



State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



Commission on Children

Minutes of Meeting

Connecticut Commission on Children

Tuesday, January 8, 2008
10 a.m. – Noon
Commission conference room
18-20 Trinity Street, Hartford

Voting members present: James Cordier, Laura Lee Simon, George Coleman, Judith Busch, Alison Hilding, Mary K. Fox, Josh Piteo, Leslie Wolfgang, and Mary Grace Reed.

Ex-Officio members present: Mary Marcial, Department of Correction; Anne Foley, Office of Policy and Management; Norma Gyle, Department of Public Health; Tammy Garris, Department of Developmental Services; Rudy Brooks, Department of Children and Families; George Coleman, Department of Education; and Amparo Garcia, Department of Social Services.

Members absent: Senator Mary Ann Handley, Representative Andrew Fleischmann, Dr. Alex Geertsma, Representative Mike Lawlor, Senator Jonathan Harris, John Yrchik, Attorney General's designee, and Chief Court Administrator's designee.

Commission staff present: Elaine Zimmerman, Tom Brooks, Elizabeth Brown, Kevin Flood, Dawn Homer-Bouthiette, and Rachel Levy.

Handouts: Agenda; draft minutes of November 13, 2007 meeting; bar graph of Commission newsletter subscriptions in 2007, per month; draft of "Recommendations of the Expert Panel to the Child Poverty and Prevention Council," December 7, 2007; "Proposed Process for Development of Results-based Accountability Framework for the Child Poverty and Prevention Council," undated; Child Poverty and Prevention Council short-term recommendations; *New York Times* editorial, "We Must Stop Failing Our Children," December 23, 2007; *New York Times* editorial, "Connecticut's Poor," December 16, 2007; *Hartford Courant* news article, "A Crisis of Poverty," December 8, 2007; and *Hartford Courant* column, "The Path Out of Poverty," December 11, 2007.

Meeting convened

Chairman James Cordier convened the meeting at 10:05 a.m.

Executive Director's report

Executive Director Elaine Zimmerman pointed to a graph in members' packets that showed subscriptions to the Commission's electronic newsletter more than quadrupling in 2007, from 83 in January to 341 in December.

She reported that after several rounds of interviews, a candidate has been chosen for the new staff position of grants writer and accounts manager. The candidate has accepted the position, and her name has been submitted to the leaders of the House and Senate caucuses for final approval. The candidate has broad administrative experience from her work as a high-ranking Peace Corps volunteer in several countries and grant-writing experience from more recently serving as director of a state nonprofit organization.

Ms. Zimmerman also drew the board's attention to favorable *Hartford Courant* and *New York Times* articles centered on the Child Poverty and Prevention Council's recent work on developing plans to reduce Connecticut's child poverty by 50 percent in 10 years. The Commission is a very active member of the Council. She also pointed to a *New York Times* editorial that described Connecticut students' scores on recent reading tests as "dismal," especially when it comes to poor and minority students.

In addition, Ms. Zimmerman reported that:

- Officials of the federal Centers for Disease Control will be visiting Connecticut soon because they are impressed by the success the Department of Public Health and the Commission in communicating the benefits of immunization to traditionally hard-to-reach populations.
- The Commission has been selected to give a presentation at a national writer's conference regarding the homeland security programs it has held for Connecticut students since the September 11 attacks.
- Officials of the U.S. Attorney's office will be meeting with Commission staff and officials of the Correction Department to learn about their work in steering children of prisoners away from gang involvement.

Policy discussions

1. Child poverty

Anne Foley briefed the board on the recent work of the Child Poverty and Prevention Council. Heard from many experts, many ideas developed, got 67 recommendations. Added 27 more with merging of Prevention Council. Three meetings in past month; assembled expert panel; pointed out recommendations in packet. Four main areas to focus on, left out helping low-income families build assets. RBA with workgroup items that council can do immediately; council accepted EZ recs; children under 5, young adults, working poor families. Come up with grid of

15 boxes using four subject areas. Between now and early March, finalize objectives, apply RBA standards. Also going out to bid for economist who will help with modeling.

