

Operating Procedures

GENERAL INFORMATION

The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 (Head Start Act), codified at 42 U.S.C. 9837, et seq., authorizes the Governor of each State to designate or establish an advisory council on early education and care for children from birth to school entry. In March 2010, Governor Crist designated the State Advisory Council on Early Education and Care (Advisory Council) as an advisory body. The Advisory Council is responsible for making recommendations to the Governor and Children and Youth Cabinet to promote policy alignment among state agencies and other organizations and create a comprehensive and coordinated system of services for young children aged birth to school entry, and their families. The Children and Youth Cabinet was established through section 402.56, Florida Statutes, and is charged with promoting and implementing collaboration, creativity, increased efficiency, information sharing and improved service delivery among and within state agencies and other organizations.

The Advisory Council is essential to identifying opportunities for, and addressing barriers to, the coordination of federal and state early education and care policies and procedures that impact the well-being and success of Florida's youngest children. The *Framework for the Future of Florida's Children* will be the Advisory Council's guide for developing this comprehensive, coordinated service delivery system across three major domains including Stable and Nurturing Families, Healthy Children, and Quality Early Learning Experiences.

RESPONSIBILITIES

The Advisory Council is responsible for fulfilling duties described in federal law. The Head Start Act places the following responsibilities on the Advisory Council:

- Conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services for children from birth to school entry, including an assessment of the availability of high-quality pre-kindergarten services for low-income children in the State;
- Identify opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among Federally-funded and State-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services, including collaboration and coordination among State agencies responsible for administering such programs;

- Develop recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing Federal, State, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations;
- Develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a unified data collection system for public early childhood education and development programs and services throughout the State;
- Develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators in the State;
- Assess the capacity and effectiveness of 2- and 4-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 prekindergarten program; and
- Make recommendations for improvements in State early learning standards and undertake efforts to develop high-quality comprehensive early learning standards, as appropriate.

FUNDING AND STAFFING

Florida received American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funding to support Advisory Council activities (as of September 1, 2010). The Advisory Council will use the funds to facilitate the development or enhancement of high-quality systems of early childhood education and care designed to improve school preparedness through one or more of the following activities:

- Promoting school preparedness of children from birth through school entry, including activities to encourage families and caregivers to engage in highly interactive, developmentally and age-appropriate activities to improve children's early social, emotional, and cognitive development, support the transition of young children to school, and foster parental and family involvement in the early education of young children;
- Supporting professional development, recruitment, and retention initiatives for early childhood educators;

- Enhancing existing early childhood education and development programs and services (in existence on the date of September 1, 2010), including quality improvement activities authorized under the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 9858, et seq.; and
- Fulfilling reporting requirements consistent with the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. 9858, et seq.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start made \$4.9 million of funding available to Florida to support the work of the Advisory Council for a three-year period ending September 2013. As established by the Executive Office of the Governor, the Agency for Workforce Innovation will serve as the fiscal agent for the federal grant funding. The Agency for Workforce Innovation will also employ two full time positions to support the activities of the Advisory Council for the grant period ending September 2013.

MEMBERSHIP

The Advisory Council includes the following representatives:

- A. A representative of the State agency responsible for child care;
- B. A representative of the State educational agency;
- C. A representative of local educational agencies;
- D. A representative of institutions of higher education in the State;
- E. A representative of local providers of early childhood education and development services;
- F. A representative from Head Start agencies located in the State; including migrant and seasonal Head Start programs and Indian Head Start programs;
- G. The State Director of Head Start State Collaboration ;
- H. A representative of the State agency responsible for programs under section 619 or part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (20 U.S.C. 1419, 1431 et seq.); and
- I. A representative of the state agency responsible for health or mental health care.

TERMS OF MEMBERSHIP

The inaugural Advisory Council members were appointed for four years beginning September 1, 2010.

Terms of membership will be revisited by the Chair of the Advisory Council after the stated four year appointment.

Members who vacate their specific membership position will remain members until another representative is appointed or until a letter of resignation is issued. If an appointee replaces a member who resigns, the new member will take over the balance of the old term and will not receive a new term. The Governor may appoint additional members.

ELECTION OF THE CHAIR

The initial Chair of the Advisory Council is Jeff Kottkamp. Subsequently, the Chair will be selected by majority vote of the Advisory Council members.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Each Advisory Council member must comply with the applicable portions of Part III of Chapter 112, Florida Statutes, which describes a code of ethics for public officers.

An Advisory Council member should fulfill his ethical obligations keeping in mind two principles:

1. Act as a reasonably prudent person, avoid self dealing, i.e., do not offer self-serving advice or vote on decisions which provide personal profit or benefit.
2. Act in terms of the principles of good faith, i.e., attendance at Council and committee meetings, review of materials, active participation in Council meetings, including recommendations and objections for the record.

