

Coordinating and Amplifying the State Advocacy Voice

Working Call with Alliance Grantees

May 8, 2020

Following is a readout of the Alliance for Early Success working call that replaced the regular StateFedConnect webinar.

Federal Overview and Communications

We opened with a great [federal update that you can see here](#) as well as the introduction of some powerful common language that will help us to “sing the same tune” in our states and more effectively elevate child care as states recover from the pandemic. (The [communications kit is here.](#))

Participants then divided into the following three breakout groups that represent on-going work supported by the Alliance.

"Open Strong"

The Open Strong group is focused on the immediate need to provide guidance to state advocates on supporting child care to open strong as an essential component of economic recovery. You can find updates to this work under the *What Comes Next* section of the [COVID-19 topics page](#) or by contacting Mimi Aledo-Sandoval (mas@earlysuccess.org). Many states are already surveying child care providers and parents on what they are experiencing and what they want and need. Many of these surveys are posted on the Alliance COVID-19 topics page under “Collecting Data and Stories for Elected Officials.” Please continue to share your survey questions and results. Amy O’Leary from Massachusetts’ Strategies for Children shared [this survey instrument](#) for collecting information on what families want. Sarah Clark from Washington’s Children Alliance shared this [template for their parent virtual advocacy workshops](#) where they are prioritizing voices from marginalized communities.

It is especially important to make your voice heard, especially on behalf of what families want, and to align your voice with other children’s organizations. Massachusetts advocates came together around [these recommendations](#) to the state’s Reopening Advisory Board. Ohio Groundwork advocated to be included on the state’s reopening advisory board to represent the interests of children, and provided [these guiding principles](#).

“Build Stronger”

The “Build Stronger” group is looking at a longer-term opportunity to rebuild the child care system in ways that are better than before. You can find updates to this work under the *What Comes Next* section of the [COVID-19 topics page](#) or by contacting Albert Wat (awat@earlysuccess.org). Whether or not states/governors have a formal task force, we heard that advocates are in big-time “build stronger” mode and working inside and outside (business, philanthropy, grassroots) government. There was a sense that messaging and visioning should be around reimagining child care as an essential state and community economic asset and for getting parents back to work. The group recognized tension between stability to re-open and bold disruption to build it better. It’ll be important to have a way to track

parents' needs and preferences continually and consider: what parents will want and when they will be willing to go back to using child care, what school-based settings will and won't allow for (smaller group sizes, staffing, etc.), and how disparities (including kids with disabilities) will be managed for parents who have no choice to stay home. There was general agreement that care provided in the child's home or in smaller settings (Family, Friend and Neighbor care) may become an option parents see as safer and demand more in the short term. Will that be a scalable long-term strategy?

What do advocates need to successfully reimagine a new future for child care? Intel on financing and tax credits, strategies to preserve quality with the intense pressure to serve more kids, staffed networks and shared services, cost modeling that reflects the true cost of quality, ideas to fund paid leave, and an expanded advocacy base (including millennial parents).

Federal Advocacy

Annie McKay and Danielle Ewen moderated a session on amplifying the state advocacy voice on federal policy matters. Session highlights include:

Navigating disagreements regarding the "ask:" When engaging members of Congress, how do advocates reconcile differences over the specific "ask" in child care? Response was to not initially raise the disagreement but to state why \$50B is needed in the context of what is going on in your state. If member offices bring up the fact that other organizations floated a different number, express gratitude for those other organizations that recognized the need, but stress that the \$50B addresses the real needs — professional development, trauma-informed care, improved rate of pay, increased cost of cleaning, sanitization, etc.

Making the "ask" when your state has been lax in spending existing child care funding or relief funding: For example, states that have not spent COVID-19 relief funding for child care might be strategically delaying spending because they have not seen a spike in COVID-19 cases. Response was to accentuate the positive aspects of what your state has done and what is in your state. Come up with a list of things you would like the state to spend the money on. Engage providers, parents, and other advocates around that and hold virtual meetings with members over what your state could be doing with funding to shore up child care industry.

How do advocates juggle many "asks" across early learning, health, home visiting, safety net, etc.? For multi-sector advocates who want to weigh-in on a number of different issues, adopt a global framework to let your members know what is needed for children and families to thrive and for the economy to rebound across health, early learning, economic supports, etc. Figure out who within your networks of advocates, providers, families and other influencers is best to deliver the message to your members. It might be law enforcement, faith leaders, businesses, or a combination of all of the above. Provide state contexts for your multiple asks.

Rapid Response Advocacy Grants: The Alliance for Early Success is working on providing rapid response grants to states whose representatives in Congress sit on key committees and who are influential in advancing legislation.

Remember your Governors and Elected Officials: Advocates were encouraged to have their governors/state legislators/local officials weigh in with their congressional delegations on key issues. It is critical for members of Congress to hear directly from state governors and other officials.

Next Up

This Friday (5/15), we go back to the webinar format with lots of information on state strategies for maximizing the two new relief federal funding streams: GEER and ESSER.

Also note that there will be no StateFedConnect Call on Friday, May 22.