

Child Poverty and Prevention Council Meeting

*Wednesday January 11, 2012
1:30 p.m.
Legislative Office Building Room 2B
Hartford, Connecticut*

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| I. | Welcome | 1:30 p.m. |
| II. | Approve Meeting Minutes of December 2011 | 1:35 p.m. |
| III. | Council Progress Report 2011 | 1:40 p.m. |
| IV. | Review of Revised Short-Term Priority Recommendations | 2:00 p.m. |
| V. | Children in the Recession Subcommittee Update | 2:45 p.m. |
| VI. | Next Steps | 2:55 p.m. |
| | A. Process to Develop Long-term Recommendations | |
| | B. Next Meeting | |

Meeting Summary

Child Poverty and Prevention Council

Wednesday, December 14, 2011

Members Present: Anne Foley (Chair), Laura Amenta (CTF), Peter Palermino for Claudette Beaulieu (DSS), Cheryl Resha (SDE), Lindy Lee Gold (DECD), Kim Somaroo-Rodriguez for Brett Rayford (DCF), Renee Coleman-Mitchell (DPH), Carol Meredith (DMHAS), Gregg Cogswell (Senate Republicans), Kimball Robbins for Christine Keller (Judicial Branch) Dennis King (DOT), Mark Polzella (DOL), Rod O'Connor for Terrence Macy (DDS), Faith VosWinkel (OCA), and Elaine Zimmerman (COC).

Members Absent: Robert Kennedy (Board of Regents-DHE), Mary Mushinsky (House Democrats), Lile Gibbons (House Republicans), Monica Rinaldi (DOC), and Robert Brothers (CHRO),

Other Participants: Susan Johnson (State Representative), and Pamela Trotman (OPM).

Agenda Item	Action Taken
Welcome	The meeting was convened at 1:40 p.m. by Anne Foley. Members introduced themselves.
Approve Meeting Minutes of October 2011	Lindy Gold moved approval of the October 2011 meeting minutes and Peter Palermino seconded the motion. The motion was approved on a voice vote with one amendment to add Carol Meredith's (DMHAS) name to the list of new Council members. The Chair reviewed the Council's letter of support for the Race to the Top-ELC Application. Cheryl Resha reported that the grant award announcement may take place by the end of December.
Status Agency Prevention Report	Pamela Trotman provided a summary on the 2011 State Agency Prevention Report. Major points included: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is the sixth State Agency Prevention Report submitted to the Council.• State agencies will continue to submit prevention reports through 2014.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nine state agencies are included in the report. They are: DCF, DDS, SDE, DOL, DMHAS, DPH, DSS, CSSD, and OPM. Other state agencies with representation on the Council do not provide primary prevention programs and are not included in the report. • State agencies reported on two or more primary prevention programs. • In fiscal year 2011, the nine agencies expended slightly over \$293 million dollars to administer 40 prevention programs. • State agency reports include information such as: program description, funding and service levels, long-term agency prevention goals, strategies, measures of effectiveness, performance based standards and outcomes and performance based vendor accountability.
<p>Review of Short-Term Priority Recommendations</p>	<p>Jamey Bell from Connecticut Voices for Children, Jane McNichol from Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut, and Jim Horan from Connecticut Association for Human Services presented strategies on the Council's priority recommendations. Major points included:</p> <p>Youth Dropout Prevention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address issues of truancy through enforcement of existing laws by requiring school districts to annually collect and report in the strategic school profiles truancy statistics and actions taken to reduce truancy. • Enforce the existing law requiring school districts to hold meeting with parents of truant students within 10 school days of the child obtaining truant status; refer student to community agencies for services; and file within 15 calendar days a FWSN petition for non-responsive parents. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Truancy is a significant problem in Connecticut. In selected school districts 20% of children missed school for 10% of the school year. ○ Unmet educational and mental health needs are significant causes of truancy.

- Individuals without a high school diploma are four times more likely to be unemployed.
- Wages increase for individuals with a high school diploma or post high school education.
- Encourage the Governor to enforce existing truancy laws.