The Advisory Council always acts as a body. An individual member cannot decide for the group or act or speak on behalf of the Advisory Council, unless specifically empowered to do so by a majority vote of the Advisory Council members.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Section 112.3143(4), Florida Statutes, requires appointed public officers to take certain steps to eliminate conflicts of interest where possible. Each Advisory Council member is an appointed public officer under section 112.3143(4), Florida Statutes.

Accordingly, Advisory Council members will not participate in any matter which would inure to the his or her special private gain or loss; which the member knows would inure to the special private gain or loss of any principal by whom he or she is retained or to the parent organization or subsidiary of a corporate principal by which he or she is retained; or which he or she knows would inure to the special private gain or loss of a relative or business associate of the public officer, without first disclosing the nature of his or her interest in the matter. Advisory Council members should comply with the instructions found in section 112.3143(4), Florida Statutes, when disclosing the nature of his or her interest in a matter which comes before the Advisory Council.

DESIGNATED MEETINGS

The Advisory Council shall meet at least quarterly beginning September 2010, and at such other times as may be deemed necessary for the performance of the duties of the Advisory Council. Decisions of the board will be made by a majority of those present at a regular or special board meeting. No quorum is required.

SUNSHINE LAW

The Advisory Council is an advisory board subject to the public record and public meeting requirements of the Florida Sunshine Law. The Florida Constitution, Article I, Section 24 (a), states that every person has the right to inspect or copy any public record made or received in connection with the official business of the Advisory Council. Section 119, Florida Statutes, sets out specific requirements detailing what public records are and how they are to be provided. Advisory Council records must be made available to the public upon request. This can include, but is not limited to, emails and mail related to Advisory Council activities.

The Florida Constitution, Article I, Section 24 (b) and section 286.011, Florida Statutes, require that meetings of advisory boards and other governmental bodies be open and noticed to the public. Accordingly, notice of all regular and special meetings of the Advisory Council will be provided to interested parties and the public in general. The Chair will be responsible for determining the length of public comment allowed during an Advisory Council meeting; reasonable time limits may be designated. Minutes will be taken and open to public inspection.

In addition, “meetings” include any form of communication between or among Advisory Council members so members must refrain from communicating with one another regarding Advisory Council business outside of publicly noticed meetings.

The Advisory Council shall submit an annual statewide strategic report addressing the activities of the Advisory Council to the State Director of Head Start Collaboration and the Governor. There will be a public hearing before this report is submitted and there will be an opportunity for public comment on the activities.

Advisory Council members may refer any questions regarding the application of the Florida Sunshine Law to the Agency for Workforce Innovation or consult the Florida Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual for clarification.

ATTENDANCE

Members are expected to attend meetings for the length of their terms to enhance the effectiveness of the Advisory Council. It is each member’s responsibility, in accepting an appointment, to attend and participate in Advisory Council activities. If a member cannot attend, it is his/her responsibility to send a designee in his/her place. Attendance will be noted and recorded by the Director and revisited by the Chair of the Advisory Council if absenteeism begins to impact the effectiveness of Advisory Council business.

COMMITTEES

Committees shall be designated, as needed, by vote of the Advisory Council. The Advisory Council will establish functions and periods of time for each committee to exist. Committees will serve to inform and make recommendations to the Advisory Council.

Chairs of such committees must be Advisory Council members. The committee Chairs shall be appointed by the Advisory Council Chair.

Members of the committee should be diverse in background and have experience with the subjects being studied by the committee. Committee members will be assigned by the Director of the Advisory Council and decisions shall be voted on by majority vote. Non Advisory Council members may serve as committee members to provide additional expertise and/or diversity of background and experience. Efforts will be made to create a balance of Advisory Council members and non-members serving on committees.

No committee can act for or bind the Advisory Council. A committee must report a summary of each meeting and any recommendations or findings to the Advisory Council at the next scheduled meeting. A committee recommendation or finding must be approved by the Advisory Council before it can become the Advisory Council's recommendation or finding. The following procedures apply for transmitting recommendations and findings from committees to the Advisory Council:

- Committees make recommendation to the Advisory Council;
- The Advisory Council reviews committee recommendations; and
- The Advisory Council decides by vote of members whether to adopt the recommendation or findings as those of the Advisory Council.

OTHER INITIATIVES

The Advisory Council will work with other organizations to avoid duplication of effort. The Advisory Council will make every effort to draw from the work of others to fully inform members prior to making recommendations.

SUPPORT LETTERS

Support letters from the Advisory Council may be provided to an organization if the Advisory Council is familiar with the organization and has had knowledge of its previous performance history.

Support letters will be drafted to identify the adopted positions of the Advisory Council in regard to a specific program area, but will not support the application of one organization over another in regard to support for the same project.

Organizations requesting support letters which identify their organization as a priority for funding must submit the request to the Advisory Council for review.