

**Transition Advisory Committee
Meeting 3
February 27, 2024, 5:30-7:00pm CT
Public attendee link:**

https://aftonpartners.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_MuYd2jo6ScaNy_X1uo5iZg

Passcode:

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In attendance:

Transition Advisory Committee (TAC) members: Makisha Binns (Kiddos Care), Katie Cobb (Peoria Public Schools), Johnna Darragh-Ernst (Heartland Community College), Tonya Frehner (Birth to Five Illinois), Rochelle Golliday (Cuddle Care, Inc), Keshia Harris (Parent, We, the Village Coalition), LaKeesha James-Smith (Parent, Family Advisory Council), Marcy Mendenhall (SAL Family and Community Services), Janice Moenster (Brightpoint), Bela Moté – Chair (Carole Robertson Center), Dara Munson (Family Focus), Mariana Osoria (Chicago of Chicago), Angel Powell-Muldrow (Early Childhood Center Principal), Edgar Ramirez (Chicago Commons), Robin Steans (Advance Illinois), Rebecca Vonderlack-Navarro (Latino Policy Forum), Sarah Ziemba (Shine Therapy Service)

State Agency Members and Consultants: Megan Bock (Afton Partners), Aressa Colely (Afton Partners), Kristen Garcia (Afton Partners), Liz Garza (Afton Partners), Sri Raghunath (Afton Partners), Katie Reed (Afton Partners), Elliot Regenstein (Foresight Law + Policy), Siri Smillie (Afton Partners), Ann Whalen (Early Childhood Transition Director)

Members of the public: 45

Minutes

1. Welcome and introductions – Bela Moté, Ann Whalen

Bela Moté (Chair of TAC and President and CEO of Carole Robertson Center for Learning) brought the meeting to a start with a brief welcome to the TAC and participants from the public. She then introduced Ann Whalen (Early Childhood Transition Director) for housekeeping items.

Bela reminded public partners of their commitment to adhere to the Public Meeting Act and that discussion materials and meeting minutes will be posted on the GOECD website. She provided a summary of items that were up to discussion for this month's meeting and meeting goals, which included building community amongst the TAC, continue getting to know consultants that will be supporting the transition work, review and begin to make meaning of stakeholder feedback, engage in a discussion around the elevated priority of racial equity, build a shared understanding of early childhood governance, and learn about the FY25 budget proposal and Department of Early Childhood legislation.

Bela also provided a brief overview of the community agreements that were established in previous meetings, which are to engage in respectful dialogue, actively participate, and make space for vulnerability.

2. **Reflections and Progress from January Meeting** – Bela Moté, Ann Whalen

Bela provided an overview of the feedback summary from the first TAC meeting held in January. The summary highlighted the topics that TAC members expressed interest in learning about during meetings, such as lessons learned and models from other states with unified agencies, racial equity learnings, and state programs. TAC members also expressed a desire to hear from representatives from other states and diverse stakeholders during meetings. Bela acknowledged that she and Ann are working towards incorporating this feedback into the agendas of future meetings.

Ann shared that the a Department of Early Childhood legislation has been filed and the proposed budget for FY25 was announced last week. She informed the TAC about the first listening session held in January and mentioned that transition consultant Chris Rudd’s Stakeholder Design workshops are set to begin soon. She also shared the launch of a data learning series by transition consultant Christina Krasov, which will focus on data best practices. These learning sessions will be recorded.

3. **Voices from the Field** –Ann Whalen, Aressa Colely (17 minutes)

Ann transitioned the discussion to review the insights gathered from the listening session held last month. This session engaged a diverse range of providers, advocates, and other stakeholders in discussions about transition updates, providing them with an opportunity to voice their concerns, questions, and recommendations to the transition team.

The purpose of the listening session was threefold: to provide updates on the transition process, to gather insights and perspectives from diverse voices to inform opportunities for the agency, and to foster collaboration and mutual learning among stakeholders. Audience members had various ways to provide feedback, including Padlet, Zoom chat, public survey, and verbal communication by unmuting themselves. These sessions will be held bimonthly and will have evolving sets of questions as the transition work progresses over time.