A report on school districts not in compliance with existing laws is being prepared and upon completion will be shared with the Council.

Workforce Development:

- The Departments of Social Services, Labor, and Education and the Workforce Investment Boards convened a workgroup to recommend changes to the Jobs First Employment Services (JFES) Program.
- Endorse and support the changes to the JFES Program recommended by the workgroup. Workgroup recommendations (based on the understanding of the advocacy group) include:
 - Extend TFA benefits for parents successfully pursuing high school diplomas and other education and training opportunities and change the income criteria for the first two TFA extensions to allow extensions to families which are otherwise eligible and have income below the federal poverty level.
 - Make pursuing a high school diploma an acceptable work activity for JFES participants.
 - Fund programs that provide intensive GED courses and contextual learning opportunities for TFA participants.

Enhance Access to Federal Programs:

DSS should:

- Increase enrollment for federal energy and nutrition assistance programs administratively.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solicit recommendations from community advocates and social service providers on strategies to increase access to federal programs. • Streamline and simplify the application forms to improve efficiency of the application process. Hire additional staff to implement this recommendation. • Create a committee with community advocates and social service providers to develop recommendations that will decrease the length of time to implement modernization efforts. • Create an integrated service delivery system to allow clients to access information and services through DSS or contractors. • Improve communication between DSS central and regional offices to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented uniformly throughout the state. • Expedite SNAP benefits for emergency cases. <p>The chair asked Council members to review and send comments on the recommendations presented by the advocacy group. The recommendations will be revised to reflect comments made by Council members and distributed prior to the January meeting.</p>
<p>State Agency Update on Homelessness Prevention Programs</p>	<p>The Departments of Children and Families, Education, Mental Health and Addiction Services and Public Health provided an update on their programs and services provided to homeless children and youth.</p> <p>DCF:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive Housing for Families provides subsidized housing and intensive case management services to DCF families for whom inadequate housing jeopardizes the safety, permanency and well being of their children. To date, a total of 542 families, which includes 1,261 children have been served through the program. • Supportive Housing for Young Adults receives funds from existing resources to pilot this program for youth aging out of foster care. The program

serves to prevent or end homelessness for young adults struggling to maintain safe and stable housing. The program will serve 36 young adults for one year.

Education:

- McKinney -Vento provides grants to 12 LEAs to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth.
- During the 2010-2011 school year, Connecticut school districts reported 2,942 homeless students, an increase of 8.3% over the prior year and a 23.3% increase over the past two years.
- McKinney-Vento funded LEAs experienced:
 - an increase of 2.5% in the number of “unaccompanied youth” served
 - a decrease of 14.6% in the number of homeless students identified as IDEA eligible
 - a decrease of 5.9% in the number of homeless students identified with Limited English Proficiency
- SDE also provided a summary on preliminary data on homelessness included in the Consolidated State Performance Report on the McKinney-Vento Program.

DMHAS:

- Supportive Housing Program provides housing based case management services to the heads of households that are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The program ensures that all children are enrolled in school and referrals are made to appropriate treatment services to meet the needs of the children.
- The “PILOTS” program provides supportive housing services similar to the Supportive Housing Program and serves 75 homeless families through various community agencies.
- The Next Step Program provides the same services as the PILOTS program. There are 76 units of supportive housing for homeless families.
- Shelter Plus Care provides 175 units for homeless

