

## **Great Start for All Minnesota Children Task Force**

Tuesday, February 22, 2022

6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Virtual Meeting: WebEx

Also available by livestream to the public.

**Task Force Members Present:** Adriana Lopez, Ann McCully, Amy Walstien, Barb Fabre, Brook LaFloe, Cindi Yang, Clare Sanford, Cyndi Cunningham, Deb Fitzpatrick, Debbie Hewitt, Janell Bentz, Jenny Moses, Jayne Whiteford, Karen Fogg, Senator Karin Housley, Kathleen Church, Kraig Gratke, Krystal Shatek, Rena Schlottach-Ratcliff, Lauryn Schothorst, Representative Liz Boldon, Luciana Carballo, Lydia Boerboom, Meghan Caine, Senator Melissa Wiklund, Michelle Trelsted, Missy Okeson, Nancy Hafner, Nicole Blissenbach, Oriane Casale, Pat Ives, Sandy Simar, Shakira Bradshaw, Summer Bursch, Suzanne Pearl

**Task Force Members Absent:** Representative Peggy Bennett, Tonia Villegas

**Task Force Consultants Present:** Ellen Johnson, Afton Partners; Gerald Liu, Afton Partners

**Children's Cabinet Staff Present:** Erin Bailey, Angela Butel, Hannah Quinn

### **Welcome and Agenda**

Task Force members reviewed virtual meeting protocols and went over the agenda for the meeting. The agenda included thoughts on how to build toward an actionable plan, a discussion of our process and progress so far, revisiting previous work on equity and effectiveness, and a report out on working group work.

### **Meeting #3 Minutes**

Members took an informal vote to approve minutes from the January 25 meeting. The minutes were approved with 27 votes.

### **Building toward and actionable plan**

The Task Force is charged with developing a plan and implementation timeline that ensures all families have access to affordable, high-quality early care and education that enriches, nurtures, and supports children and their families. Plan recommendations can be in the form of legislative actions, which can be taken by the Minnesota legislature through the lawmaking process or administrative actions, which can be taken by Minnesota state government agencies through executive action or administrative processes. The implementation timeline will be a phased plan starting in July 2025, finishing no later than July 2031.

The Task Force will submit the plan and implementation timeline to:

- The Governor
- Legislative Committees with jurisdiction over early childhood programs:
  - In the Minnesota House:
    - Early Childhood Finance and Policy Committee
    - Education Finance Committee
    - Education Policy Committee

- Health Finance and Policy Committee
- Human Services Finance and Policy Committee
- In the Minnesota Senate:
  - Human Services Reform Finance and Policy Committee
  - Education Finance and Policy Committee
  - Health and Human Services Finance and Policy Committee

Representative Liz Boldon, Senator Karin Housley, and Senator Wiklund, three of the legislators who serve on the Task Force, gave remarks regarding how to make the plan actionable and positioned for success. Themes included:

- The plan and implementation timeline should be as specific as possible – recommendations should be clear about intent and purpose, and should include details and data.
- The Task Force should engage with legislators and stakeholders through the plan development process. Continued buy-in from these groups will lead to a higher likelihood of success.
- There have been other task forces and councils that weren't able to achieve implementation of their recommendations because of a lack of consensus. That is something this Task Force should work to avoid.
- Working groups will be vital to meeting our timeline and goals. They will need to have specific tasks and work towards reaching goal statements.
- There is a large amount of expertise and experience, thoughtfulness, diversity, and knowledge on the Task Force. The group can harness that to produce a report that is actionable and leads to real change, but needs to work toward finding consensus and agreement.

Task Force members discussed who has a stake in an effective ECE system, including an initial list of: children, families, providers, the ECE workforce, businesses, and the state. Members discussed adding the following groups to the list: the K-12 system, higher education, and funders. There was also a discussion about the distinction between “providers” and the “ECE workforce”. In this context, “providers” refers to businesses, programs, and settings where children receive early care and education. “ECE workforce” refers to staff, educators, and the individuals who work in ECE settings.