Busch – Acquaintance complained that people don't know how to shop, cook – need more publicity. Foley – articles in packet.

Simon – part of information must include realistic redefinition of poverty; current figures very outdated. Foley – objectives include revisiting, but census data needed – longterm project.

Gyle – We can do 100 percent literacy, other countries have it.

Simon – Embedding Prevention Task Force, number of folks working in that area

Busch – Principals say NCLB forcing teachers to make sure kids up to grade level before promoting them.

Gyle – Another norm needed: Teen pregnancy unacceptable. Not siding with abstinence or birth control, etc. But need to end generational cycle of teen pregnancy.

EZ – experts cut across party lines; only presented what all agreed on and what could be supported with scientific evidence. Not enough research to show assets make a difference.

Mary K. Fox – Problem reaching children of illegal immigrants, don't qualify for welfare, etc., but not child's fault. Children may go to school, but parents can't help in 70 percent in Stamford ready program have English as second language, many of them here illegally.

Piteo – Any effort to coordinate services with one-stop shopping.

Brown – DSS major effort to coordinate; most school districts have intake centers, WIC doing same, but no one at state level in charge of it all

Foley – Reason why state funding 211 system

Cordier: Hispanic Health Council, will go as far as walking people through system

EZ – Using RBA model with every step, though experts suggested leaving room for experimentation.

Mary Grace Reed – increase in need for better health care for children, seeing significant drop in health of kids as they enter in school, especially dental problems. Cant concentrate.

Coleman – large percentage children of illegals, not taking advantage of limited services available.

EZ – Many parents working part-time job that don't offer health insurance or make it too expensive to participate.

Coleman – Look to articulate policy that fathers as well as mothers are responsible for ...

EZ – Asked him to participate in drawing up policy recommendations

Prevention media campaign

Launch of prevention media campaign featuring UConn men's basketball coach Jim Calhoun.

Infants and toddlers report

Status report from the Governor's Early Childhood Education Cabinet

Report by Janice Gruendel, co-chair of the Cabinet and policy advisor to Gov. M. Jodi Rell

PREVENTION

LLS – Poll indicated that people understood prevention and will to support it with tax money. Also, listening tour with Governor's Prevention Partnership revealed that communities supported it too. Science shows brain development continues into adolescence. \$16 return on every dollar invested. Business community supports it too. Next step: created partnership with Connecticut Public Broadcasting, etc., Assembled funding, hired Decker, who came up with using sports metaphor for campaign. She got University of Connecticut men's basketball coach Jim Calhoun to serve as spokesman.

Multi-media approach – web, TV, radio, newspaper ads.

Launching at January 26 press conference. National partners will disseminate as model for rest of the country.

EZ praised LLS for work to coordinate with partners and raise money.

Nov. 13 meeting changed to following Tuesday – 18th

Janice Gruendel

Couple of youth initiatives going on that in line with COC initiatives – add to agenda for next meeting?

13,000 kids without pre-school, need 2-7,000 new spaces for them, education level not up to new standards. Received 6.5 million for expansion of preschool in budget. Added about 1,000 new slots. Next year, asking comty organizations to take another 1,000 kids. Could place 357 kids in districts but no new money.

Next biennel budget very important: \$25G starting salary for someone with BA in early childcare; national problem; salary would be bumped to \$35G. Law says we will move to BA-level workforce. Money ECU workers can't speak English well enough to get into college programs. Obligation to quality rating and improvement system. Due to xgr in December 2008. Hired two consultants.

Highlight of this year will be public safety. Challenge not fiscal; need to address kids attached to inmates, not just inmates themselves.

Coleman – Governor's summit will center on birth to 3 (flyer?)

Minutes

The Commission unanimously approved the minutes of the November 13, 2007 meeting, with one correction, substituting a reference to the "Department of Mental Retardation" with "Department of Developmental Services," reflecting the agency's recent name change.

Adjournment

Mr. Cordier adjourned the meeting at 12:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Hilding, Secretary