	<p>families through rental subsidies and DMHAS matches services through the existing Local Mental Health Authority system.</p> <p>DPH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AIDS/HIV Prevention Program funds three Street Smart programs that target runaway and homeless youth ages 11-18. It is a multi-session, skills-building program designed to help youth practice safer sexual behaviors and reduce substance abuse. • Tobacco Use Prevention – addresses all risks associated with the use of tobacco products. Data is not tracked or reported by homelessness. • Women, Infant and Children serves pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding women, infant and children up to five years of age. Data is not tracked or reported by homelessness. • Community Health Centers –seven health centers receive federal funding to provide health services to the homeless population. • School Based Health Center (SBHC) – 71 sites and 10 expanded school health services sites provide comprehensive primary health care to students in grades Pre-K -12 and are not tracked or reported by homelessness.
<p>Children in Recession Subcommittee Update</p>	<p>Elaine Zimmerman and Faith VosWinkel provided an update on the Children in Recession subcommittee. Elaine Zimmerman reported that the Liberty Bank Foundation, Cronin and Company and the Workforce Investment Boards are working with the Children in the Recession Task Force to assist in the development and implementation of a fund to assist families facing a short-crisis. Funds will be available to eligible residents to assist with finding and retaining employment and bridging employment support services.</p> <p>The subcommittee made the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a think tank to help the Council gain more knowledge and understanding of specific issues relating to child poverty. • Include strategies to mitigate the impact of the

	<p>recession on children as identified in Section 1 (c) of Public Act 10-133 as an on-going Council agenda item for the year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hold cross agency training at least once or twice a year and report information to the Council. • Convene meetings with state agencies (listed in the Public Act 10-133), Children in the Recession Task Force members and the Child Poverty and Prevention Council subcommittee to discuss specific tasks assigned to state agencies as outlined in the public act and require the Commissioners of these state agencies to provide a status report to the full Council. • Consider a statutory change which will require Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Association for Human Services and Connecticut Legal Assistance Resource Center to become members of the Council. • Hold Child Poverty and Prevention Council meetings more frequently. <p>The Chair reminded the subcommittee of the significant amount of work required of the state agencies to meet various legislative and other mandates. Several state agencies lost a considerable number of staff and yet must continue to meet these mandates. The chair asked the subcommittee to engage the state agencies that volunteered to participate on the Children in Recession subcommittee and revise recommendations based on these concerns.</p>
<p>Next Steps</p> <p>a) Council Progress Report 2011</p> <p>b) Process to Develop Long-Term Recommendations</p> <p>c) Next Meeting</p>	<p>The chair asked members to provide examples of successful interagency collaboration. These examples will be highlighted in the 2011 Council Progress Report. The chair also asked members to provide comments on the short-term recommendations presented by the advocacy group.</p> <p>The next meeting of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council will be on Wednesday, January 11 at 1:30 p.m.</p>

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<p>Adjournment</p>	<p>The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.</p>

Priority Recommendations of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council

Based on Strategies Developed by
Connecticut Voices for Children, Connecticut Association for Human Services
And Legal Assistance Resource Center of Connecticut

January 2012

We offer these small-scale, practical policy options as a means of beginning incremental improvements and building a foundation for more significant progress at a time when public resources can be devoted to large-scale interventions.

FAMILY INCOME AND EARNINGS POTENTIAL:

1. EARNED INCOME TAX CREDIT:

Maximize the benefits of the federal and the newly enacted state Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

- a) Continue to publicize usage of the *state* EITC with working poor families, building upon Gov. Malloy and the Department of Revenue Services' EITC promotional event on Nov. 22, 2011. Support DRS' campaign to promote the state EITC. Continue support of private efforts to promote both the federal and state EITCs, such as PSAs involving the Governor and other state officials, at little or no cost to the state.
- b) Work actively to promote Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites.

2. HOMELESSNESS: (COUNCIL PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)

- a) Increase Rental Assistance Program certificates (RAPs) available to families with children including families involved in the child welfare system who are separated or at risk of permanent separation and to young adults ages 18-24 who have aged out of the child welfare system and are homeless or at-risk of homelessness. (DCF)
- b) Re-open the Security Deposit Guarantee Program.
- c) Continue to implement supportive housing for families with children (funded with \$30 million in bonding during 2011 session).
- d) Align investments of state agencies in family housing – DECD, DMHAS, DSS, DCF should work together to create pools of funds for housing vouchers, needed support services and creative use of federal funds.

