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State Early Childhood Advisory Councils: An Overview of Implementation across the States

Executive Summary

Nearly all governors have designated a state early childhood advisory council to advise policymakers in the state on how to best meet the needs of children from birth to school entry. Early childhood advisory councils in the states vary in their structure and scope, but all of them provide recommendations on improving the quality, availability, and coordination of early childhood care and education programs. Because states typically administer early childhood care and education programs across multiple agencies and funding streams, such councils play an important role in shaping a common agenda for early childhood policy.

Many states have had early childhood coordinating bodies in place for several years, but recently, two major federal initiatives have spurred the widespread adoption of state early childhood advisory councils. First, the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 called for governors to designate state advisory councils on early childhood education and care that meet certain requirements in membership and activities. Second, in 2010, early childhood advisory councils in 45 states and five territories applied for and received a total of \$100 million in noncompetitive three-year grants through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. As of this writing, governors had formally designated early childhood advisory councils in 48 states, and 18 state legislatures had established councils in statute. In states with early childhood advisory councils established prior to these federal initiatives, such councils already crafted and implemented detailed strategic plans across agencies and spearheaded new policies and systems.

State early childhood advisory councils focus on a range of priorities both within and outside parameters laid out in the 2007 Head Start Act. Federally funded councils are carrying out seven specific activities specified in the act, with particular focus on conducting an annual needs assessment, advising on the development of unified state early childhood data systems and professional development systems, and promoting coordination across programs. Some early childhood advisory councils have chosen to take on a broader mission, including leading outreach efforts to families and communities and building linkages with the state's K-12 (kindergarten through grade 12) education and health systems.

Policymakers in different states have organized their councils in different ways to engage stakeholders and to build on the strengths of existing childhood initiatives in the state. For example, states vary with respect to the entities that administer their councils (e.g., state agencies, governors' offices, and existing interagency bodies). The membership of the councils also varies across states, both in size and membership. All councils have members representing state and local agencies and programs, but some councils also tap other individuals who can advance early childhood policy in the state (e.g., governors' advisors, legislators, and representatives from the private sector).

Though federal grants for state early childhood advisory councils are time-limited, such councils have the potential to play a long-term role informing state early childhood policy agendas. To ensure that

their councils will continue to serve as a ready source for early childhood policy recommendations and a hub for efforts to coordinate across agencies, a number of governors are taking steps to do the following:

- Promote the state’s early childhood advisory council’s sustainability, whether through legislation, public-private partnerships, or by embedding the council’s role in state government structures; and
- Fully align and connect the state’s early childhood advisory council with other state efforts to coordinate services for children and families, including the work of governors’ children’s cabinets and P-20 (preschool through higher education) councils.

More information on state early education advisory councils can be found in the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices’ (NGA Center’s) detailed state profiles, developed in partnership with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services¹. Information in the state profiles is based on a review of state applications for grants provided by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), as well as updates provided by council leadership in April 2011. This *Issue Brief* summarizes data compiled in these profiles.

The Need for Early Childhood Advisory Councils

States fund and administer many programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including pre-K, child care, home visitation for expectant and new parents, preschool special education, and early intervention for children with special needs. Research shows that public investments in such programs and services can promote children’s school readiness and yield long-term gains in outcomes, ranging from improved third-grade reading skills to high school graduation ratesⁱ. States typically administer early childhood programs through multiple state agencies and categorical funding sources, each with different requirements for eligibility,

funding levels, quality standards, and workforce qualifications. As a result, states may support programs that offer varying levels of access and quality, incur duplicative administrative costs, and fail to target services to those families who would benefit the most. Historically, most states have lacked an agenda that coordinated early childhood policy to guide investments and ensure that resources are used efficiently and toward the greatest effect.

To promote more coordinated state early childhood systems, nearly all governors have recently designated a state early childhood advisory council supporting early childhood programs with membership drawn from key public agencies and private stakeholders. State early childhood advisory councils vary in their structure and scope, but all of the councils provide recommendations to policymakers on promoting the quality, availability, and coordination of programs serving children from birth to age five. Such councils also serve as a hub for state efforts to build early childhood policy infrastructure across programs and agencies, including coordinated data systems, professional development systems, and quality improvement systemsⁱⁱ.

