Enhancing Family Access, Education and Support Through Coordination of Local Services Funding and Planning

I. VISION/GOALS:
Department of Early Education and Care (EEC)’s Mission, Vision and Strategic Plan are built on the recognition that families are essential partners in our work. Many of the strategies EEC will focus on over the next several years will be designed to strengthen the relationships between families and the programs designed to serve them. To this end, EEC seeks to establish/build on a local infrastructure of supports and services across the Commonwealth to ensure that all families with young children, and especially those with the greatest educational need and experiencing multiple risk factors, have access, in their community, to:

High-quality, accurate and readily available information about early education and care programs and services, the variety of early education and care options available and resources on healthy child development – at locations as well as in languages that are accessible to all families, including those in hard to reach populations.

Strength based family education and early literacy activities that recognize parents are their child’s first teacher and are reflective of the needs of the community, including support for parent and child relationship development, offering information to families on topics relating to child development, supporting family literacy, and encouraging the formation of supportive networks and relationships with other parents in the community.

Coordinated resources across agencies and private, state and federal funding streams that support promotion of children’s health, social and emotional well being, family self-sufficiency and economic stability, education, and assistance with meeting basic needs.

Leadership opportunities for parents and those interested in taking an active role in assessing and designing improvements to the local early education and care infrastructure and informing state-wide policy.

An integrated and aligned network of parents and providers that includes formal linkages among local schools, early education and care programs, Head Start, Early Head Start, CCR&Rs, out-of-school time programs, private or parochial systems and other community-based resources to ensure promotion of common school readiness goals; seamless transitions between and among home, early education and early intervention programs and into the public school system; and effective inclusion of children with special needs across the community.

II. COMMUNITY, FAMILY AND CHILD OUTCOMES:
- Information on early education and care options, parenting education, and community resources is readily available and accurate; and is available at locations in the community that families frequent and in languages spoken by families in the community.
- Children experience literacy, language and print rich environments at home, in their early education and care programs and at school and
- Families will be retained in the Parent Child Home Program through the full two years of PCHP, or other literacy rich activity, where applicable, through the full strategy,
- Specific strategies and outreach mechanisms are in place to engage hard to reach families including but not limited to those for who English is a second language, families experiencing homelessness, and families living in isolation.
- Outreach to all families with newborns or newly adopted infants is conducted by a local, knowledgeable resource person, offering information about community resources and access to information about healthy child development.
In partnership with special education programs, enhanced transition supports are provided for children in Early Intervention, who are eligible, are smoothly transitioned into special education programs and other community resources and programs.

In partnership with special education programs, families with preschool children receiving special education services are provided with options about where to receive special education and related services in settings with typically developing peers.

Every community has at least one free, child safe, accessible public space (e.g., library, community center) where families can take their children to play, find resources on parenting, support literacy, and network with other families.

Families and educators have access to comprehensive services to support their children’s healthy development at home, at their early education and care program and in the community.

Families have meaningful leadership opportunities in their communities, schools, programs. Training is available to assist in becoming effective advocates for their children.

Data, collected locally and aggregated state-wide, is used to measure the need for and effectiveness of local early education and care strategies and programming.

Prior to making a transition to a new program, all children and families are contacted by their teacher and are invited to visit the classroom/program.

III. PROBLEM/OPPORTUNITY STATEMENT:
A consistent statewide system for identifying, assessing and addressing needs of families with children birth to five within a local community does not currently exist. Such an infrastructure would ensure that families across the state have access to more equitable and consistent information and services; support transition to out-of-school-time programming and would allow community resources/funding to be targeted to meet identified local needs.

EEC and other state, federal and private agencies currently support multiple funding streams at the local level that provide among other things family support and engagement, early literacy activities, local community planning, services for children with special needs, etc. Many of these funding sources have common purposes and serve similar age groups of children but, may or may not, be delivered by the same agency or coordinated at the local level. For families, gaining access to services can mean contacting multiple agencies or individuals, which often lead to different sets of information or services. For local grantees, grant requirements can be burdensome, conflicting and can work against comprehensive planning and service delivery for families. For EEC, managing multiple grants to the same lead agency or within the same community can be administratively challenging and has not allowed for coordinated planning or establishment of a consistent and comprehensive local support infrastructure statewide.

