

## **New Hampshire Council for Thriving Children**

Whether at the state level or one of our many local communities, New Hampshire is frequently singled out as one of the best places to live in America. This is not by accident. This sentiment reflects many of the culturally embedded values that we as Granite Staters share. One of those values is our respect for the important place families – and the children in those families – hold in our communities.

These values were reflected in New Hampshire’s response to the 2007 federal law “Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Public Law 110-134” (the “Act”). Responding to that new law, in 2011, then Governor John Lynch implemented by executive order, a collaborative of volunteers, private organizations and public institution partners, to craft a vision and strategy for early childhood care and education in New Hampshire. As a result of the strong work of this collaborative, the Department of Health and Human Services, the Department of Education and the University of New Hampshire, supported by members of the collaborative, sought and won a \$3.8 million planning grant and then, in December 2019, a \$26.8 million implementation grant to continue to move this important work forward.

The shift from visioning and strategy to scaled implementation, including embedding this work in state agencies and institutions, requires a changed governance structure that harnesses the full capacity of state agencies across the state that touch children and families in so many ways. This new governance structure retains the continuity and support of the initial visioning collaborative in an advisory role while enabling both DHHS and DOE to lead implementation efforts in close coordination with a new Center of Excellence embedded at the University of New Hampshire.

Establishment of this new governance structure – the **Council for Thriving Children** – is through Executive Order XXXX by Governor Sununu on January 23, 2020.

### **Governance Structure Overview**

Beginning with the B-8 needs assessment over 2 years ago and continuing through strategic planning efforts, recommendations for a new governance structure have emerged to guide the future work of NH’s B-8 ECCE system. The structure proposed is charged with developing and advancing the state’s vision for children, families and communities; formalizing collaborations and connections to foster efficient high quality services for children and families; and using a strong equity lens to guide implementation based on agreed principles and goals. This effective and inclusive structure also formalizes governance at the state and regional/local levels and engages stakeholders with defined roles and a shared vision. It addresses inconsistencies in regulations and service eligibility requirements, reduces duplication of services and uses ongoing evaluation, robust data, and current research to inform decision-making.<sup>1</sup>

## **Key components in new ECCE B-8 System Governance**

There are five components to the new ECCE governance structure. Each component is comprised of a group of individuals who collectively hold responsibility for guiding, advising and strengthening, or coordinating and operationalizing the ECCE system. Together, these entities will work in concert with each other to continuously learn, improve and evolve the system to ensure all families are afforded comprehensive and responsive supports so they are healthy, learning, and thriving now and in the future.

Governor Appointed State Advisory Council: **Council on Thriving Children** – The Council meets the federal Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, Public Law 110-134, which requires establishment of a state advisory. Council membership comes from across the B-8 ECCE system, including the Governor, leadership from an array of state agencies, parents and caregivers, professionals, legislators, business, philanthropy, and representatives from educational agencies. The Council’s role is to guide the ECCE system through a set of expectations established within the Executive Order XXXX. Designated DHHS and DOE staff, in conjunction with selected entities, will support Council efforts and activities.

DHHS and DOE Early Childhood Integration Teams (ECIT) – DHHS and DOE will create and sustain ECITs to support data driven policy and program coordination, integration, and development, while increasing performance and resource accountability across the ECCE system. The ECITs will be made up of staff from across both agencies that directly touch or support early childhood programs, as well as parents, local program or educational partners, coalitions, and agencies. Chartered teams will work towards the vision of New Hampshire’s families and young children having access to quality resources and supports within their communities to learn, grow, and thrive. As ECCE system integration/coordination evolves, DHHS and DOE will work in collaboration to expand boundaries and silos and create a joint Office of Early Childhood Care and Education. Members of the ECITs include: State Agency Staff, parents, local program and education partners, local/regional early childhood & public health coalitions,

B-8 ECCE Advisors – The B-8 Advisory group will serve in an advisory role to the Council by sharing emerging trends for children, families, communities, workforce and business, while generating learning and capacity across ECCE system. The B-8 Advisory group will be a chartered body consisting of parents, representatives from legislative or membership entities, providers, advocates, and other stakeholder groups. Via the Charter, leadership, activities and coordination of the group will be identified and will be provided via a parent-affiliated entity selected by DHHS and DOE. Examples of members includes: NH Family &/or other Parent Organizations, representation from legislative entities connected to young children & families, Early Learning NH, Grandfamilies Coalition, Whole Families Chapter, NH Children’s Trust and Family Resource Centers.

Early Childhood Care & Education Experts (ECCEE) – Led and Chartered by the UNH Center for Excellence, the ECCEE membership will include higher education, representatives from local and regional Early Childhood and Public Health Coalitions, specialized entities such as the NH Pediatric Society and others identified as efforts unfold. Their focus will be to support system strengthening through the sharing of research and best practice, while also deepening connections to and within regions and local communities.

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<sup>1</sup> Education Commission of the States, Governance in Early Childhood Education, Bruce Atchison and Louisa Diffey, December 2018

