

**Policy and Research Committee
Board of Early Education and Care**

November 4, 2013
10:00 AM – 11:30 PM

Department of Early Education and Care
51 Sleeper Street
Boston, MA 02210

MINUTES

Members of the Committee/Board Present:

Joni Block, Board Member
Sharon Scott Chandler, Board Member (via phone)
Joan Wasser Gish, Board Member/Policy and Research Committee Chair
Tom Weber, EEC Commissioner Ex-Officio Member

EEC Staff Present:

Gwen Alexander, Program Quality Specialist/QRIS Lead
Denise Karlin, Assistant General Counsel
Jennifer Louis, Management Analyst
Evelyn Nellum, Policy Analyst- Special Education
Carol Nolan, Director of Policy
Carmel Sullivan, General Counsel
Felicia Sullivan, Assistant General Counsel
Tom Weierman, Assistant General Counsel

Members of the Public Present:

Kate Giappin, Brandeis University
Pam Joshi, Brandeis University
Pam Kuechler, Massachusetts Head Start Association
Megan Teixeira, Horizons for Homeless
Emily Levine, Horizons for Homeless

The meeting was called to order at 10:04 a.m.

Disclosures:

Joni Block disclosed that she works for the Brockton Public School System and they receive EEC funding.

Review of Policy Committee Minutes:

The Policy and Research Committee members approved the minutes from the September 9, 2013 meeting and the October 2, 2013 meeting.

1.) Fingerprinting Regulations – Presentation

Denise Karlin, EEC Assistant General Counsel, discussed the new fingerprinting regulation requirements. She shared with the Committee that EEC receives the highest level of criminal information [slide 3]. She stated that if an applicant has a sealed record, EEC must request the information on the case.

Ms. Karlin explained that the regulation had to be refined due to technical errors [slide 4]. Level 1 sex offender information is not public, nor is it available to EEC. Level 2 is considered a moderate risk, and Level 3 is considered likely to re-offend.

Joan Wasser-Gish, Policy and Research Committee chair, asked about the discretionary review, and what the implications are for the field [slide 8]. Carmel Sullivan, EEC General Counsel, stated that EEC is already performing discretionary reviews. Ms. Karlin added that EEC does not expect there to be a large number of hits so the impact will probably be low.

Sharon Scott-Chandler, Board member, asked what the turn-around time will be for the reviews. Ms. Sullivan replied that SORI will be run at the same time as the CORI, and EEC expects it will take 2-3 weeks for the results.

Joni Block, Board member, asked if the appropriate action will be suspension of license. Ms. Karlin replied that sometimes the educator must surrender their license, other times they are removed from the location.

Chair Joan Wasser Gish asked if discretion with the findings sits at the employee level, or with EEC [slide 10]. Ms. Karlin responded that EEC is not allowed to disclose any results to the program. Joni Block asked if EEC will be assuming a level of responsibility that we can't fulfill. Ms. Karlin stated that EEC is already performing reviews and background checks. The biggest issue is going to be staffing as their will be more information to review. She added that there are procedures being developed to acquire more staff.

Ms. Sullivan asked the Committee asked for clarity on what the Committee's concerns are about this process. Chair Wasser Gish replied that with only EEC reviewing FBI records programs and providers will not have the information they need to exercise discretion when screening their employees. She also asked if there is the potential for any liability. Ms. Karlin stated that EEC is exempt from liability, and that EEC has been performing this task for years. Ms. Sullivan added that the part of the regulation that is new is adding in the SORI and FBI record review, transportation driver check, and checking family members of Family Child Care providers. EEC is best qualified to perform these reviews. Ms. Sullivan also stated that EEC has requested ten additional staff members for administration and review.

Chair Joan Wasser Gish asked what the process is if a program contracts with an agency for their transportation [slide 12]. Ms. Karlin replied that programs must have an agreement with the company to do background checks on all staff that have direct contact with children.

Chair Wasser Gish asked if there has been any guidance for the field. Ms. Sullivan replied that EEC has been holding meetings in the regional offices for over a month. Programs that do their own transportation and don't receive EEC funding have been in need of the most support. Ms. Karlin added that EEC has been producing a lot of

guidance documents, especially for ESE, and there is an interagency committee working on this.

Chair Wasser Gish asked if programs can conditionally hire staff [slide 14]. Ms. Sullivan responded that between 9/1/13 and today, they can be hired conditionally. These staff members will get priority review once staff has been hired and fingerprinting is running. Programs can conditionally hired if the CORI and DCF checks are clear.

Chair Wasser Gish asked if this would be going before the Board. Ms. Karlin responded that the Board will be given an overview in November, and asked to vote in December. There will also be a public comment period.

2.) Inclusive learning Environments (391) Grant- Discussion

Evelyn Nellum, EEC Policy Analyst Special Education, presented an overview of the Inclusive Preschool Learning Environments Grant. She stated that EEC is making a recommendation to release the grant as a renewal in FY15, and as competitive in FY16. Board member Joni Block asked what the goal is of going competitive. Ms. Nellum replied that there are several programs that are interested in participating in the grant. Board member Sharon Scott Chandler asked if there is a QRIS participation requirement. Ms. Nellum responded there is participation required, which means a final submitted Level 1 application.

Board member Joni Block encouraged EEC to collaborate with ESE. She also suggested that we clearly define the purpose of the grant, to help with planning and revisions. She also recommended that EEC convene a focus group to look more closely at the grant, and that EEC use the advisory council for input and feedback.

Committee Chair Joan Wasser Gish asked Ms. Nellum to come back to the Policy and Research Committee after she has a draft of the revisions.

3.) Universal Pre-Kindergarten- Presentation

Carol Nolan, EEC Director of Policy, shared with the Committee that EEC has an additional \$692,000 in unallocated funds available to use for opening up the UPK grant. EEC will post the grant as competitive, and it will mirror the FY14 UPK Renewal Grant.

Committee Chair Joan Wasser Gish asked if FY15 will be different, and requested that EEC give the grantees plenty of notice if the next round will be different. She stated that good communication to the field is important. Board Member Joni Block asked if the \$692,000 must be expended by June 30, 2014. Ms. Nolan replied yes.

4.) Brandeis University/OPRE research Grant- Discussion

Kate Giappin, researcher from Brandeis University, shared with the Committee that EEC and Brandeis have engaged in a new research partnership. The objective of the partnership is to study the effects of state-specific CCDF administrative changes that

went into effect in January 2012 and affected 50% of the income eligible "voucher children." This grant will span four years.

Pam Joshi, researcher from Brandeis University explained that this will be a mixed methods study; impact study, implementation study and subgroup analysis. Commission Weber stated that EEC would like to reduce the administrative burden on families.

Committee Chair requested that the Advisory Council be kept informed of the progress.

5.) **QRIS/RTT Updates- handout**

There were no comments on the QRIS and RTT updates.

The meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.