility requirements. She acknowledged that these experiments may lead to permanent change.

## **Transitions**

Jill Stewart, Education Program Specialist for Early Reading First in the US Department of Education, said state education agencies should extend state standards to pre-kindergarten in collaboration with Head Start and child care. Curriculum mapping should occur to align standards for pre-kindergarten and kindergarten through third grade. Early care and education partners should include kindergarten through third grade policy makers in developing plans and standards. Kindergarten through third grade should focus more on families. Kindergarten teachers and pre-kindergarten teachers should come together for planning.

Ann Segal said schools should be more cognizant of being ready for pre-school children. Some progress has been made in this area but not enough.

## **IMPROVING QUALITY AND ACCESS**

To conclude the forum, Sarah Shuptrine asked all panelists to respond to the question, "What can we do to improve quality and create more access for families to early care and education?" Responses are summarized and listed below:

- Strengthen the early care and education constituency base by building more partnerships and creating a consistent message
- Articulate a broad vision so everyone can see themselves in it
- Recognize we are working toward quality opportunities for care
- Marry the concepts of education and care so each is an intricate part of the other
- Become political in putting forth your agenda
- Tap unusual spokespeople to deliver the early care and education message
- Do not underestimate the value of pictures, measurement and cost benefit analysis in conveying the message
- Target your message to the audience. Media professionals like pictures of real people in good programs. Business people like the brain research information

- The message should stress the economic issues of early care and education
- Quality early care and education benefits the state and the nation, not just children
- In the absence of additional funds, demonstrate how groups can collaborate and do more to benefit children and to achieve outcomes
- Always set the highest standards for children
- Bring influential people to programs to see quality early care and education and its impact on children and families
- Target the message of quality in early care and education settings to principals and teachers who deal with parents
- Get media to cover public hearings and arrange for simultaneous multi-lingual translations
- In planning and advocacy involve unusual parties tangentially connected with early care and education, such as lawyers, architects and bankers
- Get an outside entity to conduct parent satisfaction surveys and publish the data
- In communicating an agenda
  - Promote solutions in manageable steps
  - Do not use scare tactics
  - Do not talk about more than can be done
- Gather a strong group of leaders to talk with the governor, the legislature and the media
- Make the public aware of the early care and education outcomes achieved
- Celebrate successes at the community level

## **POLICY BARRIER**

Differing eligibility rules were cited as a policy barrier to collaboration and coordination of early care and education programs. Attention to eligibility rules and regulations is an essential component of a collaboration initiative.

A federal policy barrier affecting migrant families was identified at the forum. Tonya Russell, a Head Start Director from Arkansas, said the definition for agriculture, which identifies who is eligible for programs targeted to migrants, differs among the US Department of Education, USDHHS Migrant Head Start program, the USDHHS Migrant Health Program and the US Labor Department. These conflicting definitions cause local programs problems in serving all migrant families and in dealing with referring agencies. The US Department of Education's definition is broader and allows communities to reach more types of migrant workers.

State and federal actions are necessary to address eligibility policy barriers to collaboration and coordination.

## CONCLUSION

The Southern Regional Forum on Collaboration and Coordination Across Early Care and Education Programs provided participants an opportunity to gain knowledge in the following areas:

- Early care and education initiatives that are priorities at both the state and federal levels;
- States' collaboration strategies on these early care and education initiatives;
- Federal officials' collaboration efforts on federal early care and education initiatives that are priorities; and
- Collaboration issues that need further action.

State early care and education officials were able to present models of collaboration, to network with other states and to discuss early care and education issues with federal officials. Federal early care and education officials presented their initiatives, heard from state officials and engaged in discussions on collaboration to improve quality in early care and education. Child advocates and foundation representatives were made aware of states' progress in collaboration to improve quality and challenging issues facing state administrators.

To provide additional evidence of state efforts at collaboration in early care and education, the Southern Institute will publish a report on collaboration initiatives, including descriptions of state strategies and contact information. The goal of the forum and the collaboration report is to inform policy makers, advocates and foundations and to assist state administrators in achieving Goal 1 in the ***Southern Regional Action Plan to Improve the Quality of Early Care and Education***, “All children and families will have the benefit of a quality, comprehensive and coordinated early care and education system.”

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> Shannon Christian substituted for Joan E. Ohl, Commissioner, Administration for Children, Youth and Families.

<sup>2</sup> Dottie Campbell, Collaboration Among Child Care, Head Start, and Pre-Kindergarten: A Telephone Survey of Selected Southern States, (Columbia, SC: Southern Institute on Children and Families, December 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Dottie Campbell, Collaboration Among Child Care, Head Start, and Pre-Kindergarten: A Telephone Survey of Selected Southern States, (Columbia, SC: Southern Institute on Children and Families, December 2002).

## **APPENDIX A**

**Participant List  
Southern Regional Forum on Collaboration and Coordination  
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June 25-26, 2003  
Washington, DC**