

STREAMLINING GOVERNMENT THROUGH EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE

A POLICY GROUP FOR FLORIDA'S FAMILIES AND CHILDREN BRIEF

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GOV. RICK SCOTT'S INTEREST IN STREAMLINING STATE GOVERNMENT PROVIDES A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO IMPLEMENT A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD. Governance in the field of early childhood is not a new concept to Florida. In 2008, more than 100 stakeholders statewide affirmed the importance of governance in solidifying an early childhood system of services.¹ And the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) study in 2008 also concluded that the lack of one single agency to coordinate early childhood services has led to duplication, poor coordination of services, and inconsistent direction.² (For more details, see *Florida's Early Childhood Governance: A Path Not Yet Taken*, Appendix A.)

The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children believes the Governor's recognition that streamlining will bring about tax-saving efficiencies is well-founded, especially with regard to the early care and education system, and that now is the time to capitalize on the Policy Matters work, dust off the final report presented by nationally-recognized systems expert Dr. Sharon Lynn Kagan, and answer the OPPAGA report with action.

THE RATIONALE FOR PURSUING THIS ACTION NOW HAS THREE IMPORTANT AND SIMPLE POINTS:

1. Governance is not to be confused with government
2. An early childhood system of services is necessary, but not in place in Florida
3. A governance structure not only streamlines government, but also benefits our children and families

No. 1: A strong body of research suggests that governance "refers to how (often multiple) programs and entities are managed to promote efficiency, excellence and equity. It comprises the traditions, institutions and processes that determine how *power* is exercised, how constituents are given voice, and how decisions are made on issues of mutual concern."³

CURRENTLY, THE MULTIPLE PROGRAMS AND ENTITIES SERVING FLORIDA CHILDREN 0 TO 5 AND THEIR FAMILIES ARE SPREAD ACROSS SEVERAL STATE AGENCIES, EACH WITH ITS OWN MANAGEMENT SYSTEM, STRUCTURE AND LOCUS OF CONTROL. Decisions on issues of mutual concern are difficult because of the complex bureaucratic structures. A single governance structure would streamline government.

¹ The Policy Group for Florida's Families and Children (2007, September). *Florida's early childhood system report: Policy Matters*. Available online at www.policygroup.org/policymatters.php

² Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (2008, June). *The governance structure of Florida's early education program presents some administrative challenges*. Report No. 08-35. Available online at www.oppaga.state.fl.us/Summary.aspx?reportNum=08-35

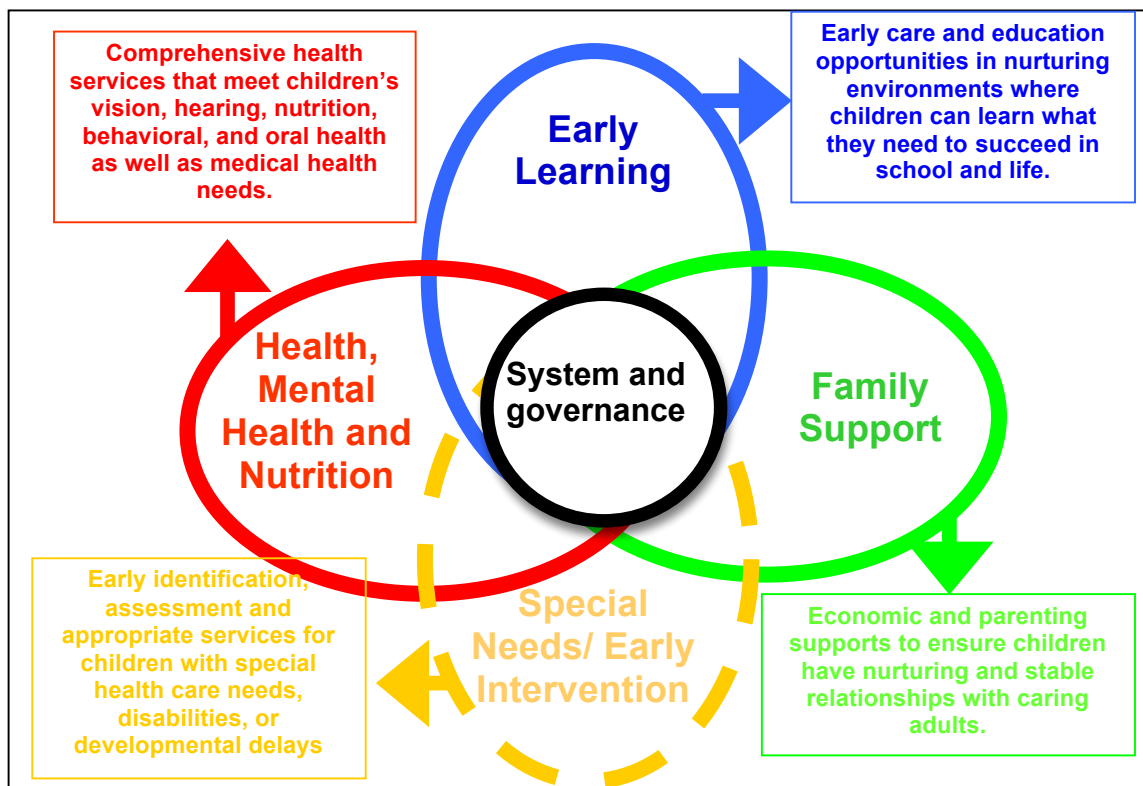
³ Kagan, S.L., & Kauerz, K. (in press). *Governing American early care and education: Shifting from government to governance and from form to function*. New York: Teacher's College, Columbia University

