

## **Arizona's Early Childhood Workforce Registry**

### *A Critical Component of a Comprehensive Professional Development System*

During 2012, a statewide group of early childhood stakeholders, convened by First Things First and functioning as a working group of The BUILD Initiative, engaged in a 12-month collaborative planning process. The working group developed Arizona's Early Childhood Professional Development Framework and Two-Year Strategic Plan. As a critical component of the strategic plan, the working group has recommended implementing an early childhood workforce registry.

### **What is an Early Childhood Workforce Registry?**

A registry is an information system for the early childhood and school-age workforce. A registry provides an online, digital place for early childhood educators to build a profile of education, training, and employment that can be verified to assist employers; and regulatory and accrediting agencies. Early childhood professional registries:

- Provide a place for multiple state agencies to verify professional credentials for licensing or certification
- Provide accessible data to track trends in workforce development and help government administrators, policy makers, and leaders of institutes of higher education answer important questions about the early childhood workforce.

Currently 38 states maintain fully functioning early childhood workforce registries and 7 states have registries under development compared to 24 fully functioning registries with 4 under development in 2009. 21 or 60% of states mandate practitioner registry participation for all or some of the early childhood workforce and 14 or 40% of states are entirely voluntary. One could infer that states that mandate participation for individuals working in licensed child care facilities have the highest registry participation rates.<sup>1</sup>

### **What is the State of Arizona's Early Childhood Workforce Data?**

- Arizona currently has no centralized statewide administrative "home" for early childhood workforce data.
- Data are housed in several state agency databases. This means data are duplicated and there is no mechanism for verifying which data are accurate.
- Degree information is housed at the degree-granting institute of higher education, which may be an out-of-state institution. There is no mechanism for aggregating data

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<sup>1</sup> State of Registries Survey 2009 and 2012, Retrieved 3-14-13.

across universities and colleges so data can be analyzed for trends in workforce development.

- Redundancies and inefficiencies exist as staff from multiple agencies must verify credentials for the same people in their own independent, disconnected systems.
- Because data are housed in incompatible data systems, it is impossible to compile accurate, statewide data on the early childhood workforce.

### **Why Does Arizona Need an Early Childhood Workforce Registry?**

An early childhood workforce registry will:

- Allow state agencies to streamline regulatory functions, reduce redundancy, increase data quality and accuracy, and reduce costs associated with regulatory functions;
- Document and track qualifications to ensure early childhood educators meet educational and credential requirements;
- Help to understand workforce trends;
- Support professional development of the early childhood workforce.
- Monitor the effectiveness of investments in early childhood workforce programs.

### **What Steps are Needed to Implement an Early Childhood Workforce Registry?**

First Things First has dedicated federal funds from the State Advisory Council grant to support the planning and development of the registry. Several key policy and funding decisions remain to be made in order to move the project forward. Those decision points are:

- The need to identify sustainable funding sources.
  - Previously, from 2004-2009, Arizona implemented an early childhood workforce registry called S\*CEEDS. The registry was paid for with federal Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) quality set-aside funds, administered by the Arizona Department of Economic Security, until funding for the program was cut.
  - Based on information from other states and previous experience with implementing the S\*CEEDS registry, yearly costs of staffing and maintaining the registry are estimated at \$600,000.
- The need to develop cross-agency, cross-sector policies and agreements for collecting and using data for a variety of administrative and regulatory functions.
  - The registry has the greatest potential for reducing redundancies and costs, and increasing accuracy and informing policy if it is used by all the agencies with early childhood workforce regulatory functions and made accessible to administrators and researchers at Arizona's institutes of higher education.
  - Formal Memoranda of Understanding will be needed to establish cross-agency/cross-sector policies and procedures.