



DATE: June 30, 2014
FROM: ECE Programs Workgroup (Chair L. Carol Scott and Co-Chair Christy Brookins)
TO: Missouri Coordinating Board for Early Childhood
RE: Recommendations for Board consideration

The ECE Programs Workgroup thanks the Missouri Coordinating Board for Early Childhood (CBEC) for its investment in consultation to inform our discussions. Following careful review of the commissioned white papers and research summaries, we have formulated the following recommendations from our workgroup. We hope that CBEC will consider our suggested recommendations and determine to move them forward to the Governor's Office, departments represented on CBEC, and General Assembly. Thank you for your consideration of our work.

Child Care Fee Assistance (Subsidy)

We see the General Assembly's FY15 increase of 3% in child care assistance (subsidy) reimbursement rates as a good first step toward a crucial goal. The ECE Programs Workgroup recommends that child care assistance (subsidy) reimbursement rates be increased by 3% per year until reimbursement rates pay are sufficient to purchase child care services at all programs with fees at or below the 75th percentile of the regionalized market costs of child care. The Office of Administration should complete projections on when we will reach this goal, using this strategy. After that goal is achieved, reimbursement rates should continue to be increased annually, as needed, to maintain families' access to at least that proportion of the market.

Rationale. The short-term outcome of this recommendation is increased revenue for child care facilities so that higher salaries may be paid. Low wages result in the inability of programs to recruit and retain qualified early childhood professionals to work with our state's most vulnerable children during the most formative years of their lives. Turnover remains high (28% in Missouri in 2011), and results in an unstable environment and poorer outcomes for the children and families in our state. The short-term results of continued low wages for the early care and education workforce are limited kindergarten readiness and early school success. Long term outcomes include lower graduation rates and an unqualified workforce across all industries. While increasing child care subsidy reimbursement rates is an indirect strategy to increase compensation in the early childhood workforce, the ECE Programs Workgroup believes it is a crucial step for our state to make progress in this area.

A long-term outcome for this recommendation is that lower-income families will have greater access to better quality child care services while they work or attend school. Increasing rates to cover the 75th percentile of the market cost for child care will help ensure that lower-income families are not left with access to only the lowest cost child care options that do not produce the desired outcomes for children.

continued

Professional Development

The ECE Programs Workgroup recommends that, when federal Child Care and Development Fund reauthorization legislation increases the percentage of required quality set-aside, DSS should:

- 1) provide a sustaining level of annual funding to the T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI program, and
- 2) provide funding to professional development programs that integrate training and coaching, as key quality improvement initiatives for our state.

Rationale. In addition to the better outcomes for children at child care, early learning, and after-school programs that participate in T.E.A.C.H. MISSOURI, our state also needs more teachers with college education in child development or early childhood education to meet new standards. Upcoming expansion of Early Head Start, pre-k, and home visiting initiatives will all require an expansion of the early care and education workforce that holds qualifications such as the Infant Toddler Child Development Associate (CDA) credential, BA/BS degrees in child development or early education, and the qualifications to earn state teaching certification. As we increase the number of lead teachers who earn these credentials, we need to also elevate the competencies of assistant teachers and aides, to ensure the best outcomes for children. Widely available and comprehensive professional development that pairs instruction with coaching to ensure implementation is essential to ensure the child outcomes our children need.