

# ALASKA'S EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) JOINT TASK FORCE (JTF) MEETING MINUTES

**Date:** 4/24/19

**Time:** 9:00am – 4:00pm

**Facilitator:** Christina Hulquist

## In Attendance

Abbe Hensley– Best Beginnings

Alison Gaines– Parent/ Public Health Nursing

Betsy Brennehan– Alaska Association of School  
Boards (AASB)

Chelsea Burke– Child Care Program Office (CCPO)

Christie Reinhardt– Women's, Children's and  
Family Health (WCFH)

Christina Hulquist– CCPO

DeAnne Chanar– Parent Representative

Devin Cress– Clare Swan Early Learning Center

Ira Slomski-Pritz- Anchorage Municipality

Iris Matthews– Stellar Group

Jimael Johnson– AK Mental Health Trust

Karli Lopez– Parent/ Hope Community Resources

Kristina Clark– Southcentral Foundation

Maureen Harwood– Senior and Disability Services

Marcey Bish– CCPO

Meghan Johnson– Learn & Grow

Merrick Brown– Southcentral Foundation

Patrick Sidmore– AASB

Robert Alsbury– Southcentral Foundation

Samantha Ray– Child Care Program Office

Sangree Froelicher– State Capacity Building Center

Scott Williams– Southcentral Foundation

Stephanie Berglund– thread

Supanika Ackerman- Department of Education &  
Early Development (DEED)

## I. Needs Assessment Review and Discussion

- a. **Table talk activity:** What would you like to be considered in the Preschool Development Grant (PDG) needs assessment?
  - We hope the funding piece—who funds what—is critical to policy makers understanding the 0-5 system. Are you going to do a funding map, timeline...some sort of graphic?
  - Clarity and consistency in definitions
  - Quality
    - How is that going to be used and what influences that
  - Workforce data
    - Teachers and retention
    - What personal preparation
    - what programs and teachers need for supports and resources
      - Challenging behaviors, Expulsion/ suspension, teacher stress, compensation
  - Teacher preparation programs going away What the current and potential needs of educators might be and what is the current state of educational opportunities
  - All Alaska Pediatric Partnership (AAPP), Stellar group already working on a needs assessment perhaps use this one as a base

- There will be 3 separate needs assessment products that will be submitted individual. What is already being collected would help us identify what other data needs to be collected.
  - Identification of barriers that are impacting parents, teachers, children, etc.....
  - Are we including data beyond a formalized Early Childhood (EC) settings?
  - Information about families living in low income, finding jobs,
  - It would be helpful to have a master list of what is being collected so to better inform what data to collect and what is missing. Then the stakeholders could better inform. Need to be mindful of over surveying the field and better collaborate between us all.
  - Not sure about another person to do surveys. Thought the PDG was going to organize and collect data already being collected and then only survey or collect data on what hasn't been collected.
- b. **Table talk activity:** How do you see yourself or your organization using the PDG needs assessment? Is there something specific you hope the PDG needs assessment will accomplish?
- Aligned definitions/shared vision-
    - quality and high quality- include parents and peers in forming definitions, organize statewide plan/unified voice and use to apply for additional funding opportunities
    - Shared vision and base line data to use for telling our story and have shared goals that we collectively are working on
    - Want this to be the statewide plan that the state can use for future funding, telling our unified message, monitor progress toward a few shared goals that Alaska reports out.
    - This needs to be the plan for EC in the state and their needs to be a stable governance body who can lead the charge for years to come
  - Workforce data- retention, education needs, personnel prep, supports & resources
  - Identify barriers- access to services, families with low income
  - Use the data to be better advocates
  - Parents- choice, needs, input into data
    - Advocacy and information for organizations to better support families
  - Equity
  - Identify needs for care
  - Include pre K, sped 619 info- consider pulling this info from school districts
- c. Early Childhood Report Update: Stellar Group
- We are working on an environmental scan of the early childhood systems. There is a need for better data on the condition of children and families (E.g. demographics; multi-sector; working with other needs assessments).
  - We are also exploring what we know about funding and governing.
  - We have collected a ton of data. We are now creating a framework to tell the story.
  - Our aim is to have a research base for what we share. For example, there will be indicators for health and development. We will show a 3-year trend in Alaska as well as national indicators for comparison. Potentially, these numbers could be updated every few years—track condition of children and families.
  - We are trying to coalesce data that is currently in silos. The data is terrific but is sitting in silos. What story does the data tell us when we put it together?
  - We are waiting for the new state budget to be released to better understand the context we are creating this report in.

d. **Table Talk Activity** Please read the draft access framework and answer the following questions at your table:

