

**Michigan Child Care Task Force  
Minutes for January 9, 2008 Meeting**

**NEXT MEETING:** The next meeting of the Michigan Child Care Task Force (MCCTF) will be on Wednesday, March 5, 2008 in room 424 of the Capitol Bldg. For more information, contact the MCCTF co-chairs Jane Zehnder-Merrell at [janez@michleagueforhumansvs.org](mailto:janez@michleagueforhumansvs.org), or Richard Lower at [richard@mhsa.ws](mailto:richard@mhsa.ws).

**GUEST SPEAKER:** Richard Lower introduced Verlie Ruffin, Children's Ombudsman, State of Michigan, and Charlotte Smith, Intake Investigator, Office of Children's Ombudsman (OCO). Ms. Ruffin summarized the function of the OCO:

- The OCO is an autonomous state agency that responds to citizen concerns with the state's child welfare system. The OCO: (1) investigates complaints related to children in the child welfare system (protective services, foster care, adoption and juvenile justice), and determines if the actions and decisions of the Department of Human Services (DHS) and private child placing agencies are in compliance with law, rule and policy; (2) recommends changes in procedures and policies; and (3) initiates system improvements.
- The OCO uses a multidisciplinary approach to investigations, and currently has a staff of 12 with approximately 65 years of experience.
- In the five years between fiscal years 2002 and 2006, the OCO received complaints involving more than 7,000 children. The largest source of complaints was birth parents, followed by other relatives.
- In the most recent OCO report period (fiscal year 2006), the OCO closed 102 cases. In nearly two-thirds of those cases (62%), the OCO found non-compliance with state law and policy; one-third (31%) were the result of poor practice or decision-making by workers. In only 2 percent of the cases did the OCO conclude that currently policies and laws were inadequate.

Charlotte Smith summarized the 2006 annual OCO report. The majority of the recommendations in the 2006 report emanated from two high profile cases investigated by the OCO that resulted in the death of a child (Ricky Holland and Isaac Lethbridge). The 2006 report included the most recommendations since the first annual report in fiscal year 1996. Copies of the 2006 OCO report, with recommendations, can be found at <http://www.michigan.gov/oco>.

**DEPARTMENT UPDATES:**

**Michigan Department of Education:** Judy Levine reported the following:

- With the fiscal year 2008 budget approved after the beginning of the fiscal year, applications for the State Aid Michigan School Readiness program (MSRP) were delayed, but are now online. The deadline for submission is February 1, 2008.
- A technical assistance meeting for MSRP competitive grantees is scheduled for April 20, 2008 at the Michigan State University library forum. Applications for the competitive MSRP are due on May 22, 2008, with reader sessions on June 20<sup>th</sup> at the Michigan Department of Education.
- Volunteer readers for the MSRP grants are needed. If you can help, contact Patti Allman at [allmanp@michigan.gov](mailto:allmanp@michigan.gov) or 517.373.8483.

- There are 483 schools that are MSRP grantees this year, up significantly from last year. There are 58 grantees for the MSRP competitive program.
- The mid-year reports from the Preschool Program Quality Assessment tool (PQA) have been delayed until March. Competitive MSRP programs have received the PQA forms, but schools have not.
- The Michigan Early Childhood Collaborative Conference was held January 23-25<sup>th</sup>.
- Timelines for RFPs for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers can now be found online at [http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530\\_6809-39974--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,1607,7-140-6530_6809-39974--,00.html)
- Great Parents/Great Start applications are due on February 15, 2008. Michigan State University Outreach Partnerships has been selected to conduct a small evaluation of Great Parents/Great Start.
- With sadness for us, and joy for her, Judy noted that Jackie Wood will be retiring on February 29, 2008. We all wish her well!

