



## Parent Advisory Committee Meeting Summary: July 22, 2020

---

**Attendees: Mary Ignatius, Deborah Corley-Marzett, Yenni Rivera, Patrick MacFarlane, Lissete Frausto, Patricia Lozano, Cheryl (Cherie) Schroeder**

### **1. Welcome and Introductions (Chair Mary Ignatius)**

- In her opening remarks, Chair Mary Ignatius welcomed members to the first official Parent Advisory Committee meeting. Chair Ignatius described the essential role the committee plays in representing the voices of parents of young children across the state. She thanked committee members for their commitment to supporting California's children, especially in light of the challenges created due to the pandemic. Chair Ignatius gave an overview of the meeting agenda, including an adjustment to postpone appointing two members of the committee to the full Early Childhood Policy Council to allow more time for the committee to provide input on the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care.
- California Health and Human Services Deputy Secretary Kris Perry presented an overview of the Parent Advisory Committee Charter. The overarching purpose of the committee is to ensure there is a focus on equity, access, and best practices for engaging families, creating welcoming care environments, and providing recommendations to support the best outcomes for families that interact with the state's early childhood education system.

### **2. Master Plan for Early Learning and Care**

- Master Plan for Early Learning and Care team members Aressa Coley and Judy Ennis presented an overview of the plan's progress and facilitated an engaging discussion with committee members to gather input on the plan as it continues to take shape. The purpose of the presentation was to develop a shared understanding of current early learning and care (ELC) issues from the perspective of parents and families and to gather input on key actions that need to be addressed within the plan to enhance families' experiences with California's ELC system. The team highlighted the importance of equity as a driver of the plan's recommendations and emphasized the critical role the Master Plan plays in addressing systemic inequities.
- Building on prior reports and recommendations, the Master Plan team presented a draft vision for a system anchored in advancing equity, attending to the needs of our most vulnerable families, engaging families as partners, and using a whole child approach. The team facilitated a rich discussion with committee members to gather feedback on how the state's most vulnerable families should be identified and prioritized within the system and how the system should align and coordinate comprehensive services to support families.
- The full Master Plan for Early Learning and Care Presentation can be found on the official Early Childhood Policy Council Website (<https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/committees/early-childhood-policy-council/#july-22-2020>)

A high-level, thematic summary of Committee discussion and public comments received during the meeting can be found in the following pages.



## ***ECPC – Parent Advisory Committee***

### **Summary of Comments from the Parent Advisory Committee Meeting**

This Summary provides themes and illustrative quotes from participants in the Parent Advisory Committee Meeting on July 22, 2020.

The Early Childhood Policy Council – Parent Advisory Committee is an advisory body to the Governor, Legislature, and Superintendent of Public Instruction on statewide early learning, care, and child development. It will provide recommendations on all aspects of the state’s early childhood system, including support for the demographic, geographic, and economic diversity of the state’s children and families and ways the Master Plan for Early Learning and Care and the Assembly Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Early Childhood Education’s (ECE) final report can be updated and improved.

### **Summary of Comments and Questions by Parent Advisory Committee Members and the Public**

Key themes included:

- Considerations for Additional Vulnerable Families
  - Families that Navigate Multiple Systems
  - Children Raised by Family Elders
  - Families Experiencing Poverty
  - Children of Parents Escaping Violence and Single Parent Families
  - Children who are Neglected and Lack of Relational Support for Families
  - African American Children
  - Children with Special Needs and Children of Parents with Special Needs
  - Additional Groups to Consider
  
- Prioritizing Support for Vulnerable Families
  - Support for Expecting Mothers
  - Need for Strength Based Approach
  - Barriers for Families Seeking Information
  - Training, Support, and Reducing Administrative Burden for Case Managers
  
- Coordinating Comprehensive Services
  - Streamlining Services and Data

### **Themes**

The themes are explained further below and supported by comments from committee members and the public. The bullets beneath each theme highlight additional related feedback.



## ***ECPC – Parent Advisory Committee***

### **Additional Vulnerable Populations to Consider**

#### **Families that Navigate Multiple Systems**

Children and families engaged in several public systems (e.g.: foster care, CalWORKS etc.) are elevated for additional attention.

- A parent advisory committee member highlighted the need to consider children who are informally in foster care (sent to live with a family member) and young parents who are transitioning out of foster care and “have been touched by the dependency system, by the child welfare system.”
- A list of several of the systems that children and families may navigate through was added by a member of the public and included, “foster care, [Child Protective Services] CPS/At-Risk, [California Work Opportunity and Responsibility for Kids] CalWORKS, homelessness, and [Supplemental Security Income] SSI.”

#### **Children Raised by Family Elders**

A member of the public commented on the need to consider families where grandparents are raising the children.

- This comment was supported by another member of the public who pointed out that grandparents or older family members are also raising children.