In several states with early childhood advisory councils put in place prior to 2007, those entities have had a clear effect on state policy. In **Delaware**, for example, the council developed a detailed interagency early childhood plan in 2006 to guide state policies that support improved outcomes for young children and their familiesⁱⁱⁱ. Recently, that plan has guided Delaware’s policy agenda for early childhood, including the state’s adoption of an early care and education quality improvement system. As another example, **Illinois’s** council, in 2005, determined that state data systems were inadequate to answer questions about the status of young children and the existing programs that serve them. To address this problem, the council spearheaded development of the Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map, which integrates data across agencies on children’s needs and available services and provides a transparent way for agencies to make funding decisions.^{iv}

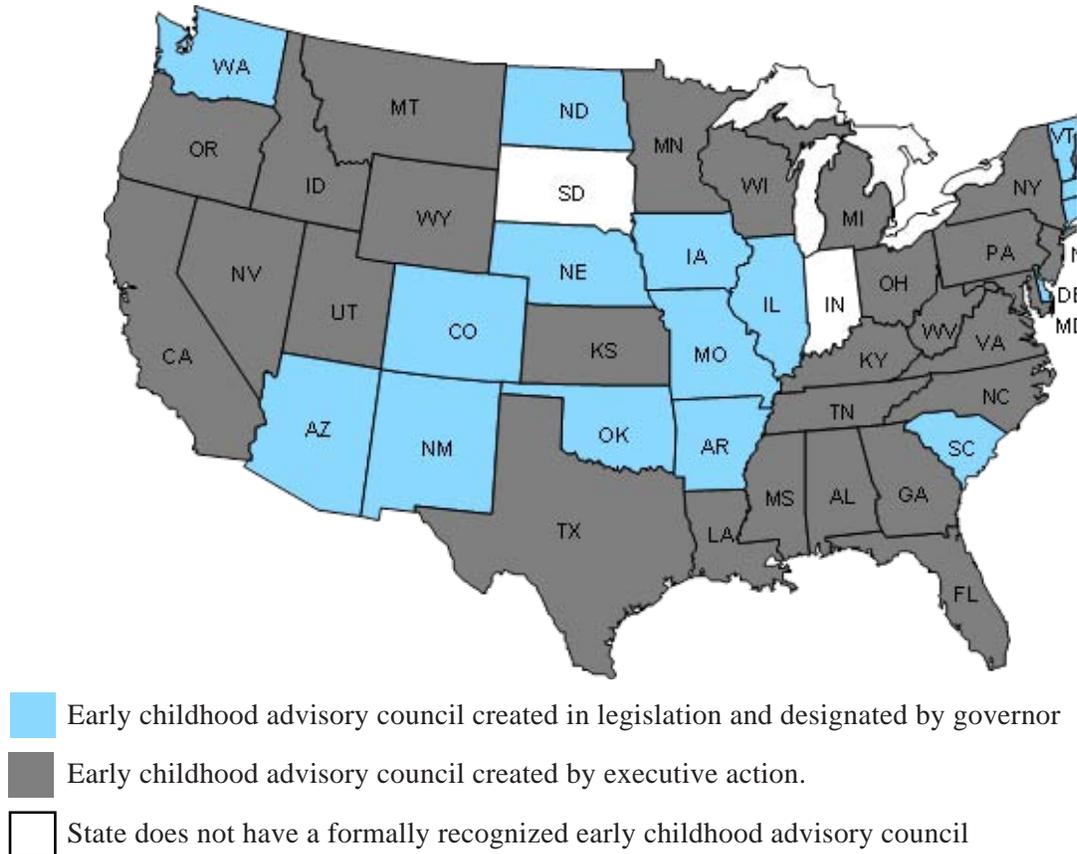
¹ The profiles are available online at the NGA’s State Early Childhood Advisory Councils Web page: <<http://www.nga.org/cms/home/nga-center-for-best-practices/center-issues/page-edu-issues/col2-content/main-content-list/state-early-childhood-advisory-c.html>>.

Evolution of State Early Childhood Advisory Councils in Recent Years

Although many states have had early childhood coordinating bodies in place for several years, two recent developments have provided an impetus for the widespread adoption of early childhood advisory councils. First, the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Public Law 110-134) called for governors to establish state early childhood advisory councils to specifically address seven key policy priorities, as well to perform any additional responsibilities designated by the

governor. It also required that these councils include as members representatives from several key agencies and early childhood programs. Second, in 2010, early childhood advisory councils in 45 states and five territories applied for and received a total of \$100 million in three-year, noncompetitive startup grants through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Funding allocations were determined by an assessment of state census and family income data, with no state receiving less than \$500,000. States contributed a 70 percent match. To be eligible for funding, governors were required to designate a council and appoint its leadership².