**ECIC Update:** Kathi Pioszak reported the following:

- The ECIC website ([www.ECIC4kids.org](http://www.ECIC4kids.org)) has some new features that should be checked out, including additional press releases and media information, “What People Are Saying,” and a “Capitol Corner” or policy center.
- The Michigan Early Childhood Challenge summit was held in Lansing on November 13, 2007. At the summit, a strategic plan was developed that includes consensus on a statewide early childhood policy agenda. The Governor attended the summit and is committed to working with the ECIC on the recommendations adopted. Presentations from the summit are available on the ECIC website.
- The ECIC Corporate Board held its first meeting on October 11, 2007. Forty-one ISDs have joined the Corporate Board or are in the process of doing so by signing inter-local agreements. For each ISD that joins, the Governor is permitted to appoint two additional members, bringing the total potential membership to 171.
- The ECIC has additional funding for local Great Start Collaboratives (GSCs) this year, including an increase in state funding and a new grant from the Kresge Foundation. There are currently 21 local GSCs funded, and an additional 10 will be added this year. The goal is for statewide coverage.
- The Finance Project has completed the first phase of its work for the ECIC, which is a map of current funding for early childhood services in Michigan. Next steps include a competitive bid RFP to build on that knowledge through support to local GSCs, recommendations for blending and braiding funding, and work to increase public and policymaker awareness.
- The ECIC is beginning work on pilot programs for the quality rating system (QRS). A bill to implement a QRS system was introduced last year by Rep. Kathy Angerer (D-Dundee).

**DHS Policy Update:** Jean Lantzer-Brailey reported the following:

- Effective in the pay period of December 23, 2007 through January 5, 2008, the maximum number of reimbursable hours for the DHS child care subsidy is reduced from 100 to 90 hours. This policy change will affect 41 percent of DHS child care cases, including 35,077 children (40% of children) and 13,278 providers (45% of providers).

- During that same pay period, child care providers were given a modest raise, the first in 11 years. Copies of the new provider rates are available on the DHS website.

**Michigan Department of Community Health:** Deb Marciniak reported the following:

- The Socio-Emotional Advisory Committee of the ECIC is producing a parent booklet on social/emotional readiness for school.
- A new study by Walter Gilliam from Yale University identifies three ways to lower pre-K expulsion rates, including early childhood mental health consultation services. Mary Mackrain, CEEP State TA Consultant was asked to participate in a press conference publicizing the study.
- There are several new resources for young children exposed to domestic violence, including: (1) *Children Exposed to Domestic Violence: An Early Childhood Educators Handbook to Increase Understanding and Improve Community Responses*, from the University of Iowa, 2004; and (2) *Young Children Living with Domestic Violence: The Role of Early Childhood Programs*, by Elena Cohen and Jane Knitzer, online at [http://www.uiowa.edu/~socialwk/paper\\_2.pdf](http://www.uiowa.edu/~socialwk/paper_2.pdf).
- A free Early Childhood Mental Health Institute will be held in Marquette on February 7-8, 2008. Day one focuses on using relationship-based practice to strengthen parent-infant relationships. The second day of the institute will focus on assisting children who have attachment difficulties due to abuse or neglect. For more information contact Deb Marciniak at [dmarcini@mphi.org](mailto:dmarcini@mphi.org).
- A training on child-parent intervention with young witnesses of violence will be held on Friday, May 2, 2009 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Hagerty Center, Northern Michigan College, Traverse City, MI. For more information go to <http://mi-aimh.msu.edu/events/index.htm#witness>.

**Child Day Care Licensing:** Don Vita reported the following:

- There are no updates yet on building code changes affecting group child care settings. Currently, the statute and rules are in direct conflict, and Michigan is already seeing a gradual drop in the number of group homes.
- Comments on proposed changes to the child care center rules will be taken at a February 8, 2008 public hearing in Lansing. The proposed changes include: (1) the ability to use thin or lightweight blankets in cribs if they are tucked in and no higher than the infant's chest; and (2) a requirement that caregivers have training that includes information about safe sleep and shaken baby syndrome prior to caring for infants and toddlers. For more information, contact Don Vita at [vitad1@michigan.gov](mailto:vitad1@michigan.gov) or 517.335.6226.

