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**NORTHEAST EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL**

**Monday, November 15, 2021**

**5:30-7:00 p.m.**

**ZOOM Meeting**

**In Attendance:** Myra Ambrogi, Sandra Assanowicz, Patty Bryant, Rena Cadro, Kristine Cicchetti, Samantha Drobiak, Jessica Fitch, Paula Graef, Lisa Girard, MaryEllen Jones, Jennie Kapszukiewicz, Rhiannon McCabe, Tammy Miner, Heather Nickerson, Laurence Prentiss, Emily Ross, Christine Rosati Randall, Erin Rhinalt, Sally Sherman, Laura Smith, Melinda Smith, Melanie *Smith-*Cervera, Barbara Tetreault, Mark Weaver, Cathy Whitehead (Access Agency)

Parent Ambassadors: Rene Toper, Melissa Kennedy, Brian Snyder, Kelley Robbins

**Agenda:**

1. Welcome
2. Guest Speaker: Access Agency
3. School Readiness Updates
4. NECC Updates- Regional Director
5. Regional Programing / Community Updates

**Guest Speaker:**

Cathy Whitehead from Access Agency: Director of home energy assistance programs. Presents PowerPoint presentation (see attachment). Access offers several programs under home energy: Energy assistance helps offset costs (any deliverable fuels), or gas/electric. If heat is included in rent, can apply. New this year, if you receive snap, SSI or TFA your automatically eligible without providing income. Guidelines on income eligibility – see presentation slide. Higher benefit if you are considered vulnerable households: has person 60 or older, 5 or under or someone disabled. Also, can get a benefit for a free clean, test or tune. Heating system repair or replacement program.

Jess presents: Offer some payment plans through Eversource: winter protection for service disconnects for non-payment. The new start program: program available for residential account with balance of $100 past due more than 60 days. Matching payment program: give payment amount to pay and Eversource matchs amount. Yoli, case manager at Willimantic and Danielson – services in housing assistance for families. In addition, there is a food pantry in both offices, by appointment.

We have Danielson office, please contact for questions or to enroll.

Cathy Whitehead: cathy.whitehead@accessagency.org, 860-412-1600, ext 1603 or Jessica Klewin- Danielson Office Jessica.klewin@accessagency.org 860-412-1600, ext. 1648

Streamlined process this year (vs. years past) – so the program is much easier to access. Please share PowerPoint with families.

**Question**: Who is eligible for food bank? Services available on monthly basis (or emergency), has to meet income guidelines, however, if there is an emergency, please reach out.

**Question:** What is the first step for a family if they want to apply? Families can print out application from DSS, or they can call the office to do either a phone appointment or in-person.

**Question:** What is the typical turnaround time once documents and application is filled? Typical is 2-week turnaround (at most), but if in emergency then gets pushed to top.

**Question:** What is deadline for requesting assistance? May 31st is the last day they can apply, May 2nd is authorization for fuel delivery.

**Question:** Do you have a 1-page flyer that can be shared? Yes, will forward tomorrow.

**School Readiness Updates:**

Melanie with quick updates: SR Monitoring takes place 3 times a year, Brooklyn, Canterbury, Sterling, Thompson and Killingly have had first visits. Plainfield and Putnam’s are coming up in December. Everything is going well, all started staff PD and classroom observations and meeting SR funding guidelines. Sub-Committee met and made recommendations to Leadership re: membership updates. Will be working on those recommendations over the next several months. In addition, programs will be creating and sending home transition surveys through programs from Pre-k to K. Programs will bring data back to group to make any recommendations.

Brooklyn: Have total pre-k enrollment of 90, all 24 SR slots filled, no waitlist. Have PT conference coming Thursday, we are in NAEYC accreditation (waiting for 2-week window). Classroom portfolios are being reviewed. Lions club has done eye exams, looking to reopen Brooklyn teen center to reach to families.

Plainfield: We are operating with a full program, over 100 in preschool, and there is a waiting list.

Killingly: Enrollment is around 120, grant funded spaces are full, 18 kids on a waitlist. Family resource center: playgroups are up and running, flyer on line. Recently collaborated with EASTCONN on car seat clinic, open enrollments going on for Tommy Toy Fund (do not have to be connected with organization). Seeking adoptive families for the holidays. Salvation Army tree – that goes thorough Dec. 15th (families can register online). Recruiting volunteers for annual “kettle’ing” at the Walmart Brooklyn – 90% of funds go directly back to Killingly/Brooklyn (dates needed for volunteers are: December 11 & 18th) please contact Emily if you can volunteer. Community Store open one last time before holidays on December 11th from 10-1, had biggest turnout last week (102 people served and 90 bags of clothing items went out).

