

Early Childhood Funding Commission

October Meeting: National Panel of Experts

Miriam Calderon, Early Learning System Director, Oregon
Department of Education

Miriam Calderon is the Early Learning System Director overseeing the Early Learning Division in Oregon. Before coming to Oregon, Miriam served as the Senior Director of Early Learning at the Bainum Family Foundation, where she shaped a new \$10 million dollar investment in a birth to three system for the District of Columbia. She also was a senior fellow with the BUILD Initiative, leading BUILD's work related to dual language learners, and serving as a faculty member for BUILD's Equity Leaders Action Network.



Previously, Calderon served as a political appointee in the Obama Administration, advising on early learning policy at the Domestic Policy Council at the White House and at the Department of Health and Human Services. She also served as the Director of Early Childhood Education at DC Public Schools, where she oversaw Head Start and pre-kindergarten programs, including helping to implement universal pre-kindergarten in DC.

Calderon was also Associate Director of Education Policy at the National Council of La Raza, a Hispanic civil rights organization. There she focused specifically on early education policy for Hispanic and dual language learner children. She began her career in early childhood working as a mental health consultant in Head Start programs in Portland, Oregon. She has published several reports on early childhood education. Calderon holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology from the University of Delaware and a Master of Social Work degree from Portland State University.

Harriet Dichter, Consulting Director, Early Childhood Education, ICF

Harriet Dichter provides early childhood policy and strategy services. In her consulting role, she has assisted more than 60% of the states through consulting services to governments, advocates, foundations and providers. Relevant to the Illinois discussion, she has extensive leadership and consulting experience in the areas of governance and finance, having innovated in her public sector roles in Pennsylvania and Delaware, and continuing to work on these issues in her consulting work.



As Pennsylvania's founding Deputy Secretary, Office of Child Development and Early Learning, she gained national attention for the state's unique new solutions and partnerships. As Executive Director, Delaware Office of Early Learning, she accelerated the pace, quality, and accountability of the state's comprehensive work in early childhood. Other state and local government public leadership has included Secretary, PA Department of Public Welfare [now department of Human Services]; Policy Director, PA Department of Education; Deputy Managing Director for Child Policy, City of Philadelphia;

Maternal and Child Health Director, City of Philadelphia; Special Assistant to the Mayor, City of Philadelphia.

Besides her public sector roles, Harriet has held leadership roles in the non-profit and foundation sectors at the local and national levels.

Publications of relevance to the work of the Illinois Commission include *Funding our Future: Generating State and Local Tax Revenue for Quality Early Care and Education*, *Financing Early Educator Teacher Quality: A Closer Look at Assumptions That Drive Variations in Estimating the Cost of Services*, *Governance as a Driver for Systems Development: A Commentary on Issues of Scope and Implementation*, and *Governance in Early Childhood Systems: The View from Pennsylvania*. She was also a member of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine committee that produced *Transforming the Finance of Early Care and Education*.

Harriet is a graduate of Yale University and the University of Pennsylvania Law School.

Sherri Killins Stewart, Director of Systems Alignment and Integration,
BUILD Initiative

Sherri Killins Stewart, Ed. D, is the Director of State Systems Alignment and Integration for the BUILD Initiative and an independent consultant. Her consulting clients have included BUILD, W. Clement & Jessie V. Stone Foundation, New Haven Public School System W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Ascend at the Aspen Institute, the Campaign for Grade-Level Reading, and Pearson Publishing. In her work with BUILD, she works directly with state leaders to advance early childhood systems efforts in health, early learning, and family support. She leads work to define and create intentional practices regarding equity in early childhood systems, policy, and leadership within the work of the BUILD Initiative. Her equity work includes co-leading a network of early childhood leaders to advance racial equity. Dr. Killins Stewart has worked at multiple levels and in a variety of states and/or communities to create targeted action to benefit young children and their families, including Georgia, Arkansas, Mississippi, Michigan, South Carolina, Virginia, New Jersey, New Haven, Connecticut, and Baltimore, Maryland.



Dr. Killins Stewart was the former Commissioner of Early Education and Care for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Vice President of Human Development and Operations at the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and CEO of Empower New Haven.

Dr. Killins Stewart is known for crossing organizational boundaries to create a child development lens on the work of informal organizations as well as within other state agencies, including public health and housing.

Throughout her career, Dr. Killins Stewart has been committed to supporting families, both children and adults, through the use of workforce, housing, health, and education strategies. Her efforts seek to increase access for families and communities to high-quality formal and informal opportunities in health, early learning, and family wellbeing.

Dr. Killins Stewart holds a nursing degree from the University of Pittsburgh, a Masters of Administrative Science from Johns Hopkins University, and a Doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the University of Sarasota.

Linda Smith, Director, Early Childhood Initiative, Bipartisan Policy Center

Linda Smith is director of BPC's Early Childhood Development Initiative. She most recently served as the deputy assistant secretary for early childhood development in the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. In this role she provided overall policy coordination for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs and the Child Care and Development Fund. She also served as the department's liaison to the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies.



Previously, Smith served as the executive director for the National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (NACCRRA), where she represented more than 650 community-based agencies concerned with the care of children in their earliest years. Key components of NACCRRA's advocacy efforts included strengthening child care licensing and oversight, requiring comprehensive background checks, and establishing minimum training requirements for all child care workers.

Smith served as a legislative fellow and professional staffer on the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee under the chairmanship of the late Senator Edward M. Kennedy. Prior to this work, she was the director of the Office of Family Policy for the Secretary of Defense, where she was one of the primary architects of the military's child care program. Additionally, she has held positions with both the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force.

Smith began her career in early childhood education on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation in her native state of Montana. She is a graduate of the University of Montana.