Ann began to discuss some of the key feedback shared during the listening session. Participants expressed excitement about a streamlined communication process, improved access to services for families, increased collaboration, greater respect and value for the early care and education (ECE) field, opportunities to participate in shaping the new agency, and centering equity within the workforce and for families. Participants also expressed challenges such as lack of consistency and collaboration between agencies, barriers for families in accessing services, and the need for better support for the workforce as areas for improvement and prioritization during the transition. To prioritize equity, participants suggested centering parent and provider voices, supporting and scaffolding engagement with underserved populations, investing in equitable data-drive approaches that center priority populations, ensuring pay equity, and identifying and deconstructing biases. Ann shared that the feedback survey was still live and available for people to provide feedback in English and Spanish, encouraging TAC members to share it with their networks.

Ann turned to Aressa Colely (Afton Partners) to facilitate a large group discussion with TAC members to make meaning of the feedback received from the listening session.

Edgar Ramirez (TAC member) shared that he was happy to see the idea of pay, salary, and wages brought to the forefront of the discussion as this is a key driver of many challenges that providers face to support families.

Marcy Mendenhall (TAC member) shared that she was happy to see the concept of coordinated intake where families can engage in a less stressful way being brought to light from stakeholders. She also shared that she had a conversation with Illinois Action for Children about parents' real-time perception of research and emphasized the importance of being mindful of their time and leverage their voices and expertise strategically and in a non-burdensome manner.

Johnna Darragh-Ernst (TAC member) emphasized the importance of identifying and deconstructing our own biases within the context of the TAC's work, acknowledging the complexity of this process.

Janice Moenster (TAC member) expressed appreciation for the feedback regarding the simplification of processes for families who are accessing services through the new agency. She also expressed curiosity about how centering equity translates into policies and practices.

Robin Steans (TAC member) raised questions about the pace of change and the importance of setting realistic expectations.

Tonya Frehner (TAC member) emphasized the importance of engaging parents from all areas of the state and across socio-economic statuses, especially those who are not typically involved in decision-making discussions.

Sarah Ziemba (TAC member) added to the idea of coordinated intake idea and shared her experience of witnessing collaboration between home visiting programs and early intervention staff in her area. She highlighted the support and resource-sharing among providers across these two disciplines.

Bela encouraged TAC members to continue to bring in their learnings and findings from their work into the TAC space.

Robin Steans raised a question about the frequency and formats of the listening sessions. Ann encouraged input from the TAC on how to engage individuals who are usually not involved and Robin wondered if an in-person listening sessions would be more effective for stakeholders.

Dara Munson (TAC member) expressed concern about the low representation of Black or African American attendees at the listening session. Ann responded by expressing the team's desire to reach a more diverse audience and welcomed suggestions from TAC members on how to achieve this goal. Dara offered her assistance in brainstorming ways to ensure all perspectives are included.

4. Small Group Discussion: Defining Equity – Breakout groups (30 minutes)

Aressa transitioned the group to a small group discussion activity aimed at defining racial equity. TAC members received the Early Learning Council (ELC)'s definition of racial equity and several other resources in their pre-reading materials. The group then split into small breakout groups and was asked to reflect on three questions:

1. What from the pre-reading or stakeholder feedback on centering equity resonated with you?
2. How can we ensure that our definition is inclusive and considers the needs of those farthest from opportunity?
3. What additional considerations should the TAC use to inform its definition of equity?

After several minutes in small breakouts, the larger group reconvened and shared the discussions from each group, which are also recorded on a [Jamboard](#). High-level takeaways from each breakout room indicated that all TAC members have a strong passion and conviction to center work in equity.

Bela announced that the group will continue to engage in small group discussions and that they are seeking 3-4 volunteers from the TAC to review equity resources and recommendations, incorporate TAC feedback from discussions during the February and March meetings, develop a proposed equity definition, and present the definition proposal and discussion reflections during the April TAC meeting.