² Three states, Alaska, Idaho, and North Dakota, have formally designated councils, but did not apply for federal startup grants.



NOTE: Alaska's early childhood advisory council was created by executive action. Hawaii's council was created through both legislation and governor designation. Councils in the District of Columbia and U.S. territories were created by executive action.

Source: Developed by the NGA Center for Best Practices in partnership with Elliot Regenstein, Partner at Education Counsel. LLC.

Policymakers have created state early childhood advisory councils in different ways, as indicated in Figure 1 on the previous page. In 18 states, legislatures have passed laws establishing councils or formalizing their membership and/or mission. In those cases, governors also took the step of designating the council as the entity in the state that met the requirements of the Head Start Act of 2007. Governors in 30 other states either issued executive orders to name a state entity as an advisory council or simply designated an entity as the council in their application for federal funds. Although executive action has often served as an important and expedient mechanism to launch council activities, states that have passed legislation may be better equipped to sustain councils beyond the current governor's term.

In many states, the early childhood advisory council builds on or links with past state efforts to coordinate early childhood policy across agencies. In **Nebraska** and **West Virginia**, for example, governors designated an existing interagency body in the state to meet the requirements of the Head Start Act, making adjustments in membership and activities, as necessary. Before its formal designation to meet federal requirements in 2010, Nebraska's advisory council promoted interagency collaboration on early childhood policy issues for 10 years. West Virginia's council supported implementation of a state law establishing universal pre-K. Similarly, **Maryland's** Governor Martin O'Malley established the state advisory council in 2008 as a successor to an early childhood subcommittee of the governor's children's cabinet, which had been charged with implementing a state early childhood strategic plan since 2003.

In some states, early childhood advisory councils are leveraging long-standing state early childhood planning and coordination efforts supported with other federal grants. Since 2002, most state health or human services agencies have received federal Early Childhood

Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grants of up to \$140,000 annually to develop and implement plans to build a state early childhood system. In states such as

Louisiana and **Nevada**, those planning efforts served as a springboard for state early childhood advisory council activities. Since 1990, states have also received small annual grants to support Head Start state collaboration offices to strengthen partnerships between federal Head Start grantees and state early childhood programs. Under the Head Start Act of 2007, state Head Start collaboration office directors are required to be members of state early childhood advisory councils, and they often align their work with council activities

Priorities and Activities of Early Childhood Advisory Councils

State early childhood advisory councils focus on a variety of priorities and activities both within and outside the parameters laid out in the Head Start Act of 2007. As prescribed by the Head Start Act, all federally funded councils are promoting quality, access, and coordination for publicly funded early care and education programs. Others have chosen to take on a broader mission, including leading outreach efforts with families and communities and building linkages with state K-12 education and health systems. Across those areas, all councils make recommendations to policymakers, and many also take a leading role in building an infrastructure for early childhood policy across state agencies.

Advisory Council Activities Designated in Head Start Act of 2007

The Head Start Act of 2007 laid out seven priority activities for early childhood advisory councils ranging from the performance of periodic needs assessment to making recommendations for improvements in state early standards. Those seven priority activities are listed in the box below.

An analysis by the NGA Center performed in 2011 indicates that all states receiving federal grants for advisory councils using the grant money for the councils to conduct periodic needs assessments of the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs. After that, the larg-

est numbers of federally funded states and territories are using the grant money for the councils to support three other priority activities identified in the act:

- Forty-seven states and territories have dedicated a portion of the federal grants to develop recommendations for establishing unified early childhood data systems (Priority #4).
- Forty-six states and territories have dedicated a portion of the federal grants to develop recommendations for statewide professional development systems for early childhood educators in the state (Priority #5).
- Forty-two states and territories have dedicated a portion of the federal grants for activities to identify

opportunities for, and barriers to the coordination of federal and state programs for early childhood education and development (Priority #2).

- More than 30 states and territories are using funds from federal grants to carry out each of the other priority activities described in the Head Start Act (Priorities #3, #6, and #7).

