



Collaboration in Head Start

Head Start Efforts to Promote Collaboration in the Early Childhood Education System

Overview

The early childhood education (ECE) system in the United States is fragmented between federal, state, local and private providers or agencies. Increasing the coordination and communication between these various entities would be advantageous for sharing best practices, centralizing information about the availability of child care slots, and reducing duplication of efforts. Despite these advantages, support for these voluntary collaboration activities has varied in funding and sustainability. Head Start is involved in multiple efforts to promote collaboration with other agencies serving the ECE population at both the federal and state levels. Below are a few examples.

Collaboration at the federal level

The Office of Head Start is housed under the federal Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and is administratively separate from the federal Department of Education (DOE). Nevertheless, recent efforts have attempted to increase coordination between these entities. One example is the creation of the [Early Childhood Development Interagency Coordination office](#) which promotes closer ties between agencies that target ECE, including HHS and the DOE. This interagency office has produced tangible results, such as the Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC), an HHS/DOE co-administered grant competition for states focused on improving school readiness programs for young children. Specifically, RTT-ELC grants are designed to support states' efforts to:

“(1) increase the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children in each age group of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are enrolled in high-quality early learning programs; (2) design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services; and (3) ensure that any use of assessments conforms with the recommendations of the National Research Council's reports on early childhood.”¹

In the 2011 fiscal year (Phase 1), nine states were awarded RTT-ELC grants: California, Delaware, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Rhode Island, and Washington.² In the 2012 fiscal year (Phase 2), an additional five states were awarded RTT-ELC grants: Colorado, Illinois, New Mexico, Oregon and Wisconsin.³ Among other activities, these grants are being used to develop or revise statewide early learning standards, implement state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS), improve professional development for early childhood educators and build or enhance statewide early childhood education data systems.⁴ The majority of the roughly \$370 million approved for funding the 2013 Race to the Top will be used for RTT-ELC state grants.⁵

Collaboration at the state level

Head Start State Collaboration Offices

A portion of Head Start federal appropriations are allocated to collaboration grants for each state, as well as for the national American Indian/Alaska Native or Migrant and Seasonal administrative offices. Collaboration grants, also

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known as Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) grants, were established in 1990⁶ and are intended to increase coordination and collaboration between Head Start agencies and other entities that also serve young low-income children and their families within each state.

Every state must have an HSSCO that may carry out various types of activities including promoting coordination between Head Start agencies and CCDF state agencies, linkages between Head Start agencies and other child and family agencies providing social services, and alignment of curricula used in Head Start programs with Head Start and state guidelines.⁷ States are expressly prohibited from using collaboration grants for direct service provision, training and technical assistance, or to replace already ongoing collaboration.⁸ In fiscal year 2012, \$8.8 million were allocated for state collaboration grants out of the total \$7.968 billion Head Start budget, representing 0.1% of the total Head Start budget.⁹

State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care

The 2007 Head Start Act mandated the creation of State Advisory Councils (SACs) to develop or enhance high-quality state ECE systems designed to promote child school readiness. SACs were tasked with seven primary responsibilities, including developing recommendations for increasing overall child participation in ECE programs, improving professional development for early childhood educators, developing a single statewide ECE data collection system, and improving state early learning standards.¹⁰ The 2007 act also authorized funding for one-time start-up SAC grants for eligible states, allocated on a competitive basis. The implementation of SACs was further supported by one-time, three-year grants totaling \$100 million provided by the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act for the period 2010 to 2013. By the beginning of 2013, SACs rolled out or completed various activities, including needs assessments on the quality and availability of quality ECE programs, legislation to expand ECE slots, data collection gap identification, and the creation of ECE workforce scholarships for professional development.¹¹

Source & notes:

¹ U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge: Program description*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html>.

² Duncan, A. & Sebelius, K. (n.d.). *Letter to Governors Announcing Winners*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/letter-announcing-winners.pdf>.

³ U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge: RTT-ELC phase 2*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/awards-phase-2.html>.

⁴ Details of awarded state activities can be found at U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge: RTT-ELC, phases 1 and 2*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/awards.html>.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education. (2013, April 16). *Education Department Announces Next Rounds of Race to the Top, Including Another Key Investment to Expand Access to High-Quality Early Learning Opportunities* [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education-department-announces-next-rounds-race-top-including-another-key-invest>.

⁶ Ohl, J.E. (2006, January 9). *Appropriate use of Head Start State Collaboration Office Grant funds* (Program instruction, log no. ACYF-PI-HS-06-01). Office of Head Start, Administration on Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/PIs/2006/resour_pri_00101_031306.html

⁷ The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. §9837b (2007).

⁸ Ohl, J.E. (2006), op. cit.

⁹ Administration for Children and Families, Department of Health and Human Services. (2013). *Justification of Estimates for Appropriations Committees* (Fiscal Year 2013).

¹⁰ The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, 42 U.S.C. §9801 et. seq. (2007).

¹¹ Administration for Children and Families. (2013). *Early Childhood State Advisory Councils: Status report April 2013*. Retrieved from <http://www.researchconnections.org/childcare/resources/25513/pdf>.