

**Access and Quality of Preschool and Childcare Subgroup
Meeting Agenda**

Monday, March 9 at 1pm

DSS Central Regional Office, Richmond Room

1604 Santa Rosa Road; Richmond, VA 23229

And via conference call 866-842-5779 and with pass code 4752632705 (*please note this is a new conference number*)

I. Welcome and Introductions

II. Reports from Subgroups

Access: Sharon Veatch

Quality: Karen Lange

Professional Development: Phyllis Mondak

III. Next steps for Subgroups and Workgroup

Upcoming Meetings:

Monday, March 30, 2015 at 1pm (same location): Continue discussion of recommendations from subgroups; discuss priority #4: *Strengthen outreach and education Virginia parents regarding quality early care*

***If Needed-* Monday, April 13, 2015 at 1pm (same location):** Finalize recommendations of the workgroup to send to the full council

April 24, Workgroup Recommendations due to Holly Coy by COB

Next Full CCCS Meeting:

May 4, 2015 at 3pm in West Reading Room of the Patrick Henry Building

Access Subgroup Discussion

Members: Sharon, Emily, Josie, Barb, Mary, Zelda, and September

Goal of the Subgroup: To identify Virginia’s highest priorities related to access to quality care and develop strategies for increasing this access.

Discussion of Features of an Accessible System

- Affordability (impacted in part by subsidy eligibility)
- Demand for services
- Choice in provider/ provider-type
- Services for kids with special needs (language, behavioral, medical, developmental)
- Nontraditional hours for parents in shift-work
- Education of providers on taking subsidies (in with professional development as well)
- Transportation (public transit routes, vouchers for families to fix cars, etc)
- Zoning, HOA’s and Insurance – impact accessibility of child care in certain localities
- Differences in accessible vs. available care
- Expanded Access to Quality via existing systems – (i.e. VSQI – Accreditation, etc.)

Access Priorities and Preliminary Recommendations

1. *Underserved areas of the state*

- a. Conduct a Targeted Statewide Needs Assessment to determine:
 - i. Underserved areas of the state
 - ii. Where greatest need is for access is to infant/toddler slots, nontraditional hours, services for those that have special needs, are homeless, etc.

2. *Affordability and Eligibility*

- a. Targeted research and analysis needed to look at competition between Head Start and VPI programs; make recommendations on adjusting age of slots available to better meet the demand.
- b. Analysis of “What is the true cost of quality care?” – (tool on cost of quality to determine cost), study on the impact of rates on the affordability and eligibility regarding child care subsidy families
- c. Support the work of DSS to improve access to quality for subsidy families

3. *Expanding Access to Quality*

- a. Expand access to existing quality systems (VSQI, Accreditation, Licensure, etc)
(Additional discussion by subgroup(s) is needed to identify and develop strategies)

4. *Educating and Empowering Parents*

- a. Public awareness on “How to Choose Quality” and expanded access to quality via existing systems *(May fit in to planned discussion by full workgroup on parent education and engagement)*

Quality Subgroup Discussion

Subgroup Goal: Boil down core elements of quality programming that would be relevant to *any* setting; prioritize most important aspects.

Quality programs meet the minimum state licensing regulations, including basic health and safety requirements, and strive to meet higher standards from other systems such as Head Start, VPI, VSQI, State recognized Accreditations, NAEYC Accreditation, NAFCC, etc. Continuous quality improvement is reflected into the program and supports self study with an assurance of quality through consistent standards and positive outcomes.

Definition of quality in JMU needs assessment:

“Longitudinal studies indicate that the best outcomes for children and their families come from an investment in high quality programs that provide well-trained staff, appropriate adult-child ratios and group sizes, stimulating interactions and learning experiences, and parent education and engagement.”

I. Well-Trained Staff (*Defer to Professional Development Group for full scope*)

- Professional development with an understanding of the foundational value of health and safety requirements and the importance of teacher quality;
- Staff should be able to conduct formal or informal screenings and/or referrals for children who may need additional services

II. Appropriate Adult-Child Ratios and Group Sizes

Adult/ Child ratio and Group size are important to quality and recommend at a minimum meeting state licensing ratios and striving for higher standards in the regulating systems that a program might operate.

