

Background:

TCDD reviewed three Unsolicited Ideas that were discussed during the May 2011 Council meetings. The Public Policy Committee reviewed one Unsolicited Idea proposing an Early Childhood Education Coalition and tentatively recommended that the Council consider providing support in some manner for this idea. However, members also asked for more information related to similar activities to review during the August meetings. Council member Margaret Christen, TEA, coordinated with TCDD staff to provide additional information that is included in the meeting materials.

Council

Agenda Item 12. D.

Expected Action:

The Council will review information and provide guidance to staff as appropriate.

Strategies to Improve Early Childhood Services

Background:

During the May 2011 business meetings, the Public Policy Committee reviewed an Unsolicited Idea that included specific strategies to improve early childhood services. This Idea specifically recommended that a statewide advisory council be developed for the purposes of improving early childhood services for children with developmental disabilities. During this discussion, the Public Policy Committee expressed support for developing activities that would improve early childhood services and requested additional information on ongoing and related activities that aim to improve early childhood services for children with disabilities.

A statewide advisory council on “early childhood” is currently established and operating in Texas. Additionally, through a technical assistance grant, Texas developed a Strategic Plan of Action to improve early childhood in Texas.

Texas Early Learning Council:

The reauthorization of the federal Head Start program required states to establish a statewide early childhood advisory council. In December 2009, Governor Rick Perry designated the Children’s Learning Institute at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston to serve as this advisory council. The Early Learning Council received \$11.4 million in 2010. This federal funding will be spent over three years to:

- Improve parental outreach and communication through:
 1. Conducting a needs assessment; and
 2. Developing improved outreach to special and underrepresented populations.
- Improve workforce and professional development through:
 1. Assess the capacity of colleges and universities to meet the needs of the early childhood workforce;
 2. Develop higher education articulation agreements;
 3. Conduct a provider wage study;
 4. Enhance Texas Core Knowledge and Skills Areas for Early Childhood Professionals;
 5. Develop an Early Childhood Education Provider Career Lattice; and
 6. Develop an Early Childhood Education Career Development System and a robust workforce registry system
- Increase collaboration and standards by:
 1. Develop a web-based integrated cross sector standards/guidelines tool;
 2. Develop early learning guidelines for infants and toddlers;
 3. Develop and pilot a Licensed Child Care Home quality improvement program; and
 4. Conduct a professional mentoring and coaching strategies meta-analysis.
- Improve data systems and quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) by:
 1. Develop recommendations for a statewide Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS); and
 2. Develop and implement an integrated early childhood information exchange system.

The Early Learning Advisory Council is comprised of 19 members, none specifically representing “parents”, and some of whom are required by federal law. The director of statewide initiatives at the Children’s Learning Institute and the director of the Texas State Center for Early Childhood Development at The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston, serve as chairs of the Early Learning Council.

Advisory Council Membership (<i>Italicized member types required by federal statute</i>)		
Member Type	Inclusion	Member Description
<i>State Agency responsible for child care</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS); and Texas Workforce Commission
<i>State education agency</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from Texas Education Agency (TEA)
<i>Local education agency</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Two representatives
<i>Institutions of higher education</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Three representatives from institutions of higher education
<i>Local providers of early childhood education/development services</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Three early care and education providers
<i>Head Start Agency</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Four representatives from Head Start agencies
<i>State director of Head Start collaboration</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Texas state director of Head Start collaboration
<i>State agency responsible for programs under Part C of IDEA</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (DARS)
<i>Coordinator of Part B, 619 of IDEA</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from TEA
<i>State agency responsible for health or mental health</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS)
Representative from governor's office	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not specified
Legislator(s)		
Parent representative		
Tribal representative		
Migrant representative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from local migrant/seasonal Head Start
Business representative		
Foundation representative		
Statewide and community organizations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from: Mental Health American of Texas*
OTHER		
Early childhood comprehensive systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Representative from Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC)
Local city government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not specified

*Possibility for TCDD to join through Statewide and community organization

Website: <http://www.childrenslearninginstitute.org/our-programs/program-overview/texas-early-learning-council/>

Texas Expanding Opportunities:

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) established a Texas interagency team that worked across systems to develop and sustain a continuum of inclusive early child care and education supports and services. The interagency team developed a Strategic Plan of Action (SPOA) that was completed October 2010. Additionally, Texas Expanding Opportunities (with the assistance of NECTAC) completed a child care provider survey in December 2010.

The SPOA identified a number of steps and responsible parties to implement each identified action. However, there are a number of actions that as of today, do not appear to have been implemented. These include:

1. MOU's between specific early care and education agencies will be reviewed modified or developed to address interagency coordination and policies supporting inclusion.
2. Draft TRS revisions to include attention to serving children with special needs and disabilities.
3. Develop a message about the importance of inclusion and the initiative to share with other agencies by creating a workgroup to create the content draft and develop the message.
4. Develop early childhood sessions on interagency collaboration and inclusive practices for the 2011 Inclusion Works conference.
5. Gather and post professional development resources/opportunities, laws, regulations and policies related to inclusion and practices supporting effective inclusion in one web location by: developing online training resources, gather links for laws and regulations, finalize content, determine agency/entity to update and maintain resource collection, determine training needed and offer specific requirements for training credits.
6. Determine a mechanism to analyze and share results of the parent and provider needs assessment.
7. Identify and coordinate a mechanism for consultants to provide TA to staff working with children in regional and local programs.
8. Identify agency representatives to participate in a stakeholder meeting to provide input about current consultation practices and local program landscape and experiences, discuss/determine funding sources and mechanisms for sharing costs of some consultants resources and determine a way to inform local programs about the availability of consultants.

The Texas Expanding Opportunities interagency team includes members from TEA, DARS, ECI, DFPS, Texas Head Start State Collaboration Office, HHSC, Texas State Based Training and Technical Assistance Office, and the Texas Workforce Commission.

Possible Next Steps:

TCDD may consider identifying ways to collaborate with that entity on specific strategies related to improving services for children with disabilities. Specific funded activities may fall into State Plan Goals and Objectives. Additionally, information related to effectiveness of early childhood programs and its impact on long-term outcomes could be included in Biennial Report analyses and findings.