

Hard to Reach Subcommittee
Minutes 1-24-13

Attendees: Carie Bires, Jessica LeBeau-Richman, Janice Moenster, Cerathel Burnett, TeeNeka Jones, Melanie Garrett, Natalie Danner, Dawn Thomas, Bob Camerata, Tom Layman, Daniel Fitzgerald, Rhonda Anderson, Patricia Islas

Approve minutes from December 12, 2012 meeting

The group reviewed the minutes from Dec. 6 and approved them.

Review categories table updates

The subcommittee reviewed each of the categories and the updates provided since the last meeting. At the next meeting on Tuesday February 19th, we will split into small work groups and members will have time to have a more in depth discussion about recommendations to submit to the Early Learning Council. Other experts who don't normally participate are invited to come to the meeting to share their insights. We will break up into different small groups to focus on each of our "hard to reach" categories, such as teen parenting, homeless, etc. Tom and Carie introduced a document that small groups will use to submit those recommendations for consideration. It is attached with the minutes.

Carie and Tom will collect the recommendation sheets at the end of the next meeting and review them with committee leadership for readiness to be submitted to the Early Learning Council. Tom and Carie will present their recommendations for which recommendations to submit at the March meeting.

There was a discussion of the recommendation and the group agreed that all recommendations should be thoroughly vetted and backed up with data.

Next, the group discussed updates to the categories table. Janice provided a significant update for the children in the care of relatives category. This information was gathered during a parent meeting and closely reflects other information provided by COFI. Granada Williams submitted an update on migrant families as well. She reports that Migrant Head Start programs feel they are reaching all migrant children in the state. The group was curious to know more about who the migrant children are and if this includes families beyond those who are agricultural migrant workers.

Daniel Fitzgerald shared information on the DCFS section of the table. Children whose families have DCFS involvement should also include intact families, in addition to those in foster care. Daniel also recommends expanding the category of children of adults who have aged out of foster care to include children of adults who were adopted as well. The group discussed why child welfare involved families are hard to reach, which included trust issues, transportation, children with special needs, knowledge of early education, isolation of families, and knowledge of services and schools. The group discussed the idea of changing intact case policies making school readiness required rather than recommended.

Janice mentioned that delay in payment to providers can make child welfare involved families challenging to serve.

Bob talked about ISFP and EI and mentioned identifying why children did not transition into special education. Bob provided some additional data on transition and agreed to send it to Natalie. Bob informed the group that CPS and EI will be having a collaboration meeting about the transition from EI to special education. The group also had a small discussion about preschool programs obtaining IEPs for 3 year olds.

Tom added a couple other bullet points describing why children with disabilities are hard to reach, including screening, complex processes to access services, documentation process, and different types of certified teacher at the preschool programs.

Group members shared that getting a diagnosis and services for children under 5 who may have a disability could take up to a year and a half. Parents get frustrated with this and it is not always a priority for families with many needs. This is an issue not only in Chicago, but across the state of Illinois. Teeneka mentioned that parents may also have a disability, which makes the process even more difficult.

Carie mentioned that it seems like many families seem to fit in multiple categories we have identified as “hard to reach” risk factors. Accessing services and programs is very complex and families with very complex needs are just unable to navigate the processes. Carie also mentioned that it seems like there are some good policies already in place to address access to services for families with complex needs, but these policies are not being enforced or followed. Dawn suggested that maybe we should not be making policy recommendations, but to figure out how to hold programs accountable for not enforcing policies.

Carie recommended that various hard to reach groups still need to be included in the list even if there are not enough measures or data. Daniel supported Carie’s recommendation and suggested that we include a strong reason why we are including these groups and why they are also a priority. Personal stories could also be included to influence the governor’s office.

Next steps

The subcommittee was encouraged to think of solutions or ideas they have for the recommendations and to bring that back to this group for consideration. The focus should be on what would have broad impact and highest chances of success. Daniel encouraged the group to not feel pressured to move too quickly to recommendations and to focus on group dynamics and a work plan. He also strongly recommended that all recommendations be data based.

Once Carie, Tom, Natalie, and Martin Torres identify the most promising recommendations from the group, they will reach out to Dawn and Bernard for assistance with compiling the appropriate data to support the recommendation.