TO BE EFFECTIVE, EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE IN FLORIDA MUST HAVE FUNCTIONAL ELEMENTS OF GOVERNANCE :⁴

- **Authority**: the power to act
 - Budgeting, allocating and managing fiscal resources
 - Collecting, interpreting and releasing data
 - Developing and overseeing regulations
- **Accountability**: the power to know
 - Fiscal accountability
 - Program accountability
 - Workforce accountability
 - Child/student accountability

THERE IS NO EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IN FLORIDA THAT ENCOMPASSES THESE ELEMENTS.

No. 2: RESEARCH AND PRACTICE HAVE LED TO A COMMON UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT CONSTITUTES AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM: coordinated, effective policies that address children's health, mental health and nutrition, early care and education, family support and parenting programs, and services for children with special needs.⁵ (See diagram.) These coordinated, effective policies are possible when the system itself is coordinated and effective. **DESPITE SOME EFFORTS AND PROGRESS, FLORIDA DOES NOT HAVE A COORDINATED AND EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM.**



⁴ Kagan, S.L. (2007). *Early childhood governance in Florida: Evolving ideas and practice – final presentation of the Policy Matters Project*. Available online at www.policygroup.org/policymatters.php

⁵ www.buildinitiative.org

Several states are making significant and notable progress in establishing an early childhood system and appropriate governance, among them Maryland, Georgia, Pennsylvania and Washington. Their governance models differ, but all encompass the requisite functional elements of authority and accountability. (For more details, see *Early Childhood Governance in Florida: Evolving Ideas and Practice-Final Presentation of The Policy Matters Project*, available online at <http://www.policygroup.org/policymatters.php>.)

No. 3: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES BENEFIT, AS DOES FLORIDA’S CURRENT AND FUTURE ECONOMIC PROSPERITY, WHEN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM IS EFFECTIVE AND COORDINATED, AND A GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE IS IN PLACE. From pregnancy through early childhood, all of the environments in which children live and learn, and the quality of their relationships with caregivers have a significant impact on their development.⁶ To focus on only one aspect of the system or have disjointed coordination between agencies is inefficient and ineffective. Our children are beneficiaries of a coordinated early childhood system and governance. Our state is the beneficiary of their optimal development, since the first five years of children’s lives is the most effective time to influence our future society and workforce.⁷

THE QUESTION IS NOT WHETHER FLORIDA NEEDS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE, BUT WHAT THE STREAMLINED STRUCTURE SHOULD BE. OPPAGA, in its 2008 study, provided three alternatives:

1) maintain the current state-level governance structure but address coordination and collaboration issues through stronger interagency agreements and oversight; 2) centralize all early education programs in one of three state agencies currently jointly involved in the administration of School Readiness and VPK; 3) place all early education programs in an independent state agency whose sole mission is early childhood education.