- What parts of these definitions do you agree with?
  - The holistic nature of the framework.
  - Happy targeting availability and accessibility
  - We like the detail in this framework because it shows the challenges of access to services for children and families.
  - We really like the inclusion of “acceptance” and the cultural aspect of access.
- How do these definitions fit with “access” to the services you provide?
  - This fits with how we think about and define access, however, the definition of quality is not robust enough.
  - The definition of quality is not sufficient. Quality is not really quality. It is basic, minimal requirements when it comes to child care. What about high-quality, can we define that?
  - What about merging the definition of quality with availability?
  - Might we merge “quality” with acceptability?
- What about these definitions will help to set the standard for “access” across sectors?
  - How can we operationalize the definitions into standards and indicators?
  - How are we defining slots? Is it by program? By sector or discipline?
  - How might we measure these definitions of access?
  - How are we defining the age-groups? Is it by program? By sector or discipline?
  - How are we defining burden? Is it by program? By sector or discipline?
- What might be missing?
  - Is Health Care included in this definition?
    - Interest on behalf of state to include more about health and mental health. Goes beyond child care access including: specialty care, health care, other family supports and resources.
  - What about the workforce availability? What do they need so they are able to staff programs? Without the workforce there are no slots!
    - Workforce availability is missing (early childhood educators, mental health consultants, health care)
  - We would like a parent and peer review of the definition of quality. Quality to parents and peer may not mean the same thing as quality does to the professionals in the room.
  - Definition of quality
    - Seems insufficient especially when it refers to pre-school. Need to account for staff turnover, curriculum. What kind of educational program do they have? What kind of training is provided to the teachers?
    - If a program legally exist then = quality?
      - Know this is temporary until Learn & Grow is fully launched, but need to add high quality and talk about quality continuum. Falling a little short right now but know will change.
    - Add a definition of high quality. For access maybe a minimum standard of quality is okay, but it’s worth a definition of access to high quality. Tentative high quality is in the Quality Rating & Improvement System (QRIS). This is quality, not high quality. That definition now could go under availability. It’s just a definition of a “slot”. We need to

define slots in availability. For who? By age? So many child care assistance families. Define who slots are for. The oversight agency partially defines this. Quality definition helps define slots.

- Communication is important to how we tell the story of quality. How will we be communicating with providers, teachers and families about quality? Is there going to be a communication plan?
- Parent Choice/ Accessibility: Can we add “parent choice” under accessibility?
  - If there are enough slots, but parents don’t have a choice in the kinds of programs, then that’s not access. If there is a healthy vacancy rate, that offers parents choices. What’s a healthy vacancy level that we could strive for? Put parent choice and options under accessibility.
  - Acceptability is an interesting facet of quality “experience of who is receiving the service”- how it is perceived. For both early childhood and health care
    - There are tools about there for Health Care
    - Learn & Grow would be collecting this for early childhood
  - For accessibility, include age groups as part of definitions. Use the family experience of child care, health care, etc. Include this as a component of quality. Question of how to operationalize these. Also didn’t see special needs addressed. Sensitive about definitions.
- Economic – transportation is missing. Also, market price vs. cost is much higher. Include a cost modeling thing. There is a national benchmark federally for states that no family should pay more than 7% of combined income for child care. AK is at 13%. What is the “burden” of child care? Low income vs. others.

## II. Governance Review and Discussion

### a. Table Talk Activity: What about Alaska’s governance model is already working? What is making it work? What caused this success?

- We have the Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC). It was created by Governor Parnell in October 2010 by “Delegation of Authority” order which delegates authority and responsibility for Interdepartmental Early Childhood Coordinating Council to DEED.
  - The interdepartmental nature of the AECCC is that two state agencies chair it, and they both have a strong interest in early childhood system
  - Even though the AECCC is not fully operationalized, we have had some pockets of success
  - There is a mission and vision (needs revision)
- Dedicated individuals/ professionals/ partnerships
  - We have committed professionals and partners across the state who are committed to improving the system and services on behalf of children and families.
  - There is leadership occurring at multiple levels and at both the public sector and private sector. This reflects a desire to collaborate.
  - People are working because they have a personal connection and passion for this work. And value the work or have a stake in this work. Wanting to make it better.
  - Passion causes success



serve the same population of AECCC. For example, the commission on education and workforce (board of education), and the Governor's council on disability. The AECCC does not work with these boards or commissions in any form.

- What are the consequences of not doing this different thing?
  - Without a shared leadership approach to AECCC, we will continue to be reactive vs. proactive. If we don't have a vision for what we want for children and families, then we will continue to respond to what funders want vs. what Alaska wants.
    - Continue to be stuck in the hamster wheel
  - Continue to have challenges implementing and executing on the AECCC mission.
    - Lack of shared goals and outcomes that would share the return on investment story
    - Lack of unified voice, institutional practices
  - Funding- lack of stability and consistency
    - Lack of services to children- coordinated services
    - Spending with no return, robbing Peter to pay Paul
    - Not being able to leverage funding and continue to feel like they are in silos because of budget limitations related to scope of work (lack of thinking innovatively)
- What would be helpful is there some kind of structure in a particular area of governing
- Governing is a huge issue what are some buckets that we can dive a little deeper?
  - Getting a temperature of what really exists
- Vision casting
  - If it's not marginally helpful it causes resentment
  - Clear goal without authority to make it functionality
    - To impact policy, we need to have legislative authority
    - We need more support
  - Early childhood governance structure coming together would be helpful
- Communication plan and cross collaboration
  - Having a more organized line of communication
  - A more centralized way of sharing data
  - Are you reporting out and who are you reporting to?
  - Getting legislators to listen to their constituents
- Function
  - A governing body in a statewide function could be turned into credible indicators and turning that into what works
  - What's different? Who is going to influence this conversation?
    - Completing a needs assessment together and inform a state wide strategy
    - We have an opportunity to bring this in with our next conversation with AECCC