### **Our Process and Progress**

Task Force members reviewed the process laid out for deliverable development and the progress so far, including how the Task Force actions are building toward meeting the legislative charge. These actions so far include the development of Task Force Guiding Principles, the equity and accountability process, stakeholder engagement process, norms and expectations, and voting protocols. Task Force members have put forward values statements, policy ideas, and governance ideas that have been documented by staff. Task Force process will move these toward actionable recommendations.

Voting Members of the Task Force took a formal vote to “formally acknowledge our commitment to the Mixed Delivery System; all types of providers and settings provide value to families and children, and family preference must be honored and respected by design.” With 14 voting members present, the vote passed with 14 votes in favor.

## Revisiting equity

Guiding Principles reflect the Task Force's values and beliefs, guide how it operates, and lay a foundation for decision-making. After discussion of proposed guiding principles at the last meeting, Task Force co-chairs brought forward the following revised draft guiding principles:

- Promote Equity: We will prioritize a system that promotes equitable outcomes, with a specific focus on children of color and building cultural competency in ECE classrooms.
- Prioritize Family Perspectives, Needs, and Choices: We will prioritize families' perspectives, needs, and choices as we make data driven and evidence informed recommendations, recognizing that all provider types and settings provide value to the system.
- Support the Power of Local Communities: We will ensure local communities are able to define their own priorities and are supported to build the system that meets their children and families' needs.
- Build Upon our Solid Foundation: We will build upon the successes of Minnesota's past and current system, lessons from other states, and the expertise and research in the field.
- Uplift and Diversify the ECE Workforce: We will invest in our dedicated and capable early childhood professionals so that they have the opportunity to thrive and grow, and we will build and support a racially diverse workforce.
- Recognize Implementation Realities: We will recognize inherent system constraints while remaining responsive to local, state, and federal landscape changes.
- Expect High Quality and Effectiveness: We will endeavor to create a high quality and effective ECE system that meets the needs of all of Minnesota's children and families, regardless of circumstance, knowing that the state's future workforce, economy, and resident welfare is dependent upon it.
- Design for Stability, Sustainability, and Positive Impact: We will work to support funding stability for providers, educators, and staff across mixed delivery settings to ensure better service for families.

Recognizing Task Force work is grounded in equity, Task Force co-chairs brought forward two recommendations for discussion before a vote:

**Recommendation 1:** Formally adopt the definition of equity from the Early Childhood Systems Report "When every person, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, or geographic location has the opportunity to realize their full potential of physical, social, emotional, and cognitive well-being, without limits imposed by structural inequities. Equity is ensuring everyone has what they need to be successful. This is different from equality which involves treating everyone the same."

**Recommendation 2:** Formalize the priority groups for consideration within Task Force planning, including:

- Racial and ethnic minorities, including People of Color and Indigenous people (POCI)
- Those experiencing multi-generational or ongoing trauma
- Those at risk of or with developmental delays or disabilities
- Those from non-English speaking homes
- Those experiencing homelessness or living in low-income households

Task Force members discussed these recommendations. Members brought forward suggestions to add the LGBTQIA community to the definition of historically disenfranchised groups and the equity definition. Members also suggested changing the language in Recommendation 2 from "those from non-

English speaking homes” to “those from homes where English is not the dominant language”. After discussion, co-chairs brought Recommendation 1 to a vote, while tabling Recommendation 2 for further edits.

Voting members took a formal vote on Recommendation 1. With 14 voting members present, the vote passed with 9 votes in favor, 3 votes against, and two abstentions.

### Revisiting Effectiveness

Task Force members have discussed factors for access in previous meetings. Task Force co-chairs brought forward the following factors for equitable access for an informal vote:

- Accessibility and ease of the process through which parents determine eligibility, identify options, and secure early care and education
- Availability (schedule & hours) and accessibility (geography, location) of early care and education that meets the diversity of families' needs
- The role local communities should have in both *determining access priorities* for their communities and *how to meet access needs*
- Income & other eligibility requirements that lead to public subsidy access for early care and education
- Resources and ability of providers to offer culturally responsive programming and environments
- Transportation and other barriers, such as language barriers, affecting access to families' programs of choice

The vote passed with 24 votes.