Recommendations for unified early childhood data systems (Priority #4). Building coordinated and longitudinal data systems across early care and education programs is a priority for most state early childhood advisory councils. States are designing such data systems to track the progress of individual children across

Early Childhood Advisory Council Activities Described in Head Start Act of 2007

The Head Start Act requires that councils conduct the following seven activities:

1. Conduct periodic needs assessment of the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-K services for low-income children in the state;
2. Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally funded and state-funded programs and agencies responsible for child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services;
3. Develop recommendations for increasing participation of children in existing federal, state, and local child care and early education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
4. Develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the state;
5. Develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the state;
6. Assess the capacity and effectiveness of two- and four-year public and private institutions of higher education in the state toward supporting the development of early childhood educators, including the extent to which such institutions have in place articulation agreements, professional development and career advancement plans, and practice or internships for students to spend time in a Head Start or pre-K program; and
7. Make recommendations for improvements in state early learning standards and, where appropriate, develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards.

programs and through school entry, as well as to inform efforts to improve program quality and access^v. Most state early childhood advisory councils are using federal grants to analyze gaps in current data systems and areas where existing data could be better linked across programs and agencies. **Georgia's** council, for example, is committing a portion of its federal grant to a comprehensive data gap analysis and system design process. On the basis of what is learned through that process, the council will develop recommendations and cost estimates for full implementation of a coordinated data system.

Recommendations for professional development systems for early childhood educators (Priority #5).

Nearly all federally funded early childhood advisory councils in the states are using grant resources to develop of a professional development and career advancement system for early childhood professionals that is integrated and available on a statewide basis. Those systems streamline existing resources for staff training and promote a consistent path for career advancement in the early childhood field. **New York's** council, for example, is dedicating federal resources to the completion of a formal career pathway framework for the early childhood workforce, as well as a document summarizing the core body of knowledge that all early childhood professionals should know. New York's council is also implementing a registry to track data on the early childhood workforce, and making policy recommendations to promote recruitment, retention, and improved teacher preparation.

Recommendations for improved coordination across federal and state early childhood programs (Priority #2).

The need to improve coordination across early childhood programs and agencies is an underlying thread in all state early childhood advisory councils' applications for federal funding. A number of councils proposed grant funded activities to explicitly promote more collaborative models of service delivery for early childhood programs. In **Kansas**, for example, the council is carrying out a planning process to assess existing efforts to coordinate across programs, identify promising models for integrated service delivery, and develop

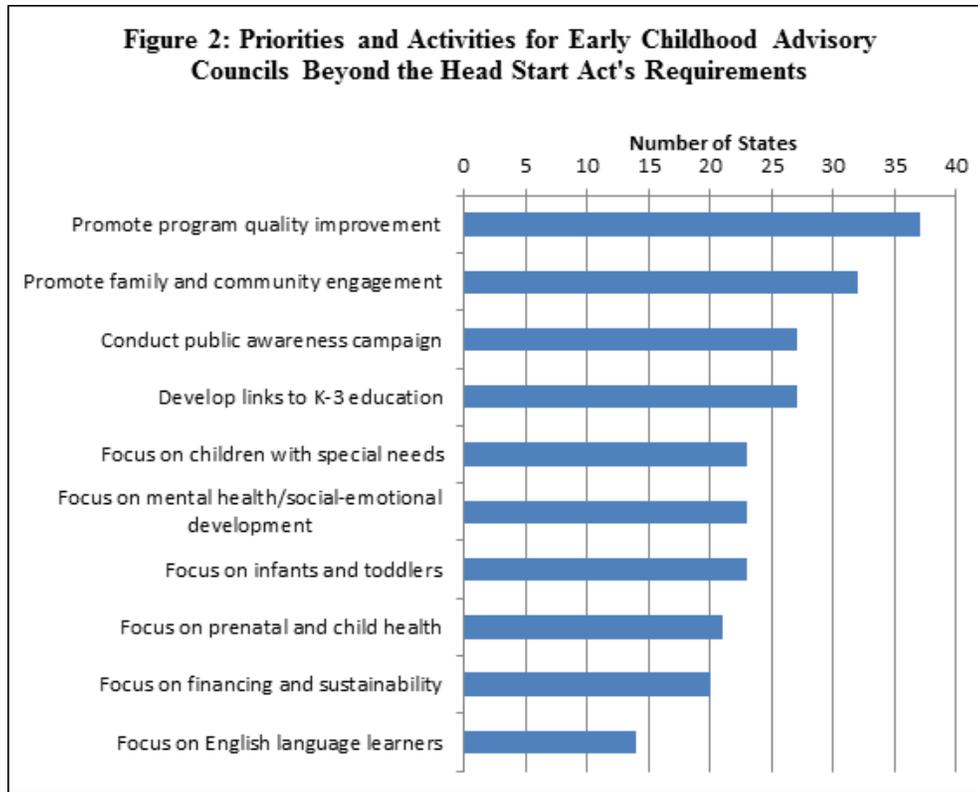
recommendations for unified state reporting requirements across various early childhood funding sources.