Sterling: All SR slots filled (25), Parent Teacher conferences next week in person and virtually. Continuing to work on NAEYC accreditation.

Thompson: Currently 19 out of 20 slots. Just finished Parent Teacher conferences. We are working on putting registration online (with tech. department). When does everyone else start? Typically, we do March – what are other schools doing? Please respond in chat. We are being audited in December by OEC (random audit).

Putnam: We have 90 preschoolers enrolled, 1 opening in full day (twins want a spot, but only have 1). Parent Teacher conferences were in October, sending out transition survey. Currently giving out coats and boots to families, just finished coat drive – 66 coats and $4,000 raised! Giving trees at WINY, YMCA, US Button, Salvation Army Tree. FRC center playgroups are in-person, just started end of October – following all COVID protocols.

Canterbury: no one present to report out

* **Please email SR report to Krissy to keep in the files.**

Question – how are in-person playgroups going? Killingly, Plainfield and Putnam have been holding and it’s going great. Following all protocols – now that weather is getting colder and brining in doors, have to limit the number of people. Putnam is now offering 3 times a week to accommodate the number of families.

* **Please send Krissy any playgroup information to post**

**Regional Director& Staff updates:**

Parent Leadership Grant Award: We were awarded the Parent Trust Fund grant to hold 12-week Parent Leadership Training called PEP – People Empowering People. Chris Rosati just finished up the facilitator trainings. She will co-facilitate with Shannon Haney. Our plan is to start recruiting in January and to hold the training in early Spring. We have had great success with this leadership program in the past, they meet 1 a week for 12 weeks ends with a community service project – you can see the past participants and their projects on our website. Keep an eye out for flyer in January to share with families.

Mental Health Task Force: First meeting will be held on Tuesday, November 23rd from 9-10:30 a.m. Future meetings would be January 25th, March 22nd, May 24th - a total of 4 meetings this year. If you want to be included in the meeting reminders to attend, please email me.

Childcare for CT’s Future: NECC was asked to speak at the launch of “Childcare for CT’s Future” of behalf of NE “rural” CT on 11/3. The speakers included Beth Bye Com. Of OEC, business leaders, lawmakers, parents. Myself and Rene Toper, our parent ambassador, were spotlighted to discuss the struggles that face families in NE CT around affordability and access to high quality, equitable childcare. Rene did a great job with a “from the heart” testimony of her struggles! You can view the campaign which includes the full video (broken down by clips) as well as the NBC CT news clip that we appeared on by going to: <https://www.childcareforct.org/>.

We are happy that the NECC and our communities continue to be a “go to” for our statewide partners when it comes to early childhood work – thank you to all our school districts who continue to see the value in our Council and help fund the work that Chris Rosati and I are doing as well as our parent ambassadors. Our work allows us to stay connected and engaged with these state partners so when they are working on things like this, they continue to think or our Council.

Early Learning Kits: Distribution is over 147, we assembled 150 with grant funding and donations from schools/towns. We have requests for 5 more currently, we are looking to assemble 30 more kits with some reallocated grant funding. It’s a great way to connect with families of children that are 3 & 4 who are not connected with any programs. We held our first extending learning zoom session for those parents around “taming temper tantrums”. Taylor from NOW and John from Nurturing Families Network presented during this live session. Will try to offer more of these sessions going forward, partnering with other parent educators in our FRC’s. Feedback from session was that it was helpful, we shared the video training with all 148 parents.

Regional Guide: Have some funding allocated to reprint these. Will be convening a sub-committee to work on revising this guide after the holidays. It can be found on our website’s home page.

**Community Programs Sharing:**

Sandra from Nurturing Families Network – down a home visitor, troubling hiring, but we are looking for someone. Playgroups have been done in person. In January heading to Audubon doing outside hiking, Feb/March will be in the library.

Jennie – Headstart. We are actively looking for enrollment in preschool programs (half full), also looking for 6 staff as well. New Head start location in Plainfield is open in the Rec center, open house coming up at the end of November.

Thank you to our parent ambassadors – Rene, Brian, Kelly and Melissa who are attending tonight. They’ve all done a tremendous job so far with sharing information and giving feedback and participating in meetings.

Guest Speakers Ideas: If anyone has idea on who you want for a guest speaker, please let me know. Rene suggests access health or husky.

* **If anyone has flyers or events to share, please forward to Kris.**

Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

**UPCOMING COUNCIL MEETINGS:**

**(Zoom until further notice)**

Monday, January 24th

Monday, March 14th

Monday, May 2nd