#### **Families Experiencing Poverty**

Low income families were emphasized by an advisory committee member who called attention to children living in communities with concentrated poverty.

- The need to consider intersectionality was highlighted by members of the public.
- One member wrote that “parents of color with disproportionate exposure to trauma and poverty” should be considered.

#### **Children of Parents Escaping Violence and Single Parent Families**

A committee member brought up the need to consider children of parents who are escaping domestic violence and often face housing insecurity and homelessness, as well as the challenges associated with being raised by a single parent (e.g. “struggle with picking up the children”, having “no other resource” in terms of child care support).

- Children from “families that are victims of violent crimes” were also included in the comments.
- A member of the public added that “high cost of housing and other expenses should be considered” highlighting the need to consider the family’s housing situation.
- Another member of the public agreed that children of single parents should be considered.



## ***ECPC – Parent Advisory Committee***

### Children who are Neglected and Lack of Relational Support for Families

A committee member spoke about the need to consider the family's situation, particularly regarding children who may experience neglect at home.

- This was affirmed by members of the public.
- Another committee member verbally agreed and added that COVID-19 has furthered a “layer of pressure on really at-risk families” who have had their relational support cutoff due to social distancing.

### African American Children

An advisory committee member commented that black children and families must be included on the list of vulnerable populations.

- The committee member commented on “the multiple layers” of vulnerabilities that are uniquely experienced by this population, such as preschool expulsion rates and family trauma. Several members of the public agreed.
- One member of the public reiterated that “black boys and girls who are most likely to be suspended or expelled from ECE settings.”

### Children with Special Needs and Children of Parents with Special Needs

Several members of the public emphasized the need to consider families in which a “parent has mental health or other challenges” including “maternal depression, drug addiction,” and “developmental disabilities.”

- A member of the public commented, “parents with a developmental disability who have young children may be a subgroup... these parents don't always have support to ensure access to child care which can be very important for the development of their child.”
- Another member of the public commented on the importance of considering “children who are showing behavioral issues.”
- Several other members agreed and mentioned that “children (particularly younger ages) that do not have a diagnosis but may have behavior concerns or have experienced ACEs.”
- One member of the public added that “medical professionals should have ACEs checklist” and that “ECE needs to be trauma informed to help and catch these vulnerabilities.”

### Additional Groups to Consider

Members of the public mentioned the need to consider “families with mixed immigration status,” children with young parents, and “LGBTQ families.”



## **ECPC – Parent Advisory Committee**

### **Prioritizing Support for Vulnerable Families**

#### **Support for Expecting Mothers**

An advisory committee member spoke about the need to focus on early intervention and providing support for expecting mothers.

- Members of the public agreed and one person commented, “We need to increase support and services in prenatal mental health and postpartum.”
- Another comment from a member of the public added, “support from birth at hospital to ensure family is supported.”

#### **Need for Strengths- Based Approach**

Members of the parent advisory committee and public emphasized the need for services that comprehensively addressed the needs of families and take a strengths-based approach in working with vulnerable families was underscored.

- “Our social service agencies view these vulnerable families with a deficit lens,” wrote one member of the public. This member also wrote, “They only see these families through what they don't have or what they are lacking. The only deficit these vulnerable families have are lack of resources.” Other members of the public agreed.
- Creating changes in the way the system is structured was seen as necessary in supporting a strengths-based approach in supporting vulnerable families. One member of the public wrote, “[Families] have many strengths that the system does not value or acknowledge.”
- Another member commented on the institutional racism that continues to undermine the needs of families. The member wrote, “The ‘system’ assumes parents/families don't know what's best, nor want what's best for their families... is based in historical anti-Black racist policies that have persisted to apply to all families struggling to make ends meet.”
- Other public comments further touched on the need to “meet families where they are, not where we want them (or expect them) to be.” One member of the public wrote about “not putting people in a box” but rather being open to the unique needs families have.
- Another member of the public reiterated, “Not all of the vulnerable populations will always be readily apparent so it would be important for a conversation to occur with EVERY family where professionals listen and identify each parent's priorities, needs, concerns, as well as preferences and then work with them to develop a plan of support.”



## **ECPC – Parent Advisory Committee**

### **Barriers for Families Seeking Information**

#### Providing Support and Knowledge While Proactively Building Relationships with Parents

The need for families to feel “welcomed and comfortable” when they interact with case workers or service personnel was mentioned by members of the public.