III. Stimulating Interactions and Learning Experiences

(From Competencies for Early Childhood - Learning Environment (pages 43-58))

1. Overall Learning Environment
2. Learning Strategies
3. Curriculum
4. Schedules, Routines and Transitions
5. Physical environment
6. Materials and Equipment
7. Collaboration

Enriched environments for children will have the following common threads:

[\(From Six Principles of Early Education\)](#)

- Include a steady source of positive emotional support
- Have an atmosphere free of undue pressure and stresses
- Present a series of developmentally appropriate novel challenges
- Allow for social interaction for a significant percentage of activities
- Promote mental, physical, aesthetic, social, and emotional development
- Create an enjoyable atmosphere of exploration and fun learning

IV. Parent Education and Engagement

[From Competencies for Early Childhood - Partnering with Families and Community and Effective Interactions](#)

1. Knowing and Respecting Families
 - Create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all families, accepting their cultural practices
 - learn about and understand families' circumstances, goals, values, concerns regarding their children
 - Maintain confidentiality
 - Nurturing Families as Advocates
2. Communication
 - Communicate daily with the family to exchange information -- share info about the child's progress, activities, interests
 - Communicate program policies with families
 - Share information regularly with the family obtained from child observation, and formal and informal assessments, collaborating with the family to plan strategies and individual services
3. Collaborative Community Partnerships
 - Involve families in program-wide activities

Definition of Accessibility from the JMU needs assessment:

Accessibility refers to the ability to obtain the program or service needed by or for the family or child at the time it is needed. Factors associated with accessibility include program information, eligibility, location, hours of operation, and capacity.

Access and Quality of Preschool and Childcare Workgroup

March 9 Meeting Notes

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
Phyllis Mondak, Special Education, Dept of Education
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
September Jones, Knowledge Universe
Emily Griffey, Voices for Virginia's Children
Allison Gilbreath, VCU

The following workgroup members were on the phone:

Barb Newlin, Division of Childcare and Early Childhood, Dept of Social Services
Cheryl Thompson-Stacy, Lord Fairfax Community College
Karen Gallagher, Virginia Tech

Reports from Subgroups (Attachments were circulated prior to the meeting, and are [online here](#)).

Access Subgroup: Sharon walked the group through the Access Subgroup document which outlines features of a truly accessible system the group agreed on; and the group's top 4 priorities as far as increasing access.

There were questions about the cost of quality calculator and how it has been used in others' states and how we might use it in Virginia. Barb noted that it's a complex model that requires lots of detailed inputs. It was used in the Tiered Subsidy study that was requested by Sen. Miller and provided to the General Assembly this winter. The workgroup could look at this and its use in other states to determine if/how it should be pursued here.

Quality Subgroup: Karen explained that the group boiled down core elements of quality programming that would be relevant to any setting; including areas of priority to be considered.

The group discussed the need to operationalize these components of quality in Virginia as being the heart of the matter. Some suggestions included:

- Creating a better floor (licensing) by tightening those requirements
- Coordinating existing technical assistance (at Child Care Aware) or funding additional TA staff at DSS to help providers access existing resources
- Aligning standards, assessments and professional development around core values of early childhood system in VA

There was also discussion about the need to educate Center directors on these standards of quality and the resources available to them within different priority areas.

Professional Development Subgroup: Phyllis and workgroup members started with ECAC documents on professional development, and identified remaining challenges and recommendations. They acknowledged the reality that many of the programs have their own system of training but it is separate due to different funding streams but that there is a need for a comprehensive system that covers everyone who is involved in caring for children birth to 5.

They noted there are some immediate steps that the group could recommend:

- Possible recommendation for SCHEV to look at a 4 year Early Childhood degree whereby those with an AA in early childhood could add 2 years at a 4-year institution and at the end of 4 years have an early childhood degree with skills applicable to the field.
- Formalize and empower the VCPD (with Council or Children's Cabinet)
- DOE is currently waiting on the Governor and Attorney General's Office for feedback on proposal for birth – 5 licenses; that is needed before progress can be made at DOE. Group could recommend or request those opinions be sent back ASAP.

But that the need for a comprehensive system is the ultimate goal for us to be working towards. The group will work to refine the recommendations and update the ECAC documents, with an eye toward short and long term recommendations

There was also discussion about the difference between pre-service and in-service needs to be looked at. In service training can be provided on evidence based practices, in cost effective ways that helps providers improve the basic quality of their programs.

The group discussed the complicated nature of how professional development affects quality and access in the system. The lack of PD certainly lowers the quality, but compensation is such that it doesn't easily accommodate increased PD/Quality. Inherently increased PD/ Quality/ Compensation means decreased access for some families.

Additionally, it was noted that there is a need to align standards, assessments and professional development around core values of early childhood system in VA.

Next Steps for Subgroups:

Each of the subgroups will meet before the March 30th meeting. In addition the Access and Quality groups will meet together once to discuss how to increase access to quality via existing systems – VSQI, accreditation, licensure, etc. Refinements will be made to initial ideas, with the goal of some concrete recommendations being presented on the 30th for discussion.

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