EDUCATION:

3. EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: (COUNCIL PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)
 - a) Guarantee Child Care Subsidies: Allowing low-income parents up to 75% of the state median income (instead of the current 50%) to enroll in Care4Kids would reduce poverty, since it would improve the ability of parents to participate in the labor force, while providing safe, developmentally appropriate care for their children. This would need to be phased in over several years due to the cost.
 - b) In the short-term, and within available appropriations, increase eligibility to 75% of state median income for minor parents, including the parents of a minor parent in the income calculation. (This would address the small group of teen parents living with their parents, making it more likely that they would attend high school and graduate, and succeed economically.)
 - c) Create a "bridge" program to cover Care4Kids costs for providers between the time an application is submitted and approved (usually 60 days), to ensure that parents do not lose a job during the wait period.

4. YOUTH DROPOUT PREVENTION
 - a) Enforce existing law which requires districts to annually collect and report in the strategic school profiles truancy statistics and actions taken to reduce truancy.
Priority. (Judicial)
 - b) Enforce existing law which requires school districts to: hold meetings with parents of truant students and appropriate school personnel within 10 school days of the child obtaining truant status; refer truant children to community agencies for services; and within 15 calendar days file a FWSN petition for truant children whose parents do not respond to school outreach efforts. Create new accountability mechanisms and penalties that allow the State Department of Education to monitor local board follow-through and enforce compliance.
Priority. (Judicial)
 - c) Ensure compliance with state and federal Child Find laws to identify students with special needs.
 - d) Expand from the current ten day window the time frame in which districts must immediately re-enroll students who have dropped out (whether formally through signing disenrollment forms or informally by just not attending school).
 - e) Establish clear guidelines for alternative schools and programs, including a specific definition of what constitutes each type of program, entry and exit processes for students voluntarily or involuntarily placed into an alternative setting, and minimum requirements for curricular offerings and teacher training and credentialing.
 - f) Establish new accountability procedures for alternative schools and programs, including a list of all program locations, students served in each program, and annual educational data (including truancy, graduation rates, and test scores), publicly accessible online through a Strategic School profile or similar means.

- g) Adopt the *National School Climate Standards* at the state level; expand and support local evidence-based school climate improvement initiatives.
- h) Encourage districts to implement new or better utilize existing programs that reduce and appropriately address behaviors leading to involvement in the juvenile justice system, including graduated response models in school discipline codes, training of school personnel (including police) in conflict de-escalation and behavior management, school based diversion programs; and emergency mobile psychiatric services.
- i) Require schools to track and report number of children arrested in school. Require schools with high arrest rates to implement strategies to reduce those rates and address disproportionate minority contact issues.
- j) Increase provision of wrap-around services in schools, particularly for mental health, by maintaining current funding levels for School Based Health Centers and encouraging partnership with local community providers to supplement district staff capacity by bringing community services into schools or referring students for services into the community

5. POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION: (COUNCIL PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)

Increase Attainment of Associates Degrees:

- a) A major impediment to attainment of associate's degrees is the failure of many of the 70-80% of community college students who need remedial education to progress beyond remedial classes. Western Connecticut State University's Bridges program has agreements with the Danbury and Bethel school districts. WestConn professors work with middle school students and with high school students, administrators and teachers to reduce the need for remedial education. This effort includes offering placement tests for remedial education (AccuPlacer and a written test) in junior year of high school. *The program has reduced the need for remedial education by graduates of these high schools attending WestConn by half over the past seven years.* Each CSU college has some funding to replicate this program. WestConn's program also receives private support. Manchester Community College has a program with the Manchester and East Hartford school districts. There may also be interest by private higher education institutions in operating and private funders in supporting such programs. WestConn estimates it would cost about \$50,000 per district to replicate. A state investment in future years could expand the program to all community colleges, covering all or most of the state's Priority School Districts.
- b) The Board of Regents conducted a massive data project to analyze and inform all public school districts of their remedial education needs for graduates and the six-year college graduation rate of their high school graduates.
<http://www.ctregents.org/files/pdfs/p20/Supplemental%20Data%20Review%20for%20Superintendents%20-%20web.pdf> This data should inform decisions by the state Department of Education, in collaboration with superintendents, teacher unions, parent groups, and advocates on how to reduce remedial education needs

for high school graduates. This data should be collected and distributed every two years.

