

## **Access and Quality of Preschool and Childcare Subgroup** *January 6 Meeting Notes*

### **Welcome**

The following workgroup members were in attendance:

Selena Mayo, Total Action for Progress (Head Start and Early Head Start provider)  
Bill Ermatinger, Huntington Ingalls/ Chamber of Commerce  
Barb Newlin, Division of Childcare and Early Childhood, Dept of Social Services  
Toni Cacace-Beshears, VA Association for Early Childhood Education  
Josie Webster, VA Council for Private Education  
Sharon Veatch, Child Care Aware  
Karen Lange, Regional Military Child Care Liaison, Child Care Aware  
Teresa Harris, JMU  
Sue Gellar, Wingspan

The following workgroup members were on the phone:

Karen Gallagher, Child Development Center for Learning and Research, Virginia Tech  
Phyllis Mondak, Special Education, Dept of Education  
Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, Lord Fairfax Community College  
Bob Pianta, UVA  
September Jonas, Knowledge Universe

### **Child Care Aware Presentation:**

Sharon Veatch, of ChildCare Aware, provided an overview of issues related to access and affordability of child care in Virginia. Her power point presentation covers the particulars of that conversation, which also included the maps that are available online here:

<http://va.childcareaware.org/virginia-child-care-programs/>

\*Do note, these maps don't include any unregulated providers. Local ordinances also affect the maps. For example, some localities don't allow any family home care providers to operate; while others like Arlington, Alexandria and Fairfax have set up dual licensing systems where providers must have a local and a state license (which have different requirements).

She also noted the 1988 JLARC study which still has relevant recommendations for this group. That study can be found online here: <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/reports/Rpt108.pdf>

Questions were raised about why these changes haven't been implemented. Suggested answers included: philosophical debates about the state's role in regulating the industry; ability to ignore the issue until tragedy occurs and pressure is created to make changes; and the amount of research that has been done on brain development since the 80's which now better informs policy makers about the importance of the quality of care in early childhood settings.

Sharon also spoke to the experience Kansas recently had in lowering the threshold for licensing from 6 to 1 children in 2010. Though some providers did close as a result of the increased regulation, the system as a whole still has the capacity for the same number of children and access was not greatly decreased, nor did costs drastically increase, with the additional regulation.

## **VA Child Care Subsidy Program**

Barb Newlin, from the Department of Social Services, provided the group with a comprehensive overview of how the administers its child care subsidy program. Mary Ward, the Subsidy Program Administrator was also in attendance and helped answer questions. Their power point is quite detailed and provides an in-depth overview of the program.

Committee members who are service providers also shared their experiences with the program, and challenges around the swipe cards, attendance based reimbursements; and success with new management and reimbursement data systems.

Barb then briefly reviewed the Office of Child Care's summary of the new statutory changes for the CCDBG funds (which pay for the subsidies). Barb explained that although these changes have been signed in to law, the timeline for implementation spans 2 years and includes various waivers that states can apply for as they work through the implementation process. This legislation reflects the quantity vs. quality tension that the workgroup members discussed throughout the meeting, but overall, the direction the feds seem to be moving is towards quality. Barb noted some of the highlights from the summary document, explaining that some requirements VA is already meeting or close to meeting (posting inspection reports publicly, for example) while other requirements will need focused attention from the state (like posting instances of substantiated child abuse).

The law requires background checks on all staff of those providers receiving subsidies, along with enhanced health and safety requirements. Virginia does not currently require subsidy recipients to be formally licensed (nor does the federal government) but given these enhanced standards, Barb explained that it does seem prudent to streamline the system to the extent possible by requiring all subsidy receivers to become licensed so that VDSS is not administering multiple sets of standards to different providers.

It was also noted that VA doesn't qualify for any tribal set-aside funding because we don't have any federally recognized tribes; and that one of the major changes is that the CCDF state plan cycle has been extended from 2 to 3 years (her power point includes details and timeline for VA's next state plan).