“Other activities (Priorities #3, #6, and #7). Federally funded early childhood advisory councils in the states have dedicated a portion of their resources to other activities described in the Head Start Act. Specifically, many councils are developing policy recommendations to promote increased participation of at-risk children in high-quality programs (Priority #3); assessing the capacity and effectiveness of higher education institutions to prepare the early childhood workforce (Priority #6); and reviewing and revising comprehensive early learning standards (Priority #7).

Additional Priorities for Advisory Councils

As shown in Figure 2, several states have adopted priorities and activities for their early childhood advisory councils that go beyond the requirements of the Head Start Act of 2007. Thus, for example, many state councils are promoting program quality improvement, often through use of a quality rating and improvement system. Other states are using the advisory council infrastructure to engage directly with families and communities or linking the work of the councils to broader state reform efforts in K-12 education and health policy. Examples of activities related to priorities beyond the requirements of the Head Start Act in Figure 2 on the next page.

Promoting program quality improvement. The NGA Center found that 37 of the federally funded early childhood advisory councils are committing federal resources to strategies to improve program quality. Most often, councils are promoting development or improvement of a state quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). A QRIS typically allows early care and education programs to voluntarily earn a quality rating based on research-based metrics of program quality. States use a QRIS to provide accessible information to parents on program quality and to promote quality improvement, often through financial incentives. **Arizona's** federally funded advisory council, for example, will use its federal grant to pilot test an



Source: NGA Center for Best Practices analysis of federal grant applications.

existing state QRIS framework and assess whether it serves as a valid measure of program quality. The Arizona council then plans to advise policymakers on statewide implementation of the QRIS.

Engagement with families and communities. An analysis by the NGA Center indicates that 32 state early childhood advisory councils view engagement with families and communities as a critical part of their federally funded project activities. **Maine's** council, for example, has made improving the flow of information to parents the primary goal for their federal grant. Thus, council members are currently identifying deficiencies in current strategies for parent outreach across health, early care and education, and parent education programs, and planning new state strategies. Maine's council also has embedded a focus on parent engagement in their other activities. Thus, it will develop

recommendations for a unified state early childhood data system that is accessible and useful to parents.

Twenty-seven state early childhood advisory councils are using a portion of their federal grant to support public awareness campaigns about the importance of positive early childhood experiences. **Nebraska's** council, for example, is leading a public-information campaign to disseminate the practical implications of research indicating the importance of an emotionally supportive and instructionally rich interactions between teachers, children, and peers in early childhood in promoting children's school readiness.

Linkages with education in grades K-3. A growing body of research demonstrates the importance of third-grade academic success as a predictor of long-term student achievement^{vii}. To ensure that young

children sustain gains from early care and education programs through the early elementary grades, states are increasingly focused on building an aligned and integrated birth-to-third-grade system. As a reflection of that shift, 27 state early childhood advisory councils are using parts of their federal grants to promote stronger linkages between early childhood programs and their K-12 education systems.

In **Washington**, for example, the council is advising the state’s department of early learning and the superintendent of public schools on implementation of a birth-third grade policy action plan. The council will also advise on state efforts to revise and promote the use of statewide early learning standards that align with grades K-3, and will contribute to the development of a kindergarten readiness assessment. Finally, Washington’s council is providing competitive grants and technical assistance to local coalitions for early learning to promote partnerships and improved transition practices from early childhood settings to public schools.

Health and mental health supports. A number of early childhood advisory councils are also focused on strategies to promote children’s healthy physical and social-emotional development. Twenty-one councils are using federal grants to promote prenatal and children’s health and 23 councils identified mental health and social-emotional development as a priority for their federal grants.

In **Maryland**, for example, a primary objective of the its council is to establish and strengthen programs and practices to better assess and meet children’s health and mental health needs. To achieve that goal, the council is developing recommendations to increase the number of health providers who accept payment from the state health insurance program and to establish a medical home program. The council will also promote ongoing state funding for early mental health consultants, who support early care and education providers in addressing children’s mental health needs.

Many state early childhood advisory councils have

also targeted federal resources toward coordinating services for specific populations with greater needs, including 23 councils focused on children with special needs and 14 councils focused on English language learners. An additional 23 councils are carrying out grant activities focused specifically on the needs of infants and toddlers. Finally, 20 councils are using federal grants to plan innovative strategies to finance and sustain early childhood services.

