

State of Alabama’s Early Childhood Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care (ECAC)

In the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Head Start Act, 42 USC 9801 et seq.), Congress authorizes the Governor of each State to designate or establish an Early Childhood and Care Advisory Council. The overall responsibility of the State Advisory Council will be to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school readiness. Additionally, the State Advisory Council will work to strengthen state-level coordination and collaboration among the various sectors and settings of early childhood programs in the State.

Governors are to: (a) designate an individual to coordinate activities of the State Advisory Council (The Alabama Department of Children’s Affairs), b) appoint other members determined to be relevant to the work of the Council, and c) appoint nine required members. The nine required members represent the following:

- State educational agency
- Local educational agencies
- Institutes of higher education
- Local providers of early childhood education and development services
- Head Start agencies including migrant/seasonal and tribal Head Start programs
- State Director of Head Start Collaboration
- State agency responsible for early childhood special education
- State agency responsible for health and mental health care

Funding Opportunity for the Council

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) (P.L. 111–5) made funding available to improve coordination and collaboration among early childhood education and care programs and services. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has funds available by ARRA to be awarded to eligible States, Commonwealths and Territories to enable States to develop and implement a plan established by their State Advisory Council on Early Childhood Education and Care for children from birth to school entry (referred to as the State Advisory Council).

Consistent with section 642B (b) (2) (A), the States shall also use the funds to carry out activities to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school readiness. The funding appropriated by ARRA to support the work of the State Advisory Council is

for one-time startup grants to develop and implement the plans of the State Advisory Council. These funds can be used over a three-year period. Applications may be submitted through August 1, 2010.

The application requires an opportunity for the public to comment on the proposed work of the Early Childhood Advisory Council. Below are specific required activities and recommendations of the Council. Your comments will be used to enhance or amend the SAC application.

Please take a few moments and provide comments, feedback, and opinions about the Council's ability to do this work. Please send all responses by **Tuesday, July 20, 2010** to Commissioner Marquita Davis at marquita.davis@dca.alabama.gov. Again, to clarify, please indicate how you believe Alabama's Early Childhood Advisory Council can best accomplish the activities and recommendations outlined by Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007 and the State Advisory Councils Application.

Consistent with section 642B(b)(2)(A) of the Head Start Act of 2007, States shall also indicate how they will carry out activities to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school readiness through one or more of the following activities:

- (a) promoting school readiness of children birth to five;

- (b) supporting professional development, recruitment and retention initiatives for early childhood educators; and

- (c) enhancing existing early childhood and development programs and services.

The Council must develop recommendations for the items listed below. Please prioritize the recommendations with 1 being the most important. Additionally, answer the following question. 1. How can each recommendation be accomplished? 2. What are your ideas about accomplishing each recommendation? 3. What barriers exist to accomplishing each recommendation?

- (1) Conducting a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the State; **(Required so please don't prioritize)**

- (2) Increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State, and local child care and early education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
- (3) Establishing or improving core elements of the State early childhood system, such as a statewide unified data collection system;
- (4) Establishing or improving a statewide professional development system and career ladder for early childhood educators;
- (5) Establishing, enhancing or improving high-quality State early learning standards; and
- (6) Assessing the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4- year public and private institutes of higher education in the State toward supporting the development of early childhood educators.

Please provide feedback to one final recommendation.

- (1) Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs;

Thank you for taking time to respond. Please remember to send all responses by **Tuesday, July 20, 2010** to Commissioner Marquita Davis at marquita.davis@dca.alabama.gov.