5. Early Childhood Governance: Lessons Learned and Key Takeaways from Other States – Elliot Regenstein (15 minutes)

Bela turned it over to Ann to introduce Elliot Regenstein (Foresight Law + Policy) to give a presentation on lessons and takeaways from other states' early care and education governance. Elliot is a Chicago-based law partner at Foresight Law + Policy who has extensive state-level policy and advocacy experience. Elliot shared insights from his work with other states on systems, governance, and accountability. He expressed his commitment to supporting the transition and thanked the TAC for all the work that they are doing.

The information Elliot shared is based on a paper he wrote in 2020 titled *Early Childhood Governance: Getting from Here to There*. His presentation focused on the importance of early care and education, the meaning of governance, the definition of early care and education, and the components of comprehensive early development services. A follow-up email will be sent to the TAC containing Elliot's presentation, and it will also be available on the GOECD website, along with other materials shared during the meeting.

After his presentation, Elliot shared his contact information with TAC members for further discussion. A link to a [Jamboard](#) for Q&A for Elliot was provided in the chat.

Robin Steans (TAC member) asked Elliot about the appropriate use of advisory bodies and boards in situations requiring cross-agency coordination. Elliot responded by emphasizing the contextual nature of this issue, noting that while Illinois may have 15 advisory bodies, other states may only use them as a last resort. Elliot suggested that it is important to hire a leader for this role and to consider what decisions the TAC wants to make or have in place when that person assumes the position, as well as what aspects the TAC wishes to reserve for leader to help shape.

Ann encouraged TAC members to continue adding questions into the Q&A Jamboard.

6. Large Group Discussion : Overview of FY25 State Budget Proposal and DEC Legislation – Ann Whalen (7 minutes)

Ann then shifted the discussion to provide an update on the State's progress in the transition process. Currently, the State is still in phase one of a three phase process. Ann explained that Phase 2, occurring from July 2024 to July 2026, is the most exciting part, as it involves the reimagining and rethinking of programs and policies. Ann further explained current early care and education (ECE) programs will not transition over to the new agency until July 1, 2026, and additional legislation is likely to be developed in the next year as policies are reimagined. Governor Pritzker's budget request includes \$13 million for the new agency, which will be used to begin staffing, resources for data evaluation and learning

infrastructure, and funding to engage families, parents, providers, educators, and other stakeholders in the design of the new agency's system. Ann also mentioned they will keep the TAC informed about when the budget will go in front of the Senate's Appropriations Committee.

Ann then shared the proposed list of programs and services that will be moved into the new agency, based on the recommendations of the Early Childhood Funding Commission. The proposed legislation for the new agency was filed as SB 3777 and HB 5451, which aim to establish the new agency and outline the timeline for the transfer of programs. Ann explained that the proposal purposely does not include any policy changes to allow the field and TAC time to inform and help policy recommendations related to this work. She provided an overview of the entire legislative process to enact the bill and highlighted that there are multiple opportunities for the TAC to engage and hear how senators are discussing the proposal. Additionally, there are opportunities for the TAC to support their networks in engaging with the legislation. Ann shared the list of ECE committee members in the Senate and encouraged the TAC to share this information with their networks to advocate for the passage of the bill.

Marcy (TAC member) shared that this is a great opportunity to leverage advocacy channels and capture real-life experiences in op-eds and media. She encouraged everyone in the TAC to reach out to her directly to help amplify the message on a broader scale and to continue the great work being done to pass the budget and the bill.

Ann emphasized that members of the Senate also want to hear from parents, providers, and community members most engaged in the system.

7. Next Steps and Adjourn – (3 minutes)

Bela shared that the next meeting will focus on continuing to build a shared understanding of racial equity and developing goals and guiding principles to support the TAC's charge of centering equity and family experiences throughout the meaning-making process. A follow-up email will be sent next week with a meeting summary. Bela encouraged TAC members to reach out to Ann or Bela with any feedback, reminded members about the consultant working groups and learning sessions that were shared at the beginning of the meeting, and that the next listening session will be on March 17, 2024, from 12-1pm CT.

Next meeting:

Tuesday, March 12, 2024

5:30-7pm CT