Advisory Council Structures to Engage Stakeholders

States have organized their early childhood advisory councils in various ways to engage stakeholders and to build on strengths of existing childhood initiatives in the state. As discussed below, states have set up councils through different administering entities and have engaged an array of different types of members. The number and types of members on advisory councils in different states varies. Moreover, some councils have set up structural features such as subcommittees and regional councils to tap the capacity of a range of state and community experts.

State Entities Administering Advisory Councils

Governors have designated different agencies or state entities to administer early childhood advisory councils, often relying on an entity that has already demonstrated leadership around early childhood initiatives:

- **Department of education.** In 10 states, the state department of education houses the state’s early childhood advisory council. In states, such as **Maryland** and **Minnesota**, that placement has allowed states to build early childhood into a broader education policy agenda. In Minnesota, for example, the council’s work is aligned to Governor Mark Dayton education plan to expand the function of the council to address care and education for children from birth to grade three. In addition, Governor Dayton has tasked the council with recommenda-

tions to improve school readiness, grade-level reading by third grade, and closing the achievement gap between socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic groups.

- **Department of human services.** In an additional 10 states, the state’s early childhood advisory council is housed within the department of human services (also called department of social services or family services), which has historically had a leadership role in state early childhood policy. As an example, **Montana’s** department of public health and human services administers the council and has led early childhood initiatives in the state for many years, including the state’s ECCS and Head Start Collaboration grants.
- **Governor’s office.** In six states, a governor’s office directly administers the early childhood advisory council. In **Kentucky** and **North Carolina**, for example, staff administering councils report to the governor. This approach can elevate a council’s prominence in the state and provide its leadership with the authority to work across agencies to promote a coordinated early childhood policy agenda.
- **Multiple entities.** Another six states have taken a hybrid approach to the administration of the state’s early childhood advisory council, with multiple entities administering the council, in an effort to maximize the value added of each entity. In **Mississippi**, for example, the governor’s office and department of human services co-manage the council. In **Rhode Island**, the council is co-chaired by the state’s education commissioner and the executive director of the nonprofit Rhode Island Kids Count. The department of education administers the council’s budget, and Rhode Island Kids Count coordinates day-to-day activities.
- **Existing interagency body.** In yet another six states, governors have leveraged an existing interagency body to house the state’s early childhood

advisory council, building on past efforts to coordinate across agencies. In **Florida**, for example, the early childhood council serves as a coordinating council to the existing Children and Youth Cabinet, which represents all state agencies serving children and youth from birth to age 18. This model can reduce duplication between coordinating bodies and can support linkages between early childhood policy and a larger state policy agenda for children and families.

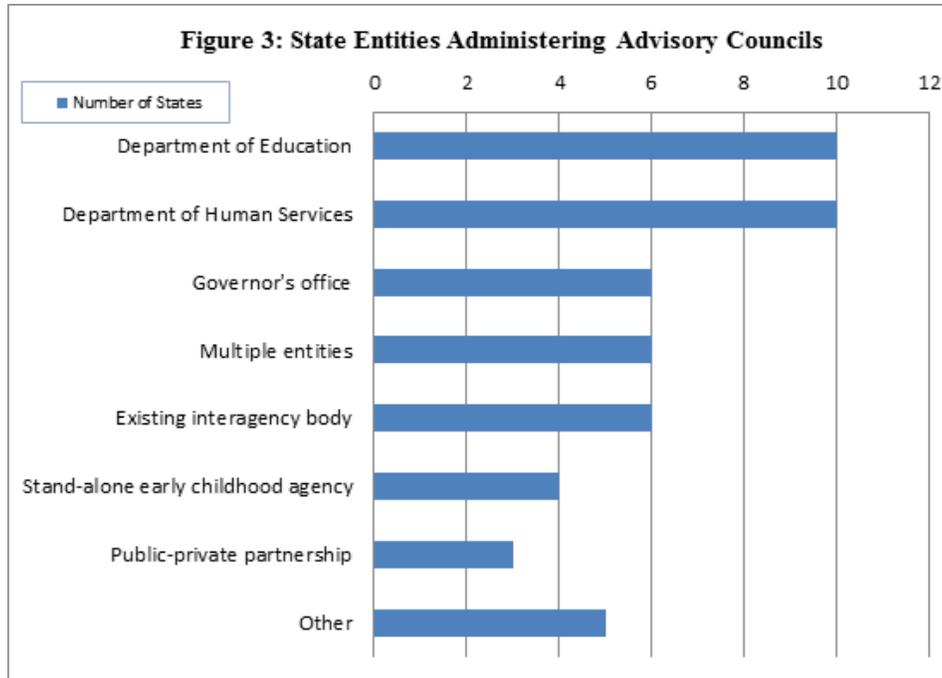
Beyond the approaches just discussed, one finds a variety of other approaches used by states to structure their early childhood advisory council. As an example, four states have consolidated early care and education programs within one state agency or office to better coordinate service delivery³. In those states, the council serves as advisory body to the consolidated state agency or office. An additional three states have leveraged an existing public-private partnership to serve as the hub for the council. Finally, five states administer their councils through another entity, including a different state agency or a university.