- Parents often “have to wait on hold for 2-6 hours to speak to a live human” making interactions between families and case workers or other personnel that much more important in ensuring families are helped.
- One member wrote, “The stigma around getting support needs to be addressed. In my experience, some families do not pursue supports because of pride or shame. And when they feel unwelcome, it just confirms these feelings.”
- Another member of the public highlighted the importance for service personnel to demonstrate patience with families, “Because [parents] ‘don't always know the magic words to get the services.’”
- A member of the public reaffirmed the need for patience and understanding of parents, highlighting the stress they experience. The member wrote, “[Receiving services] is a never-ending process. Everyday a new letter arrives threatening to take away services if we do not provide the requested document. Stressful is an understatement!” Through these comments, members of the public linked how interactions between service personnel and families can facilitate or deter the accessibility of services and information.
- Several comments were made by the parent advisory committee and the public regarding the challenges in accessing information, and in turn, the barriers in receiving services. A member of the advisory committee said, “The lack of information is worse than no information at all.”
- Members of the public called attention to the need for information to be “accessible in different languages” and for service to be provided in the “family's home language.”
- In addition to language, immigration status, digital literacy, as well as access to technology were cited by members of the public in being barriers “for low income families to apply and qualify for services within their community.”
- Members of the committee and public acknowledged that parents often must rely on others to get informed. A member of the advisory committee said, “Parents rely on family daycare providers to provide them with the information that they should be getting from the case manager and that's only if your provider is informative or has information.” This comment highlights how it is often by chance that families find out information they need.
- Another member of the committee mentioned that when they get informed, they make sure to “let other parents know,” understanding that not all families receive information or all the information they need.



## **ECPC – Parent Advisory Committee**

### Training, Support, and Reducing Administrative Burden for Case Managers

An advisory committee member commented on the importance of case workers providing a baseline service in which they listen to all families and are well-trained in trauma-informed care and implicit bias to better serve families and identify what families need.

- One advisory committee member suggested that prioritizing vulnerable families involves knowing the “number of risk factors that [families] are living through.”
- A committee member agreed that caseworkers need support in serving parents with “sensitivity and empathy” and that training may help. Members of the public agreed. One member of the public agreed, “More training to improve quality in case management, reflective practice supervision, and lower case loads.”
- Another member of the public wrote, “Case managers are fraught with having to abide by being ‘compliance driven’ yet there is no measure on how they support the family overall.” This may be compounded by being short-staffed.
- One member of the public commented, “I also think that there is not enough case managers to fulfill helping our large needy community. The amount of work load case managers received is a lot and they can only do so much.”
- A member of the advisory committee spoke about the need to “reduce case loads for case managers to spur case managers to see themselves as a supporting families versus, having to check boxes or collect signatures.”
- Providing their own experience as an example, one member of the public commented, “One thing that prevented me from helping more vulnerable families was the massive amount of paper work and data gathering the program funder demanded from the agency.” The volume of paperwork also impacts families.
- A member of the public wrote, “The documentation that families have to produce to qualify is astronomical. Some families must provide three to six months of pay stubs. Birth certificates for ALL the children in the home. Some families don't apply because they are asked for too much.”

### Coordinating Comprehensive Services

#### Streamlining Services and Data

Processes between agencies can improve the services vulnerable families need.

- One advisory committee member remarked that, “making sure that we can have that transparency between agencies where there's communication and information shared” can help reduce misinformation and keep families from “bouncing back and forth” between agencies.
- Members of the public added that “parents want to share their information between agencies especially if that helps streamline the process and will make sure parents get all the services they



### **ECPC – Parent Advisory Committee**

are eligible for.”

- A member of the public brought up how technology has the capacity to greatly streamline and support families accessing via smart phones or computers services and supports, but existing statutes and regulations create roadblocks.”
- Streamlining services was also talked about at the state-level with an integrated data system that connects services across the state, and at the local-level with cities and counties working together to help “families dealing with housing insecurity and food insecurity.” One advisory committee member recognized that there are challenges of streamlining information while maintaining HIPAA compliance.
- Another advisory committee member brought up a “universal enrollment form” that would give a family access to see the services they are eligible for. There was agreement in seeing the potential of a common data system in reducing administrative burden by minimizing data duplication, in avoiding the re-traumatization of parents as they recount their needs at different agencies, and in simplifying and ensuring information that families receive.
- A member of the public echoed the need to provide an option for in-person communication with a service personnel or case worker, particularly for families who have no access to technology or have limited to no digital literacy. This member wrote, “For access it would be great to have both the online option and the physical location for one case manager, since not everyone has access to the internet.
- The importance of navigators or case managers was also mentioned by other members of the public. One member wrote, “Navigators (Case Managers) should help families navigate other systems such as health, food insecurity, homelessness, etc. therefore, there is no wrong door or a single door for families.”
- The need to identify and remove procedural barriers to accessing services was mentioned by one advisory committee. They shared the challenges of families who are receiving services as they talked about how parents need to pay “a certain fee for the child's care” and often struggling to make that subsidized payment.
- Another member spoke about families who do not have transportation and have the burden of “finding transportation somewhere to deliver documents in person.” The member also mentioned the financial barrier, saying “There's any number of social services programs where families have to sort of pay their share to participate.”