THE POLICY GROUP FOR FLORIDA’S FAMILIES AND CHILDREN BELIEVES THE BEST OPTION IS AN INDEPENDENT STATE AGENCY. An independent agency provides the best opportunity to balance interests and intent, cultivate the values that drive leadership and governance, manage multiple funding sources, engage public support and provide durability to the system. If an independent agency is not feasible, then a possible but less appealing alternative for existing programs and services for 0 to 5 (see below) is consolidation within the Department of Education, where agency mission more closely aligns with desired outcomes.

Florida Programs/Services 0-5 That Need to Be Part of a System and Shared Governance	Where They Are Now
Maternal and Child Health	Department of Health
Child Care Licensing	Department of Children and Families
Child Care Credentialing	Department of Children and Families
Early Childhood Mental Health	Department of Children and Families
Child Care Resource and Referral	Agency for Workforce Innovation
Child Care Subsidy	Agency for Workforce Innovation
School Readiness	Agency for Workforce Innovation <i>and</i> Department of Education
Voluntary Prekindergarten	Agency for Workforce Innovation <i>and</i> Department of Education
Head Start Collaboration	Head Start Collaboration State Office, co-located

⁶ National Symposium on Early Childhood Science and Policy. *The impact of early adversity on children’s development*. www.developingchild.harvard.edu

⁷ Heckman, J. J. (2007, August). The economics, technology, and neuroscience of human capability formation. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 104(3), 13250–13255.

	within the Agency for Workforce Innovation
Kindergarten	Department of Education
Early Steps (Part C IDEA)	Children's Medical Services within the Department of Health
Preschool Special Ed (Part B IDEA)	Department of Education
Family Involvement and HIPPIY	Department of Education <i>and</i> Agency for Workforce Innovation
Women, Infants, Children (WIC) Program	Department of Health
Family Support	Department of Children and Families

Appendix A: Florida's Early Childhood Governance: A Path Not Taken

Long before the President and the nation's governors established "readiness to learn" as the first of six national education goals in 1989, the importance of healthy development in the early years was known. The inclusion of the goal, however, marked a turning point at which knowledge gained currency as a policy issue.

Informing this policy issue has been a rapidly growing body of knowledge about the science of early childhood and early brain development. Through the work of the nation's leading neuroscientists, developmental psychologists, pediatricians and economists, there is now consensus about what we know about development in the early years.⁸

"Thus, the time has come to close the gap between what we know (from systematic scientific inquiry across a broad range of disciplines) and what we do (through both public and private sector policies and practices) to promote the healthy development of all young children."⁹

Significant work is being done to close the gap. One notable project was Policy Matters, designed to develop and make available coherent, comprehensive information regarding the strength and adequacy of state policies affecting children, families, and communities. Policy Matters endeavored to establish consensus among policy experts and state leaders regarding the mix of policies shown to offer the best opportunity for improving child and family well-being through an integrated system.¹⁰

In 2006, Florida became the sixth state to engage in the Policy Matters project. More than 100 of Florida's Policy Matters stakeholders ranked governance, planning and systems alignment as three out of five top priorities to emerge from the process. The timing of these priorities was excellent, as Florida had just passed legislation creating a Florida Children's Cabinet, designed to bring together all of the agencies serving children to develop and implement a shared vision for improving child and family outcomes. Also passed was an amendment asking for an independent study by the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) on the issue of consolidating all early education programs into one entity.

OPPAGA's report, *The Governance Structure of Florida's Early Education Programs Presents Some Challenges* (June 2008) noted that the state does not have a single agency whose mission focuses exclusively on early education or whose mission encompasses the broad objectives of the state's early education programs. Further, the report said that "while the division of program responsibilities among three agencies has several strengths, it also has resulted in some instances of inconsistent program direction, insufficient coordination, and duplication."

Some systems work has been done since then. But Florida has not made appreciable changes that move the state closer to an early childhood system. And it is no closer to having an early childhood governance structure than it was in 2006.

⁸ National Scientific Council, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007

⁹ National Scientific Council, Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, 2007

¹⁰ Kagan & Rigby, 2003