In sum, as shown in Figure 3, state departments of education and human services most commonly administer early childhood education advisory councils, but other choices for administering entities include governors’ offices or existing interagency bodies. The choice in a particular state depends on the policy context, but each of these types of administrative entities has potential benefits in supporting an effective advisory council

Membership of Advisory Councils

The membership of early childhood advisory councils varies significantly across states, both in size and representation. The average size of federally funded councils is 27 members, but councils have between eight

³ Georgia, Massachusetts, and Washington have separate state agencies dedicated to early care and learning. Pennsylvania has centralized early care and education programs from the state’s departments of education and public welfare within their office of child development and learning (OCDEL). OCDEL remains organizationally linked to both agencies.



Source: NGA Center for Best Practices analysis of federal grant applications.

and 78 members⁴. All federally funded councils have members representing specific categories required by the Head Start Act, which includes: state agency representatives managing child care, education, early intervention, health or mental health programs, and Head Start Collaboration, as well as representatives from a local education agency, higher education, an early care and education program and a Head Start program.

In a number of states, policymakers have expanded council membership to include other individuals who can help advance early childhood policy in the state. For example, many councils include among their members:

- Governors’ advisors and state legislators, who can promote policy traction for the council’s recommendations;
- Representatives from foundations and members of the business community, who can support increased private engagement and support for early childhood initiatives;

- Leaders of state associations, nonprofits, and advocacy organizations who represent the voices of key stakeholders in the early childhood field; and
- Parents of children in publicly funded early childhood programs, who can offer firsthand perspectives on how programs can be improved.

Subcommittees and Workgroups

Most federally funded councils rely on a subcommittee or workgroup infrastructure to manage workflow and address specific policy issues and council projects. In many cases, a council will invite nonmembers with substantive policy expertise to join a subcommittee. For example, **Missouri’s** council is launching at least workgroups focused on high-priority policy areas, such as professional development and early childhood health, which include participants who are not council members. Missouri’s council also relies on small committees of members to address operational issues, such as the development of council bylaws.

Regional Council Infrastructure

Finally, some states are building an infrastructure of

⁴ The NGA Center does not have information on the size of Montana’s council. Councils in Iowa and Arizona are also not included in this average. Iowa’s council is an open federation, where any stakeholder is invited to attend. Arizona’s council is composed of 12 state board members and 341 members of regional partnership.

local councils to promote stakeholder engagement and early childhood system-building efforts at the community level. As an example, **Vermont's** council provides funding to 12 regional councils, each tasked with developing and implementing local plans that address state goals in the areas of early childhood care, health, and education. The state council supports a coordinator position in each region and evaluates regional council outcomes according to common metrics.

Next Steps for Early Childhood Advisory Councils

Even though federal grants are time limited, state early childhood advisory councils have the potential to play a long-term role informing governors' early childhood policy agendas. A number of governors are taking steps to ensure that the state early childhood development council will continue to serve as a ready source for early childhood policy recommendations and a hub for efforts to coordinate across agencies in the future. Specifically, as discussed below, governors are (1) promoting the sustainability of the council through legislation or other means; and (1) aligning and connecting the council with other state efforts to coordinate services for children and families.

Promoting the Advisory Council's Sustainability

To ensure the sustainability of their state's early childhood advisory council beyond federal grants, governors are pursuing a range of strategies. As discussed below, these strategies include legislation, public-private partnerships, and institutionalizing council activities within the work of state agencies.

Legislation is one important mechanism to sustain the role of councils beyond the current governor's term and, in some cases, to establish an ongoing source of funding. Eighteen states have already established their councils in statute. In **New Mexico**, for example, Governor Susana Martinez signed legislation in 2011 formally establishing the membership and role and responsibilities

of the council in statute. The law also establishes a fund to support the council in fulfilling its responsibilities and outlines components of a high-quality system of early learning to guide future state efforts.

