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**Vermont Child Care and Early
Childhood Education Systems
Analysis:
Governance Approach Options**

April 2022

Overview

- Why the Systems Analysis is happening
 - Helping children and families
 - Creating the context for communities and providers
- The Major Themes document
- What's happened since
- What happens next

Statutory Charge

- Act 45 refers to a Systems Analysis focused on “child care and early childhood education systems”
 - That term is defined to mean “programming provided at a center-based child care program or family child care home regulated by the Department for Children and Families’ Child Development Division that serves children from birth through 12 years of age.”
- This conversation has turned out to be broader than that
 - The ambiguity about the scope of this conversation has raised some concerns
 - Is the statutory language a jumping off point, or an outer boundary?

The Major Themes

- State Government Capacity
- Local Capacity
- The Human Services/Education Dynamic
- Data
- Specific programs (CIS, special education, state pre-k)



Governance Models

Three Different Models

Coordinated

- Early childhood funding streams and functions live in multiple, distinct agencies – requiring coordination across those agencies
- Sometimes a centralized office helps to facilitate coordination

Consolidated

- Early childhood funding and functions are consolidated into an existing agency that also has other responsibilities (typically the state education agency or a human services agency)

Created

- Early childhood funding and functions are consolidated into a single agency that is created to focus on early childhood services
- Agency has a sole or primary focus on early childhood, without other responsibilities

Vermont's Current Status

- Vermont currently uses a coordinated approach
 - AOE Early Education
 - AHS Child Development Division
 - AHS Maternal & Child Health Division
- State Advisory Council provides a shared space for collaborative work



Potential Options: Introduction

Why might the state change governance?

- If the state is going to make a change, be clear on the purpose
- Possible purposes (interconnected and complementary):
 - Minimizing the burden on low-income families seeking to access services;
 - Ensuring quality across the full range of available services;
 - Expanding access to services;
 - Efficiently delivering services; and
 - Elevating the level of leadership on early childhood issues in state government.

Why might the state change governance?

- Some core values to reflect in any change:
 - Holding children and families at the center, including making the system easy for them to navigate;
 - Equity;
 - Having decision-making informed by families, communities, and professionals; and
 - Leveraging existing integration initiatives.

Addressing core functions

- Some core functions of state government:
 - Setting a vision and then holding stakeholders to it;
 - Money management;
 - Setting standards for – and supporting improvement in – service quality;
 - Supporting professionals;
 - Engaging and supporting families and stakeholders; and
 - Communications and public relations.
- The state's effectiveness in these functions should be a central consideration in choosing a governance model.
- The state will need capacity to succeed at these functions.

The Role of State Government

- Providing coherence and leadership?
 - The challenge of federal fragmentation
- Managing dynamic partnerships with communities
- Ensuring capacity

Program-specific issues

- Multiple stakeholders raised program-specific issues relating to:
 - Children's Integrated Services
 - State pre-k
 - Special education
- The Systems Analysis will not resolve those issues, but may set a frame for how they are resolved.



Potential Options

Governance Options

- Coordination
 - Governor's Office of Early Childhood?
- Consolidation
 - AHS
 - AOE
- Creation
 - Standalone agency
 - Pennsylvania's hybrid model

Governance Options – Benefits and Challenges

- Transition comes at a cost – but so does the status quo
- The need for stronger leadership in early childhood
- If that need is to be met, how is it to be structured?
 - Choosing among consolidation and creation options

Create a New Agency or Department

- Different states have taken different approaches, given their overall approach to agency structures
 - Standalone entities in Alabama, Colorado, Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Washington
 - Hybrid approach in Pennsylvania



Interagency Connections

Interagency Connections

- There is always a need for interagency collaboration
- The State Advisory Council fulfills this role, and can continue to
 - Its role and that of the regional councils may shift
- Interagency data sharing will still be needed, and the state can develop a framework for doing so based on its overall early childhood governance



Transitions

Transitions

- Key issues in a transition include:
 - Determining the exact parameters of what moves
 - Defining the needed capacity
 - Addressing logistical challenges
 - Addressing cultural challenges
 - Re-setting relationships with communities
- This is a lot of work, and requires focused capacity.
 - Philanthropic and business leaders can play a supportive role.



Concluding Thoughts

Final Thoughts

- Stated broadly:
 - A coordinated office prioritizes minimizing the impact of change while creating a single point person
 - Consolidating into AHS prioritizes connecting early education and care to the broader range of early childhood services
 - Consolidating into AOE prioritizes connecting early education and care to the broader education system
 - Creating a new Agency or Department prioritizes the importance of early childhood as a policy area that demands its own dedicated oversight.

Final Thoughts

- This is meant to spark conversation in several ways:
 - Do the benefits and challenges seem appropriate?
 - How do you weigh the benefits and challenges?
 - Which scenarios appeal to you?
- We will be collecting feedback in April and May to inform a draft report due June 1.

Thank you!

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