### III. Strategic Planning Process and Discussion

#### b. Strategic Planning Structure Graphic Feedback

- Helpful to outline what the boxes are on the outside of the diagram
  - List out participants
- Can there be a supplemental sheet of roles and responsibilities

- Not clear how the AECCC fits in with “Us” the grants
- What our assumptions in terms of how we will communicate out from the Joint Task Force (JTF)?
- Establish JTF Strategic Plan (SP) to help gain buy in from your organizations
- c. Table Talk Activity:**
  - What questions do you have around the strategic planning process?
    - Can you provide a work plan that shows the stages/phases and timeline of the strategic planning process?
      - Is this just a SP for PDG or is assumption is this is a statewide EC PDG that is more inclusive.
      - Is there a framework to guide the SP planning process?
      - Are we going to call it a statewide EC strategic plan rather than calling it a PDG or Project Launch SP
      - How do we reframe this needs assessment and SP to be inclusive of who is at the table to support EC, Health and Families by mission
      - Foundation is set before we start building a house.
      - Is this group going to be looking at old plans like Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) plan? Honor what has been done before and look at revisions to the plans we already have.
    - How are we going to engage partners in this process? What is the stakeholder engagement plan? Are tribes included in the engagement activities?
      - Is it AASB or impact (Who responsible for facilitating the facilitation and writing of the SP) Can we use Sangree?
      - Project Launch has a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) grant with technical assistance that will guide their SP. How much is incorporated into EC PDG? (Robert indicate strong partnership and this is the goal to align and be the same as PDG
      - Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) also looking at Needs assessment in 2020
      - Tribal also having some movement in EC (Southcentral Foundation, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium)
    - Is there any way we can push back on the timeline? Can we align the strategic planning process with the conclusion of the Early Childhood Report—the environmental scan? It feels too rushed, too reactive to federal requirements vs. operating on Alaska’s timeline of environmental scan. Is there a way to fulfill the federal requirement and to be on the same timeline as the environmental scan?
  - What recommendations do you have at this point in the process?
    - Be intentional in the scoping and planning of the strategic planning process. It should start and end with what children and families need, including research-based or evidence of what’s best for them.
    - Design the actual strategic plan around what we can do for children and families.
    - Engage the whole state in the planning process. Harness our technology assets for engaging input from more stakeholders and partners, including those in more rural areas.
    - Remember that we are all operating in a hostile political climate right now. Think about what to consider as you develop the strategic planning process.
    - Can you change how the strategic planning structure graphic reads...can you flip it so it reads right to left.
    - Can you add more detail on the boxes that inform the Joint Task Force?
    - Can you give us more detail or articulate the “ambassador” role the JTF can be playing during the strategic planning process?

- Can you add the function or role and responsibility of the AECCC to the strategic plan on the graphic? Is the AECCC really doing something with the JTF toward the strategic planning effort? Should there be an arrow going from it to JTF?
- What exactly do the arrows mean? Can you add some verbs to the arrows to designate their function? Approve, inform etc.
- Use previous strategic plans and needs assessments as our jumping off point to begin the strategic planning process (e.g. ECCS plan from 2008-09). Let's use what we already have. There is no need to start from scratch.

#### IV. Ponderables

Items the group shared on post-it notes as things to consider:

- Communication- how and when do we communicate to partners/stakeholders and to get communication back?
- I recommend Scott/Robert get the Anchorage Realizing Indigenous Student Excellence (ARISE) data from Cook Inlet Tribal Council (CITC) & McDowell Group
- For Project LAUNCH- Have they looked at the demographic information in the Childhood Understanding Behaviors Survey (CUBS)/Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) data. Also, there may be useful information about social determinants of health in the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) data
- Can we get information from Senior and Disabilities Services (SDS) regarding children on wait list- responses to question about parental employment
- If we create Early Childhood Education (ECE) "shared vision", would the intent to be to get it into statute for leverage?
- This is my first JTF meeting. For the PDG and impact project grants, are Alaska's rural communities being reached out to as well to assist the needs assessment?
- Possible contractors for needs assessment: stellar group, McDowell group, Agnew Beck
- Can we please get a copy of the surveys (parent/teacher) used for Project LAUNCH?
- Can we contribute/discuss more about data & sources used & what/how gaps will be defined and identified