States can establish councils as public-private partnerships to leverage additional resources and engage stakeholders from the philanthropic and business sectors. In **Vermont**, for example, the legislature formally recognized the council as a public-private partnership in 2010 and provided state funding to support council staffing. The council is now an independent nonprofit entity that can receive both public and private grants to carry out its work.

Finally, some states have made efforts to institutionalize council activities within existing agency structures. *Pennsylvania*, for example, administers early childhood services through its office of early childhood development and learning (OCDEL), which reports jointly to the state's departments of education and welfare. The state's council is housed at OCDEL and advises on its ongoing work. Council leaders requested federal funds for time-limited activities with long-term benefits, such as improvements to the state's early childhood data system, while planning to support ongoing council activities with staff support from OCDEL.

Aligning the Advisory Council with Other State Efforts to Coordinate Services for Children

Councils are intended to promote collaboration across agencies and stakeholders serving young children. In some states, however, there are multiple coordinating bodies serving complementary or potentially overlapping purposes, including: children's cabinets, P-20 councils, and entities carrying out other inter-agency early childhood initiatives. To varying degrees, states have already aligned and linked their councils with those other efforts, but some governors are looking to strengthen those connections.

P-20 councils and children's cabinets typically have a broader mission than early childhood advisory councils.

At least 29 states have a P-16 or P-20 council, which are charged with advising policymakers on building linkages between early education, K-12 education, higher education, and workforce development programs^{viii}. Twenty four states have a governor's children's cabinet or other high-level commission to coordinate around a broad range of policy issues affecting children and families. By connecting early childhood advisory councils with those entities, some states are working to make those bodies more efficient and to link early childhood development to larger children's policy agenda. **Colorado's** council, for example, will work with the Governor's Education Leadership Council, a state forum addressing issues from school readiness to college completion. Both entities are housed in the lieutenant governor's office and the early childhood council's leadership is represented in the broader group. As another example, **New York's** early childhood council is housed within the New York Council on Children and Families (CCF), which provides staff support to the commissioners of the 12 health, education and human service agencies on cross agency issues including early childhood. CCF reports directly to the governor. That arrangement allows for close coordination between early childhood advisory council activities and the governor's broader agenda for children.

In **Oregon**, Governor John Kitzhaber has recently taken the P-20 governance model one step further by creating a new educational investment board with funding authority for programs throughout the educational pipeline. The state's early childhood advisory council will be an important part of that new structure. According to legislation passed in 2011, the new board will oversee programs serving children from birth through college, with support from three advisory councils focused on early learning, K-12, and higher education systems. Oregon will restructure its existing early childhood advisory council to meet the requirements of both state legislation and the Head Start Act.

Councils can also be effective when their work is aligned with other interagency early childhood efforts, including state activities under federal Early Child-

hood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) and Head Start Collaboration grants. In New York, for example, CCF serves an umbrella body for both the early childhood advisory council and other federal grants, in an effort to prevent duplication across grant activities. Finally, the federal Race to the Top–Early Learning Fund program will provide competitive grants to governor-designated lead state agencies in 2012 to develop comprehensive early learning systems. States have an opportunity to maximize the impact of these grants by building on and linking with existing efforts of their councils.

Conclusion

As early childhood advisory council activities supported by federal grants are underway, governors have an opportunity to both promote sustainability of early childhood advisory councils and to ensure that these councils are well connected to other state efforts to coordinate services for children. Although the scope, structure, and role of early childhood advisory vary and reflect each state's unique policy context, such councils can provide governors with an ongoing source of policy recommendations and serve as a hub for efforts to coordinate across agencies.

Endnotes

- i Rachel Demma, *Building Ready States: A Governor's Guide to Supporting a Comprehensive High-Quality Early Childhood State System* (Washington, DC: National Governors Association, 2010) [online] [cited 16 November 2011]. Available at: <<http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1010GOVSGUIDEEARLYCHILD.PDF>>.
- ii Ibid.
- iii For more information, see Delaware Early Care and Education Council & Early Childhood Comprehensive System Steering Committee, *Early Success: Delaware's Early Childhood Plan* (Dover, DE: Delaware Department of Education, 2006) [online] [cited 16 November 2011]. Available at: <http://www.doe.k12.de.us/infosuites/students_family/earlychildhood/files/ec_EarlySuccessDeECPlan.pdf>.
- iv For more information, see: Early Childhood and Parenting Collaborative, College of Education, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, IECAM [Illinois Early Childhood Asset Map] Website, n.d. [online] [cited 16 November 2011]. Available at: <<http://iecam.crc.uiuc.edu/>>.
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