

Illinois Early Childhood Funding Commission Meeting (Virtual)

May 11, 2020

Meeting Minutes

Opening Remarks (10:00AM – 10:15AM)

After roll, Leader Currie welcomed Commissioners and thanked them for their continuing support of families around the state during the ongoing public health crisis. She noted that the work of this Commission is as important as it's ever been, and the work must continue; therefore, the Commission anticipates continuing to meet virtually for the foreseeable future.

Leader Currie shared the goals of the meeting and subsequent agenda. The goals are:

- To gain an understanding of the direction each Commission working group is headed
- To further refine and conceptualize the definition of “equitable access” in the Commission’s charge
- To get a clearer picture of the Commission’s final deliverable scope and timeline to get to recommendations

Leader Currie shared that the Commission’s charge and deliverables remain the same and ever more urgent in light of the pandemic. She shared that the Guiding Principles have been updated to reflect the importance of flexibility and adaptability in any future system. There were no questions regarding these updates.

Working Group Updates (10:15AM – 10:45AM)

Dep. Gov. Ruiz noted that the Commission’s working groups have been progressing over the past few weeks and will share developments as they continue to progress toward initial recommendations over the coming months. Working Group Leaders then presented their updates:

- Robin Steans provided updates for the Management & Oversight Working Group, notably that the group is moving toward a recommendation to consolidate oversight under one agency. It is yet to be determined if this would be an existing or new agency. She noted there is much work to do to understand implications of this on families and providers, and that recommendations will go from the Working Group to the full Commission to be approved and finalized.
- Elliot Regenstein discussed Funding Mechanisms progress. Notably, Elliot reminded Commissioners that the group has recommended blending funding upstream in the process where possible. He shared the group’s thinking that key funding mechanisms may be most successful toward accomplishing the objectives determined by the group in various contexts.
- Rey Gonzalez provided an update on the Funding Adequacy Working Group. Notably, he shared a plan to validate cost model assumptions and the need for the group to get insight from the full Commission as the discussions shift toward the count of children accessing services in the model.
- Pat Chamberlain shared that the Inclusion Working Group has been working toward inclusion-specific recommendations for M&O and Mechanisms while also gathering data to inform ECSE and EI funding adequacy assumptions. Regarding M&O and Mechanisms objectives, the Inclusion Working Group emphasized the importance of ensuring smooth transitions among services for families, and recommended M&O and Mechanism objectives be updated accordingly.

Defining Equitable Access (10:45AM – 11:35PM)

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Co-chair George Davis reminded the Commission that Working Groups got to a point in their deliberations where it was clear that more direction was needed to define the phrase “equitable access” in the Commission’s charge, and that Commissioners provided input on this in a survey, where they were asked to provide feedback on the factors that should determine how public funds are prioritized. This was discussed in each of the last Working Group meetings. He introduced Carrie Stewart, who discussed the updates from these meetings. There were no questions.

Carrie Stewart then led the Commission in a group activity to conceptualize “equitable access” in action. Commissioners were asked to discuss 1. “who should have access to state funded ECEC services” when the system is at full scale and 2. “at what level of family pay.” Commissioners broke into small virtual breakout sessions to discuss.

In the small group report-outs, there were several key points raised:

- The Commission was aligned that, as much as possible, all services should be available to all who want them, with the possible exception of age restrictions for intensive home visiting and school-based services. There was alignment that some factors may determine priorities during ramp up to promote equity, such as historically underserved communities, but that at the end state all should have access.
- There was alignment that income should be the dominant factor in determining level of family co-pay at the end state, but that any co-pay policies must be mindful of avoiding the creation of co-pay “cliffs.” It was also noted that income may be a prioritization factor for access to and prioritization of public funds.
- It was noted that special education and intervention services must be provided without co-pay, but within which intensities this must exist was not discussed.
- One group noted that family work status may impact access to extended day or full year ECEC.
- One group noted that it would be helpful to get more data on utilization and family demand for services both within and outside the state, as well as understand if there are other models of services that should be considered beyond our current offerings

Leader Currie thanked Commissioners for their thoughtful engagement in furthering the Commission’s understanding of equitable access.

Commission Timeline & Deliverables Scope (11:35AM – 11:50PM)

Leader Currie reminded Commissioners of the expected deliverables and provided clarity on what the Commission will be providing as a final work product. She then shared the Commission’s expected upcoming decision points for working groups and its likely impact on Commission topics. There were no questions.

Next Steps (11:50 – 11:55)

Co-Chair George Davis thanked Commissioners and the public for joining the meeting. He shared next steps, which are as follows:

- Working Groups will meet virtually during the first weeks of June.
- The June Commission Meeting will be held virtually on Tuesday, June 16.

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- Between June – August, Working Groups will continue to bring preliminary recommendations to the full Commission for feedback.
- The co-chairs will continue to assess the public health crisis and its impact on our work, our priorities, and our timeline.

It was noted that the virtual nature of these meetings will impact the stakeholder engagement plan and that the team will continue to assess opportunities for meaningful engagement.

Public Comment (1:55 – 2:00)

There were no members of the public wishing to make a public comment.