- c) Replicate the "Achieving the Dream" model at community colleges to close student achievement gaps. There is not additional Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation funding available to expand the programs, but it may be possible to replicate using state funds or funds from other foundations.
- d) Expand financial aid strategies to cover cost of living expenses: Charter Oak State College has a successful program to provide living expenses, including all tuition, books, internet costs and a computer, as well as continuous advisement, to a cohort of students. State and private funds supplement federal dollars. The program was not expanded to community colleges, as originally contemplated, due to cost.

6. WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

Enhance GED and literacy programs for Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) participants.

- a) Endorse and support the proposals put forward by the JFES Enhancement Workgroup convened by the Department of Labor which address these issues. (The specific proposals below are in some cases included in the workgroup proposals, as we understand them.)
- b) [Provide extensions of TFA for parents successfully pursuing high school diplomas and other appropriate education and training and change the income criteria for the first two extensions to allow extensions to families which are otherwise eligible and have income below the federal poverty level.] Modify C.G.S. § 17b-112(c) to apply the same federal poverty level income test that is used to determine TFA eligibility in the first 21 months to the first two six-month TFA extensions. (DOL)
- c) [Make pursuit of high school diploma an acceptable work activity for JFES participants.] Revise JFES operating principles to make the attainment of a secondary education credential a goal in addressing barriers to employment. The state should apply for federal and/or private grant opportunities for pilots to test various ways of expediting the attainment of a high school diploma/GED. (DOL)
- d) [Fund programs that provide intensive GED courses and contextualized learning opportunities for TFA participants.] Establish pilot projects that would test service models that provide adult base education/GED and vocational education (I-Best model) and intensive, short-term GED programs. The state should apply for federal and/or private funding to help fund the pilots. (DOL)

INCOME SAFETY NET:

- 7. SUPPORT FOR YOUNG MOTHERS ON TFA: case management for mothers in first 12 months of child's life.

- a) Coordinate with the state Dept. of Education on its \$1.99M grant from the U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services to develop programs in the "top five districts" for support of pregnant and parenting teens.
- b) Coordinate with the DSS' HUSKY administrative services organization which will have some responsibility for care coordination during pregnancy.

Latest birth data: in 2009, there were 2,619 births to teens statewide, including 2,211 babies born to teen in HUSKY A and B and in FFS Medicaid. Also: 1) The CDC awarded the City of Hartford \$4.5 M for reducing teen pregnancy by 10%. 2) Hartford also just received a federal Healthy Start grant for improving pregnancy outcomes and reducing infant mortality (DPH is lead agency).

8. ABRUPT TERMINATION OF BENEFITS:

- a) Adopt program to supplement income from work for parents who move from welfare to work and lose cash assistance because of earnings. Estimated cost of the program in past years was \$1-2 million.
- b) Eliminate the cliff in benefits by gradually lowering the cash benefit in TFA when a parent is working rather than terminating it entirely when family income exceeds the cash benefit amount. Cost depends on the design of the program.] (DOL)

9. ENHANCE ACCESS TO FEDERAL PROGRAMS: (COUNCIL PRIORITY RECOMMENDATION)

The DSS should increase enrollment for federal energy and nutrition assistance programs administratively. The DSS should solicit specific recommendations from advocates (End Hunger CT, Hispanic Health Council, CAP agencies, CAHS, etc.) and discuss with Commissioner Bremby.

- a) Streamline applications (simplifying application forms), improve access to DSS offices (including simpler, more easily understood communications from DSS), increase efficiency of application processing, enhance outreach for SNAP and child nutrition programs, etc. DSS wants to increase efficiency in processing SNAP applications and services, and is under pressure from USDA to do so, but will need to hire additional staff to accomplish this. While this will cost the state in funding, continued slow processing will result in additional USDA fines; funding the positions and improve processing is therefore recommended for reasons of both service improvement and fiscal prudence.
- b) Improve access, including on-line applications, a voice response phone system, and worker retraining through the first phase of DSS's "modernization" effort. Full implementation is at least 18 months away, but steps will be implemented in the interim. The second phase (involving replacement of DSS's computer system) is four to five years away, and 90 percent of the cost will be funded by the federal Affordable Care Act. A planning committee involving end-users, advocates, and DSS staff should determine how to speed implementation.

