

**Arizona Early Childhood Development and Health Board
Family Support and Literacy Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes
September 9, 2013**

The Regular Meeting of the First Things First – Arizona Early Childhood Development & Health Board, Family Support and Literacy Advisory Committee was held on Monday, September 9, 2013 at the First Things First Board Room, 4000 North Central Avenue, Suite 800, Phoenix, Arizona 85012.

Members Present: Colleen Day Mach, Marilee Dal Pra, Terri Clark, Patty Merk, Irma Marquez, Erin Cowan as designee for Carol Lopinski, Irene Burton, Detza Van Bogaert, Gabriela Parra as designee for Janna Murrell, Danielle Gagnier

Members Participating by Phone: Ally Baehr, Sherie Gifford, Christine Niven, Suzanne Schunk, Becky Ruffner, Holly Henley

Guests: Dawn Craft

FTF Staff: Dr. Aaliyah Samuel, Marla Dedrick, Stephanie Willis, Michelle Katona, Cynthia Chavarria

Call to Order and Welcome and Introductions:

Co-Chair Dal Pra welcomed the Members and called the meeting to order at approximately 9:04 a.m. and introductions were made. Co-Chair Dal Pra announced that Member Baehr will be resigning her post from the Advisory Committee. Member Baehr is leaving United Way and transitioning to the Girl Scouts of Southern Arizona. Member Baehr announced that she will be the Director of Development and that they will transition her seat on the Advisory Committee to her replacement. Co-Chair Dal Pra announced that First Things First has asked that all Committees provide an update on which seat they fill on the Advisory Committee and to report to Dr. Samuel.

Consent Agenda:

Co-Chair Day Mach called for a review of the consent agenda item which included meeting minutes from April 18, 2013 and called for a motion to approve. Member Rosenberg motioned and Member Schunk seconded. All in favor, none opposed, motion carried.

Family Support and Literacy Update:

Dr. Samuel gave a summary of the Summit. There were over 1,100 participants this year. Received great feedback on the appropriateness of the sessions and thanked the Members who were able to attend.

Ms. Willis provided an update on the work of the Quality Assurance (QA) Team. The “Initial Phase” ran through July 2013 and for the past two months they have focused on reflections, getting internal and external feedback about the process and in making modifications to the process and assessment tools being used during their site visits. They are rolling out the “Regular Phase” starting in October 2013. The Grantees have been notified and the QA Team has created a spreadsheet of all the contracts that will undergo the assessment over the next two years. Starting in January 2014 there will be a “Responsive Phase” where the QA Team will be responding to the issues identified from the field and a QA Specialist will be the point of contact for any concerns that elevate to this level. With the rollout of the “Regular Phase”, we will continue with the rotation of Tribal/Urban and Rural contracts. In the “Initial Phase” the QA Team was able to gather a number of exemplary practices in home visitation and especially with parent education community based training. They have been incorporating these findings as they make modifications to the strategies. Findings also include concerns grant partners might have and as well as some of the great things that are happening in the field.

Dr. Samuel provided updates on the Maternal Infant Early Education Childhood Home Visiting grant (MIECHV). The First Things First (FTF) Family Support and Literacy (FS&L) Team have helped co-plan the MIECHV Home Visitation Conference on September 24th and 25th at the Mesa Marriott. MIECHV has extended invitations to 600 Home Visitors across the state and all slots are full with 50 on the wait list. The FS&L Team will be presenting at the Conference and the FTF Community Outreach Team will host a community booth. The great work being done with MIECHV is not only limited to programs that are receiving their funding, but they’ve open up these types of trainings and resources to every type of Home Visitor across the state. During a June training in Tucson, Dr. Samuel had the opportunity to converse with a Home Visitor who had been working in the field for 17 years, who stated she had never had the opportunity to attend trainings like this and was so grateful for the opportunities that were being afforded through MIECHV. This grant is still working on expanding their community health analysis areas and Dr. Samuel noted that funding will be ending September 30, 2015. At the Conference in September, there will be an on-line training portal so that Home Visitors can access and see upcoming trainings and will be able to register for them on-line. MIECHV is also trying to focus their efforts around breast feeding and we’re finding that there are less than 30% of Moms in Arizona who are breast feed for longer than 12 weeks. Another area MIECHV is focusing on is in addressing domestic violence in the home.