III. CURRENT EEC FUNDING/PROGRAMS FOR LOCAL FAMILY ACCESS AND SUPPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program/Funding</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>FY09 Funding and Grants</th>
<th>Grants &lt;15K</th>
<th>Target Population</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Partnerships for Children Local Planning and Coordination</td>
<td>Funds ensure equitable access to EEC financial assistance and information on high quality early education and care options for families; support family education and activities at the local level; support early education and care programs across public and private sectors in delivering high quality services and coordinate and collaborate with local, regional, and</td>
<td>$14.2 M</td>
<td>Post9c= 12.67M</td>
<td>140 Grants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program</td>
<td>Description</td>
<td>Funding/Grants/Programs</td>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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| Massachusetts Family Networks (MFN) | Funds provide for a variety of activities such as home visiting, parent-child play and learn groups, workshops, trainings, trainings, family literacy activities and support groups to provide child development information to enhance parenting skills and support the parent as the child’s first and lifelong teacher. Programs respond to requests for information and services for all family members through both direct service and referrals to a variety of local resources and collaborative partners. Serves 22,000 families (29,000 children ages birth-3 years) old in 42 programs across 164 communities. | • $5.2 Million  
• Post 9c= 4,216,556  
• 42 Grants | 0              | Birth - 3                                                             |
| Parent Child Home Program (PCHP)   | Funds a home-based parenting, early literacy, and school readiness program for at-risk families with 2 and 3 year old children. Funds 25 grantees ($100,000 used to for PCHP programs in 33 family child care homes.) | • $2.31 Million  
• 25 Grants | 0              | 18 months – pre k                                                        |
| Joint Family Support Program (JFSP) | Joint funding to provide a coordinated approach to family outreach, education, and support in communities with high concentrations of families who are low income and at-risk; establish stronger linkages in a community among EEC-funded family support programs with a focus on joint PCHP/MFN programming. Serves ~ 300 families via the PCHP portion of this funding (of which at least 20 are experiencing homelessness) by 11 grantees. | • $869,300  
• 11grants | 0              | 18 months – pre k                                                        |
| Early Childhood Resource Centers  | Provide resources and materials to parents, educators, and the general public on child development and supports family literacy via the public library system.                                                                 | • $60,000  
Plus $10,000 in Special Ed. Funds in FY’09 to purchase materials related to children with disabilities.  
• 5 Grants | 0              | All ages; also a resource for providers, parents and teachers             |
| Preschool Direct                  | Provides for comprehensive services                                                                                                                                                                         | • $ (TBD)  
TBD                                                       | 0              | TBD                                                                   |
Other state funded, community-delivered resources for this population include but are not limited to:

- **Children’s Trust Fund, Healthy Families**: Provides voluntary, statewide newborn home visiting to young, first time teen parents in order to connect them with information, resources and support in their communities. Available up to child’s third birthday. FY2009: $13.1 Million/Post 9c=$12.4.

- **Children’s Trust Fund Family Centers**: CTF provides additional funding to 6 existing EEC funded Massachusetts Family Network sites to expand their services to all parents of young children ages three-six years. CTF’s investment is to support services that prevent child abuse and neglect. FY2009: $62,000/program.

- **Early Intervention**: Statewide, integrated, developmental service for children birth to 3 years of age with developmental difficulties due to identified disabilities, or if typical development is at risk due to certain birth or environmental circumstances. FY2009: $42.9 Million/Post 9c= $41.5.

- **Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (CCR&Rs)**: provide early education and care providers with workforce development services, offer families referrals to local providers and manage vouchers to support child care tuitions. FY 2009: $11.9 Million/Post 9c=$10.7 Million via 14 CCR&Rs statewide.

- **Head Start and Early Head Start** programs are federally funded comprehensive child development programs which serve children birth to age 5, pregnant women, and their families. EEC provides state funds to support Head Start and Early Head Start services in MA: FY 09= $10M/Post 9C = $9M to 30 Head Start and Early Head Start programs state-wide.

IV. PROPOSED REQUIRED OBJECTIVES/SERVICES

**OBJECTIVE 1: Increase knowledge of and accessibility to high-quality early education and care programs and services for families with children prenatal through school-age.**

- Act as local point of entry to assist families in accessing EEC financial assistance for early education and care by placing eligible families on the EEC centralized waiting list.
- Conduct universal outreach through a variety of methods and languages, ensuring that all populations of children and families, especially those at-risk are engaged and are provided with opportunities to receive information and other supports.
- Contact families with newborns to offer information about parenting/child development and community resources, and
- Provide targeted outreach to underserved and/or high risk families.
- Support children with and without disabilities by providing enhanced referrals where necessary and conducting follow-up regarding placement and services provided.
- Through direct services and/or referrals, provide families with access to:
  - Child development information;
  - Transition information and supports;
  - Assistance with meeting basic needs;
  - Timely support in periods of family crisis; and
  - High-quality, specific and up-to-date information and referrals about early education and care and family support options and applicable community resources.

