

2015 PUBLIC COMMENT AND TESTIMONY FOR THE NEW JERSEY COUNCIL FOR YOUNG CHILDREN

January 30, 2015

Good afternoon,

I am, Elmoría Thomas, Co-Chairperson of the NJ Early Care and Education Alliance. On behalf of the New Jersey Early Care and Education Alliance, we commend the members of the Council for the development of a strategic plan that has outlined its goals for continued implementation of a comprehensive early care and education system for New Jersey. We thank you for this opportunity to comment on the plan. We trust you hear our comments and act upon them, plus know that our comments are meant to be supportive throughout the work of the Council for Young Children.

The NJ ECE Alliance would like to recognize the Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood for sending a representative to our monthly meetings. The information shared with the Alliance membership has been valuable and informative to us in revising our mission to meet the needs of the early care and education community.

We applaud the Council for Young Children for taking into consideration our previous suggestion in providing incentives for programs meeting the requirements of QRIS.

In this new edition of the strategic plan, it states “the Council for Young Children will be creating deeper and more meaningful coordination of state systems”. However, the NJ ECE Alliance believes that in order to meet this goal there must be more collaboration and communication with grass roots stakeholders who are already in the state’s system and who have been a part of New Jersey’s early care and education workforce for many years.

The NJ ECE Alliance would like to see greater diverse representation and input from Early Care and Education Professionals. Additions to the Council’s membership will bring new ideas and resources.

The NJ ECE Alliance recommends inclusion of the Department of Community Affairs, NJ Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, The League of Women Voters, the NJ School-Age Coalition, the NJ Catholic Conference, the National Council for Jewish Women and the NJ Early Care and Education Alliance.

We would like to echo again non-elimination of existing quality services. The grass roots work of the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in parent education, data collection and training has served in the community for 30 or more years. The NJ ECE Alliance believes that creating new avenues to provide training has incurred higher training costs and has reduced allocations for existing training entities, such as the CCR&Rs. The NJ ECE Alliance sees the new training academies as an asset to New Jersey’s Professional Development infrastructure; however, we must not forget the needs of dual language learners, literacy issues and/or other special circumstances. Other options for access to professional development must be available to these groups. On-line coursework or the college environment will not address the needs of many already in the early care and education workforce. A small investment in CDA and other

coursework through the CCR&Rs can address the issue of dual language learners; literacy issues and more local training opportunities.

The NJ ECE Alliance is concerned that investing in a new Infant/Toddler Credential is a duplication of an existing service through the Coalition of Infant/Toddler Educators and an unnecessary cost to the early care and education system. New Jersey has a nationally recognized Infant/Toddler Credential which has been very effective. There are 115 infant/toddler professionals with this credential. How is the proposed I/T Credential/Endorsement going to impact what currently exists and how will the Credential/Endorsement impact those who have earned the NJ Infant/Toddler Credential? Regardless of whether it is an AAS or an AA, there should be one system. No fees to obtain the Credential/Endorsement should be paid outside of New Jersey.

The Council for Young Children is in the process of revising the Kindergarten Common Core Standards and the 1st to 3rd grade teaching and learning standards. Acknowledging the importance of afterschool programs as part of the full day learning process, the NJ ECE Alliance encourages the review of the NJ Quality Standards for Afterschool developed by NJSACC.

The NJ ECE Alliance recommends the NJ Council for Young Children look closely at the impact of these new initiatives within this new system; reach out to the early care and education workforce for input before these decisions are made and act upon the input received. The Council for Young Children should recommend more options for CDA training and earning an I/T Certificate, Credential or Endorsement.

The NJ ECE Alliance believes there is the need for continuous local professional development throughout New Jersey. The CCR&Rs have been leaders in professional development offering opportunities to the early care and education workforce for program quality improvements. CCR&Rs have offered trainings on topics such as the NJ Infant/Toddler Credential, the Child Development Associates (CDA) Credential, Strengthening Families, Childhood Obesity Prevention, Nutritional and Physical Activity Self-Assessment, Medication Administration, Curriculums, Pre-K Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and training on the benefits of joining Professional Impact NJ's Registry. Currently there is a high demand for CDA and medication administration trainings which needs immediate attention.

As the NJ Council for Young Children continues to make recommendations for early care and education quality enhancements, the NJ ECE Alliance recommends the Council include the CCR&Rs as a service provider in all professional development initiatives. The Council should encourage and support more articulation agreements between community colleges and the CCR&Rs. CCR&Rs have a local presence and have developed relationships with the early care and education workforce. Maintaining these community-based relationships will assist in aligning and coordinating early care systems to continuously support quality services to the early care and education profession, children and families.

The NJ ECE Alliance believes that an all-inclusive mandate for participation in the NJ Registry will assist in improving the quality of care and learning throughout all early care and education disciplines. The Registry provides a clear systematic professional path, the opportunity to improve caregiver and teacher qualifications, and the articulation between levels of teacher

preparation. The NJ Registry also compiles data for tracking continuous early care and education quality improvements within the early care and education workforce.

This is a quality enhancement that the NJ ECE Alliance recommends the NJ CYC embrace and plan for in its continuous work in building a comprehensive early childhood delivery system.

As mentioned, the NJ Training Academies are a great asset to NJ Professional Development System. However, there needs to be a clear timeframe to address county specific health consultation in New Jersey. New Jersey has been without a system of health consultation since 2010. Through the NJ First Steps Initiative, it's been reported that health and safety is one of the primary issues in improving quality in child care and early education environments. It is essential to the health and well-being of our youngest children that health consultation be available to over 6,500 child care programs in New Jersey serving over 330,000 children and their families. (Giosa 2007).

The NJ ECE Alliance recommends immediate action be taken to implement health consultation in New Jersey.

A clear and shared vision, as well as, sustainability will be necessary for short- or long-term implementation and success in creating a comprehensive early care and education service delivery system. The NJ ECE Alliance looks forward to continued work with you in this challenge.

Respectfully submitted,

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Giosa, R. (2007). Medication administration safety in child care. Unpublished manuscript.