Dr. Samuel gave an update on BUILD. The first meeting was held in August and Cory Underhill, the Consultant for BUILD also presented to the First Things First (FTF) Regional Directors. BUILD is working on creating policy briefs across the different goal areas and they hope to have these briefs finalized and distributed to all FTF Stakeholders and Regional Councils to be sure everyone is informed of what's happening on the statewide level.

Dr. Samuel announced that aside from the national presentation being done at the Home Visitation Conference another will be done at the National Black Child Development Institute in New Orleans which will focus on home visitation and comprehensive & collaborative approaches. This presentation will highlight how First Things First is working with various stakeholders to highlight the work being done in the state. Arizona is one of the leading and highest funded states working on home visitation.

The Harder Evaluation group out of California, who has done a lot of work with First Five, has been working with First Things First (FTF) on an innovative evaluation study that's looking at family support strategies across five regions in Arizona. Over the last year they have been doing regional work and they've completed their data collection and are getting ready to present their study at Regional Council meetings with the first taking place later today in Santa Cruz with following meetings in North Pima and Cochise. The Family Support and Literacy Team are eager to hear the findings of the study which has predominately looked at home visiting and family resources centers in Arizona. We are looking forward to combining their information with FTF Quality Assurance team findings on how to improve and/or modify our standards of practice for state fiscal year 16 (SFY16).

This afternoon Member Clark and Dr. Samuel will present at the Arizona Grant Makers Association and they'll discuss why the work of Read On Arizona is so important. Member Clark will give the Advisory Committee an update on Read On Arizona shortly.

Dr. Samuel announced that the Family Support and Literacy Policy Brief which was released a few months ago, was provided for the Committee's review and distribution for public information.

State Wide Literacy Update:

Member Clark gave an update on State Wide Literacy. Noted that Read On Arizona along with the Arizona Department of Education and First Things First have been working on an early literacy guide for families. This document has been completed and is being designed for publication now. There are three parts to the report, the first part simply explains what the Move On When Reading Third Grade Retention Policy is and means for families and provides questions families can ask of their schools or Principals and/or Teachers. The second component is to explain the early reading process and how that starts at birth or before and why third grade is so important and how it's actually eight years of becoming a reader and doesn't just start at kindergarten. It also describes things families can do at home to support that emerging reader especially early on in developing language skills and vocabulary. The third component is the resource and referral section for them to be able to access help. We will be able to offer in English and Spanish and will be distributed statewide on November 2nd for Family Reading Day in collaboration through our partnership with McDonalds. The report will be distributed in 250 locations throughout Arizona. There will also be an electronic version for anyone to access and to distribute. We're hoping all our partners will use this guide and help us get this out to the families statewide. Read On Arizona is also in initial steps for a national data pilot initiative through the Campaign for Grade Level Reading. This Campaign will help us develop benchmarks and in monitoring progress around early literacy. The Campaign has a data integration group that is helping us devise how early literacy will work and what it will look like.

Member Clark also announced that Read On Arizona had a general partners meeting a couple of weeks ago and about 80 organizations came together and helped devise what the next steps around communications will be and what other items we'll be focusing on over the next six to 12 months. We're also moving along and making progress on the continuum of effective literacy practices tool. This will devise what early learning and literacy instruction looks like for ages 0-8, what screening and assessment professional development and family engagement looks like. The next big work is the Early Literacy Summit in early November that we'll be co-hosting with Read On Phoenix and Mayor Stanton. We have a number of new communities that will shortly become Read On Communities. We currently have eight now and could possibly have 12 by the end of the year.