**Head Start Reauthorization:** Richard Lower reported the following:

- After a five year battle, reauthorization legislation was finally signed by the President in December of 2007. Regulations and policies will be drafted in the next couple of months.
- There are many positive aspects of the reauthorization, including stability for programs, and expanded professional development and training requirements. A summary of the reauthorization bill can be found on the following websites [www.nlwc.org](http://www.nlwc.org), [www.nhsa.org](http://www.nhsa.org), [www.clasp.org](http://www.clasp.org).
- On the negative side, the President vetoed domestic spending bills, resulting in a cut in Head Start funding in 2008 of 10 percent. Consequently, there are new training requirements in

the reauthorization bill, but not more funding. There is some possibility of a funding amendment in the spring of 2008 to fix this problem.

**State Budget Update:** Richard Lower reported the following:

- While the state budget for fiscal year 2008 has been adopted, the state budget crisis is not over. For a good summary of the ongoing structural deficit and revenue problems, visit the website of the Michigan League for Human Services at <http://www.milhs.org>. Summaries of the 2008 budget can also be found on the website of Michigan's Children at [www.michiganschildren.org](http://www.michiganschildren.org).
- Judy Levine noted that despite an increase in MSRP funding for the current fiscal year (to raise the per child allotment from \$3,300 to \$3,400) there is not enough money to fund the children districts have identified. HB 5531 has been introduced to provide over \$18 million in supplemental funding for the MSRP (an amendment was later added to also expand the 0 to 3 Secondary Prevention program by \$350,000).
- Judy also described the shortage of staff to monitor MSRP programs. There are currently three staff members to monitor programs statewide; the MDE has requested an additional five.

**Additional Updates:**

- Denise Osgood provided an update on the work of Child Care Providers Together Michigan (CCPTM). Negotiations are completed and the contract was ratified overwhelming in December. The contract gives providers a voice, and establishes a framework for training. A number of committees are functioning, including a joint education and training committee, a health care committee, and a reform/quality committee. Included in the training is a 45 hour training program with phases and incremental wage increases (as providers reach training milestones). However, the contract does not mandate the Legislature to appropriate additional funding for rate increases, so much more work needs to be done to influence budget decision-making. For more information on the contract go to <http://www.providerstogether.org/index.php>. Task Force members who receive questions regarding the meaning of the contractual language are encouraged to refer them to MCCPT staff at [email@providerstogether.org](mailto:email@providerstogether.org) or 1.888.867.8299.
- The MAEYC 2008 Early Childhood Conference is scheduled for April 10-12, 2008 in Grand Rapids. For more information, go to <http://www.miaeyc.org>, or call 800.336.6424.
- The MHSA Annual Early Childhood Training Conference is scheduled for February 27-29, 2008 in Kalamazoo. For more information, go to [www.mhsa.ws](http://www.mhsa.ws) or call 517.374.6472.
- The 6<sup>th</sup> annual Fatherhood Conference, "Nurturing Children, Leaving Legacies," will be held on February 1, 2008 in Dearborn. For more information go to [www.mhsa.ws](http://www.mhsa.ws) or call 517.374.6472.

**SUBSCRIBE/UNSUBSCRIBE**

You have asked to receive correspondence from the Michigan Child Care Task Force. Send comments and suggestions regarding this e-mail network to [mcctforce@miaeyc.org](mailto:mcctforce@miaeyc.org).

To remove your name from the mailing list, please send an email to [TFAdmin@miaeyc.org](mailto:TFAdmin@miaeyc.org) and write Remove in the subject line.

Please FORWARD THIS NOTICE TO OTHERS; we invite and encourage people to join this e-mail network.

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The MCCTF Organizational Sponsors:

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