Task Force members participated in a breakout session examining the below definition of an effective ECE system:

In addition to being affordable and accessible, an effective ECE system centers child and family well-being. It does this by:

- Ensuring offerings address and advance the social, emotional, psychological, physical, and intellectual needs of each child
- Providing safe, stable, secure, consistent, nurturing, and enriching environments for each child
- Building trusting relationships between each family and their caregivers
- Connecting families to resources and supports *they* have identified will increase their family well-being

Each group was asked to discuss what they like about the definition, what they would change about the definition, and what it would take for providers and their workforce to be able to offer this experience.

#### 1. Group one discussion themes:

- The group liked the social and emotional needs being called out in the first bullet points.
- Last bullet point connects families to needed supports – what they have identified
- A cultural component is important, providing responsive environments

- The group identified that stable and consistent funding would be needed to allow providers to offer this experience.
  - How do we ensure offerings are effective, with a measure of accountability?
  - The group identified that support that is needed to providers and staff themselves – there needs to be care for those providing care.
2. Group two discussion themes:
- One thing that is missing from this definition is the importance of settings that are affirming of diversity of cultures, families, and children. This is inclusive of each child’s culture, as well as lessons in settings that promote caring and openness to difference.
  - Importance of a setting that is supportive of needs of workforce – a teacher’s working environment is the children’s learning – you can’t build trusting relationships when teachers are burned out.
  - To allow this experience, there needs to be more money in the system.
3. Group three discussion themes:
- A positive is the focus on relationships – building trusting relationships between caregivers, children, and families.
  - The workforce needs time to prep the environment and make sure they are able to provide an effective, enriching setting.
4. Group four discussion themes:
- One thing missing from the first point is a setting needs to meet the linguistic needs of the child.
  - One solution to make sure providers can offer this setting is possibly having roaming supports – teams that could go out to FCCs and other providers to provide extra support.
  - Prohibiting expulsion based on behavioral issues.
5. Group five discussion themes:
- Recognizing this definition is based in a wrap around approach, centering children and families.
  - To offer this type of experience, providers need more training, support through legislation, and conversations with parents.

### **Working Group share-outs**

The first meeting of the Workforce Compensation and Supports Working Group was held on March 9. In the meeting, the group considered the working group charge and legislative considerations, including:

- **Workforce Demographics:**
  - Preserving and increasing racial and ethnic equity and diversity in the workforce
  - Developing affordable, accessible, and aligned pathways to support ECE staff's career and educational advancement
- **Compensation:**
  - Identifying a compensation framework that supports recruitment and retention of qualified staff in every setting
  - Aligning provider compensation with that of elementary school teachers
  - Tying provider reimbursement rates to employee wages

The group also brainstormed ideas around defining the four areas of the charge: qualified, diverse, supported, and equitably compensated

The first meeting of the Family and Provider Affordability Working Group was held on March 10. In the meeting, the group Considered the working group charge and legislative considerations, including:

- The maximum percentage of income that families must pay for ECE
- The process through which families will access financial assistance for ECE (infrastructure, benefit mechanisms, and financing mechanisms)
- How provider payment rates for childcare will be determined and updated
- How to streamline funding and reduce complexity in plan administration
- Roles in administering the plan (including state agencies, local agencies, and community-based organizations)
- How to maintain and encourage the further development of Minnesota's mixed-delivery system in the plan

The group also brainstormed what comes to mind as members think about what they like, wish, and wonder about family benefits and provider funding.

### **Timeline and next steps**

As Task Force staff maintains and updates records of potential recommendations to include in Task Force deliverables, members of the public and members of the Task Force are asked to provide written input. Input can be emailed to [GreatStart.TaskForce.MMB@state.mn.us](mailto:GreatStart.TaskForce.MMB@state.mn.us).

Draft timeline of work:

- Task Force Launch: November 30, 2021
- Work Groups begin meeting: February 2022
- Today's Meeting: February 22, 2022
- Research & Analysis in Work Groups with Task Force guidance: March – September 2022
- Draft recommendations and report completed: December 15, 2022
- FINAL Report submitted: February 1, 2023

There was discussion regarding timing of upcoming working group meetings being adjusted to allow broader participation, including from the ECE educators in the group.

**Next Task Force Meeting: March 29, 2022, 6:00-8:00 p.m.**