Review of Family Support and Literacy Framework:

Dr. Samuel noted that this document is almost finalized. Prior to Ex-CEO Evans Allvin's departure, she provided a list of parting recommendations and it brought to the forefront identifying three "key priorities" for the Advisory Committee to move forward. Dr. Samuel would like to focus on these three areas during this meeting. The Framework captures well the work needed to be done for moving Family Support and Literacy forward but we need to hone in on what approach to take for our work. From the recommendations, we have three guiding questions to consider.

1. How are we defining the Family Support System?
2. What are the components in Arizona that would make up the Family Support System?

3. What are the big goals we want to achieve for the Family Support System in the next 3-5 years?

Based on recommendations from today, the Advisory Committee may need to revisit the priority recommendations at the next meeting. Once finalized, the document will be presented to the First Things First Board at their next meeting in December. Dr. Samuel announced that all three of the Program Division Units will collaboratively present their frameworks at this meeting. Dr. Samuel asked that the Advisory Committee break into three smaller group discussions to talk about the three questions presented today.

The Advisory Committee regrouped and Representatives from the breakouts provided a summary of their discussions.

Group #1: Member Burnton's group defined what a family support system should look like. Their definition is that "It's a system of support services and programs to ensure parents have the tools to raise healthy children." This "System" needs to be at the level of intervention that meets parent's needs. It should help families with skill building including literacy and home visiting and it needs to be convenient for them.

A goal to achieve is to provide supports so that parents have sufficient literacy to ensure their children are ready for school and to ensure they have appropriate social, emotional and medical support while pregnant and through the first years of life. We need to ensure all children are appropriately screened for hearing, vision and developmental needs and that all families are aware of and have an understanding of child development including school readiness, basic maternal, child and behavioral health and social services including early intervention. Intervention should be based on varying levels of family support with the top being for crisis needs down to more acute needs like mental health services and developmental delays. The group also discussed what the next three to five years might look like. We envision defining and linking all home visiting programs so that parents are connected to the level of support that they need and that all children are appropriately screened. Member Burton noted that the group is looking forward to First Things First completing their inventory screening project and reviewing the data collected. They talked about expanding the level of quality for all people who are receiving family support services. We referenced a program through the Maricopa County Family Support Coalition who is looking at the California Guidelines for Family Support Quality and it's interesting to note, that incorporating quality was something founders of the early childhood system had discussed early on and now it's come back to the forefront. Once we define what a quality system is and to promote better quality, we need to move organizations towards using evidence informed models and then help support organizations to maintain quality levels of standard.

We discussed the various components of home visiting and really looked at evidenced informed home visiting, parent education, family resource centers and family support for children with special needs. We talked about the kids who fall between the cracks, who are not Arizona Early Intervention Program eligible. Other components would include behavioral health, substance abuse prevention, foster care, mental health, infant mental health, English fluency, money management and parents obtaining their GED. We looked at this holistically, not just what First Things First (FTF) would do but where it fits into the larger puzzle of what other agencies and organizations already do and where FTF fits.

Group #2: Stephanie Willis presented on her group discussion with the Co-Chair Day Mach and the Members who were on the phone. We defined the family support system as being the foundation of the framework document but with some pieces which are less obvious and need to be highlighted which includes overall economic development, food security and safe communities. If we move the needle in these areas, we believe we'll see great outcomes for families. We want there to be more of an emphasis on system coordination, so that there is less to no duplication in the system and a continuum that's integrated. The group sees there are silos, services that do not connect very well, and we want families to be able to find their way from one service to the next. We want to build a system that is coordinated, collaborative and complimentary.

In looking at goals for the next three to five years, we first discussed a statistic which notes that only nine percent of families receive home visitation services in Arizona. It was suggested that First Things First take an active role in providing increased access to home visitation services which should be evidence based or evidence informed models. We looked at the family support and literacy indicator that looks at families feeling confident and competent with their ability to provide for their children. There needs to be an increase in parenting skills and access to knowledge of all the services and programs that are offered and how to access them. We envision a system of outreach awareness which is at a community or local level and we talked about how the Quality First program just released an online system where families can find quality childcare services and how we can do something similar focusing on family support services. This led to discussion of another statistic found by the Arizona State University that finds many child welfare providers don't know how to get services for the families they serve. This further supported the idea of a website/on-line service for parents and providers on what is out there and how to access services. We talked about a web component to the Parent Education Community Based Training (PE-CBT) strategy and how we can share that information. We talked about partnering with the Communications Team in First Things First because we do so much advertising and awareness outreach. We need to identify how we get more specific on disseminating information and what venues we use.