- c) Change DSS internal procedures and external contract to create "integrated service delivery," "one-stop shopping" where clients who come to the agency or any contractor are provided with an array of services and informed of all programs for which they are eligible to enroll.
- d) Improve communication between the Central DSS Office administrators and regional line staff to ensure that policies and procedures are implemented uniformly throughout the state.
 - Examine best practices at DSS regional offices and work to apply these across regions to simplify the application process and optimize use of existing resources.
 - Improve signage in DSS offices so people don't wait in wrong line – and/or adopt the "bank" method: one line from which you are sent to the correct workstation based on your issue (would probably need a worker to talk to people in line and identify what workstation they need to go to).
 - Assign specific front-desk staff to deal with clients as they enter DSS offices so that practices are consistent.
 - Implement and enforce consistent rules about how documents can be delivered. Implement consistent policies about logging in documents so that documents are not lost.
- e) Grant expedited SNAP (food stamp) benefits pending an interview. Presently, some applications for expedited food assistance are not processed because the applicant cannot be reached for an interview within the seven day time frame. This policy change would require a waiver from the federal FNS. The policy change would be most useful with mail-in applications or applications taken by community outposts.

FAMILY STRUCTURE AND SUPPORT

10. REDUCE TEEN PREGNANCY

As noted in #7 above, the CDC awarded the City of Hartford \$4.5 M for reducing teen pregnancy by 10%.

[11. CASE MANAGEMENT FOR EMPLOYMENT-RELATED SERVICES

Lower caseloads for case managers in the Jobs First Employment Services program from the current level of between 110 and 150 cases per case manager to at most 80 – 100 cases per case manager. (Ideally, the case load should be substantially lower than 80-100 cases.)] (DOL) Case management for all mothers of high risk newborns for the first twelve months after birth. Priority. (Judicial)

12. FATHERHOOD INITIATIVE

PROCESS RECOMMENDATIONS:

13. IMPROVE POVERTY MEASURE

Connecticut-specific census information using the new measure will not be available until the next release of the supplemental poverty measure in late 2012. For now, data is available on a regional level – the Northeast.

The new measure includes both a more comprehensive list of “costs” as well as “income” sources. There is also an adjustment for cost of living. It is unclear whether the new measure will show a “rise” or “decline” in poverty in CT. While the cost of living is higher in CT it is possible that CT provides more income support than other states. Also, CT has above average access to healthcare for the poor which could result in a “decline” in poverty in CT.

Nonetheless, the new measure available in late 2012 will allow us to measure how different social programs contribute to reducing poverty.

14. CHARTER OAK'S RESULTS-BASED ACCOUNTABILITY INITIATIVE

15. COORDINATION AND SYSTEMS

- a) State agencies' employees (and their contractors) should be made aware of various services across agency lines administratively, and little cost. For example, eligibility is the same for SNAP and school meal programs operated by local districts through SDE. These agencies could collaborate initially to publicize to enrollees for one program their eligibility for the other, and could eventually have common applications.
- b) Technology used by various state contractors, including screening tools and navigators operated by 2-1-1, CAPs, CAHS, End Hunger CT, and others can facilitate benefit eligibility determinations and enrollment. Integrate these tools to improve the quality of applications and recertifications for SNAP and other benefits submitted to DSS, which proved successful in the recent Disaster SNAP program implementation.
- a) Create a master contract or coordinated leadership team across agencies and branches of government:
 - Coordinate between DCF and DMHAS to ensure services to clients aging out of DCF services
 - Implement recommendations of the Achieving Administrative Efficiencies Workgroup of the Commission on Nonprofit Health and Human Services, March, 2011.