**Objective 2: Promote family education, engagement and literacy**
• Coordinate family education and support services that build on and enhance family strengths;
• Support family literacy through research based home visiting programs and in group settings in order to strengthen the quality of parent-child verbal interactions.
• Provide information and resources regarding basic literacy training and adult basic education that is linguistically and culturally appropriate for families.
• Provide outreach and engage “family, friend and neighbor” care-givers.
• Through direct services and/or referrals, provide families with:
  o an accessible space to implement program activities (e.g., a family center);
  o family literacy and school readiness activities;
  o family and community events;
  o parent leadership opportunities; and
  o information about EEC and other community resources that support parents in their role as their child’s first teacher

OBJECTIVE 3: Facilitate collaboration and community planning between local early education and care partners and other community stakeholders.
• Convene an early childhood governing council of stakeholders, including parents.
  o Through the early childhood council, facilitate linkages between public and private sectors, e.g. business community, higher education, local foundations, public libraries, hospitals;
  o Conduct community wide needs assessment and
  o Facilitate development of a community plan for supporting the needs of children and families.
• Facilitate collaborative community-wide activities for families with children from prenatal through school-age, and
• Collaborate across agencies in order to build on and foster efficiencies within the local array of services available to children and families.

OBJECTIVE 4: Provide support and information to families with children transitioning between and among early education and care settings, home and school
• Ensure that all families have access to health and developmental screenings.
• Coordinate community wide activities and resources which maximize families’ access to supports which promote successful transitions from home or preschool to kindergarten.
• Partner with public schools to ensure that families receive information about Kindergarten screening,
• Collaborate with public and private schools to promote correspondence between children and families and their Kindergarten teacher and a classroom visit prior to starting school.
• Provide families with information about transition activities, timelines and specific contacts for the transition process.
• Collaborate with Early Intervention and public schools to ensure that all families with children who participated in early intervention have access to resources and supports to promote successful transitions from early intervention to appropriate early education and care options.
• Update and maintain information of available community resources about effective transitions including program descriptions, eligibility requirements and contacts.

Objective 5: Support early education and care programs across the public and private sectors in delivering high-quality services.
• Identify program quality needs and help coordinate access to training, professional development and other quality support services including support for implementation of the *Guidelines for Preschool Learning Experiences*.
• Coordinate/administer a locally available set of resources to provide comprehensive services at early education and care programs including but not limited to physical and dental health, early childhood mental health consultation, support health care, occupational or speech therapy, etc.
• Provide technical assistance to enhance program strategies that build on protective factors in families known to reduce child abuse and neglect.
• Provide opportunities for early education and care professionals to network, share best practices and coordinate resources.
• Assist early education and care staff to access professional development opportunities and access higher education, where applicable.
• Provide or connect programs to technical assistance and local resources which assist them in meeting quality standards (such as QRIS standards when finalized).

V. FY2010 PROPOSAL

To *move towards* the vision outlined above including creating greater access for families and achieving greater efficiencies in administration at the state and local level, EEC proposes to allow communities with multiple grants/funding streams supporting similar goals to submit one joint proposal to start (or continue) working towards comprehensive planning and delivery of local family access and supports. EEC will allow greater flexibility in service delivery and across funding streams but create increased accountability through outcome measurement (see above). Communities will also be required to develop or maintain a single/consolidated local planning council/entity responsible for meeting the goals of the funding and to work through any issues related to inconsistent service areas.

Although participation in the consolidated grant application will be strongly encouraged, but voluntary, in FY2010 it may be required or implemented through a competitive bid process in FY2011. All communities/grantees, whether they participate in the consolidated application process for FY2010 or not, will be expected to work towards the community, family and child outcomes described above and also to begin or continuing working towards a collaborative community planning process.

VI. QUESTIONS/CONSIDERATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED THROUGH RFR PROCESS:

1. What supports, technical assistance and or incentives are needed from EEC (or other sources) during FY2009 and FY2010 to assist and encourage communities in moving towards collaborative planning and coordinated funding?
2. How can children in Commissioner’s Districts, rural areas and/or communities with greater educational risk factors be prioritized within existing resources?
3. How will communities approach the near/long term vision of including a prenatal through school-age vision within local planning?
4. What is the base level of funding needed to achieve outcomes outlined? What funding would be needed to fully implement the vision across the state/how does current funding address these gaps?
5. What is the definition of “community” or how will service areas that vary be reconciled?
6. How will local resources/efforts be coordinated with local/regional quality and professional development and higher education resources/efforts?
7. What objective data and information will programs provide to demonstrate effectiveness in supporting the goals and objectives of this vision and the impact on communities, children and families?
8. How can EEC and other state agencies coordinate systems, so that when a family is working with multiple agencies, their needs can be recognized as a priority?