We talked about children in out of home care and in the foster care system. First Things First (FTF) needs to clarify its Child Protection Services (CPS) policy. With 39% of children in the foster care system, we need to have a better understanding of who is actually involved in this system. There are many families receiving home visitation services but we may not be asking whether or not they have a CPS Case Manager or if they're involved in the CPS system. If they are, what services can we provide at their risk level? For children in the foster care system, we talked about providing quality literacy and child development training for foster parents. We also talked about kinship families and how we can provide assistance to them. We discussed broadening the continuum of services, reaching out to all child advocacy agencies so we're better connected. We talked about the family support coordination strategy. Although it's only implemented in Maricopa County, it can be a good service to be generalized statewide. Other statewide efforts can be to increase inter-regional connectivity so we're working together and we know what's happening in other regions. We discussed including health and early learning systems and how to also bring them to the table so we have a coordinated effort. We tried to look at all the Family Support System components and the various strategies that FTF funds and we talked about the various silos that exist and how we need to start reaching out earlier to our families. With approximately 89,000 births each year we need to identify how we get those families connected in the system.

Dr. Samuel noted there are consistent themes across these two groups around early access, awareness and making those connections, not just across our goal areas but as a broader system.

Group #3: Member Merk's group mainly discussed how we're defining the Family Support System. At what level are we moving and thinking as we move forward with this framework. How do we articulate to our partners and funders of what we're doing and why we're doing it? We discussed the previous work done by the Early Childhood Task Force and the three things that were the charge for this Advisory Committee which was in informing and educating people about child development, information and referral services and in getting people to those services in culturally responsive ways. We echoed many of the points the previous two groups have made. We also looked at the continuum of family support and what efforts are already being done by the other agencies like the Arizona Department of Economic Security, Child Protective Services, the Arizona Early Intervention Program, the Arizona Department of Health Services and the work they're doing with home visitation and we need to identify what role First Things First needs to take in this continuum. We settled on looking at things from a prevention/preventive intervention approach. We felt there were things being done when families were in a crisis situation but what was there for families from the beginning? What happens when the economy tanks, parents get divorced, or a child gets into an accident? What are some things that we can do in terms of bridging the gap?

There was much discussion on "literacy", we need to revisit previous conversations and institutional memory around what the Early Childhood Task Force meant by "literacy". There were some of us in this group who participated in those historical discussions and we believe we were really looking at literacy in broader terms, not just as it relates to reading because literacy fits into the work of the Health Policy Advisory Committee as well as the Early Learning Advisory Committee. For example, if families need education on say child development, financial services, what supports are there for their literacy and understanding of various topics? Our recommendation is to take a look at that word "literacy" and maybe for the broader term, see if there's another word we can use so we don't keep confusing issues with our public and also with ourselves.

Dr. Samuel thanked everyone for their contributions and stated that this work will enrich the Framework document and will not only help drive our agency work but will help our partners to understand their role as well. The ultimate and desired outcome is for everyone in this room who works with other agencies and in other capacities to serve as a vein to help get the system connections going and really taking this information back and starting to be that change agent within our agencies.

Future Work and Next Steps:

Co-Chair Dal Pra acknowledged the work and focus of the Advisory Committee and is so impressed with the Committee's efforts.

The next Advisory Committee meeting is scheduled for October 17, 2013. The breakout groups from today may need to meet to further discuss the three priority items prior to the next meeting.

Dr. Samuel called for three to five volunteers to help develop frames for the next meeting. Please notify her of participation at the end of the meeting or by e-mail.

Adjourn:

Co-Chair Dal Pra adjourned the meeting at approximately 10:45 a.m.