



**Strengthening Early Childhood Governance in New
Hampshire: Approaches to Consider**

***Initial Report of the
Early Childhood Governance Task Force***

December 2018

FINAL DRAFT

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I. Introduction

If we want New Hampshire's future to be in good hands, we need to develop a generation who can lead our communities and grow our economy.

Scientists tell us that the best way to do this is to provide children with stable, responsive relationships and experiences in early childhood --conditions that literally build the architecture of children's brains. Ensuring we can achieve this throughout the state, for all children, means our system of childhood programs and supports has to be effectively governed.

Currently we have a number of early childhood focused public programs that support young children and their families, all working hard to meet families' needs, but which are not optimally coordinated.

Early childhood governance concerns the way state government organizes and locates authority and accountability for publicly funded programs and services for young children and families. An early childhood governance structure ideally would assign authority and accountability in an efficient manner to ensure purposeful oversight and would allow agencies to better manage resources, better manage data, and better develop, implement and monitor policies, programs and regulations. An effective early childhood governance structure would also allocate accountability for finances, support and quality of workforce, program quality, and individual child or student outcomes.¹ Such governance would create a system that supports children and families to ensure that all of New Hampshire's families have equal access to developmental opportunities for their children.

This report is focused primarily on governance at the state administrative level since that was the focus of the Early Childhood Governance Task Force. The idea was that by focusing on the highest level, administrators could create changes in infrastructure and processes which could improve collaboration and coordination in the early childhood system to benefit young children and their families. It should be noted that the Task Force felt that further work must be done to extend governance coordination to every level of the early childhood system, including and especially the local/program level, where families interact directly with programs and services.

Currently in New Hampshire, early childhood programs are housed within numerous different governmental divisions across two different departments. Like many states, New Hampshire has primarily used federal funding streams as an operational vehicle for structuring programs. However, some recent changes have been made to emphasize prevention to intervention continuums within some of the divisions at the Department of Health and Human Services. At present there is still a lack of formal coordination between early childhood programs which can make collaboration to benefit young children and families more difficult. Many other states were similarly diffusely organized and some chose to address this early childhood fragmentation through changing their approach to governance of early childhood programs.

In New Hampshire, the current early childhood structure may cause discontinuous, uncoordinated delivery of programs and often creates a complex maze for families to navigate. As a result, child/family access to needed programs is compromised. Early childhood programs are often isolated from one another; administration is handled separately; and data is collected separately and kept and reported in different ways and for different purposes. While efforts are made to collaborate and share data, the structure of government programs relative to one another makes those efforts difficult. Program administrators often do not have information about other programs that families might benefit from, do not know whether families might be eligible for other services or indeed whether families are receiving

¹ Build Initiative, "A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System"

other services. This makes duplication and inefficiency possible and makes it difficult to get a full picture of service gaps.

New Hampshire's Children

- 74,749 children birth through age 9. ²
- 521,373 households; 138,046 with children. ³
- 29% of children under 8 years old live in families below 200% of the Federal Poverty Line (FPL).⁴ (200% of FPL for a family of two adults and two children is \$48,072).
- Young children, especially those living in poverty, gain short and long term from effective, high quality early childhood programs, and society reaps economic development and other benefits as well.

The impact of the current structure on families is that they often are not aware of, can't apply for, or don't receive services that might benefit their young children. The impact on young children is often an inability to identify and address developmental and health issues early in life – which increases the risk of future problems in learning and health. Children are missing out on early opportunities that have a lifetime of consequences for them. When we know what to do early in life to keep children on a course of healthy development – improving their chances of long term health and well-being – failing to do so is not only costly for those children, but for our communities and our future.

At the time of the writing of this report both DHHS and DOE have reorganized some of their services more broadly to more fully embrace a prevention and early intervention focus. They have an interest in advancing integration that can ultimately contribute to eased access and coordination at the community level. The reorganization work, however, did not have a primary focus on addressing early childhood needs and issues which is the focus of the Task Force that prepared this report. At DHHS, critical work is being done across programs to address child safety and well-being. The re-organization work is an important start but both agencies have acknowledged that the work of the Task Force, with its deep dive focus solely on early childhood, is important to the road ahead.

II. Spark NH Early Childhood Governance Task Force

In January 2018, the Endowment for Health awarded a grant to Spark NH to support a process for creating recommendations to improve early childhood governance in New Hampshire. Spark NH's role is to facilitate coordination among early childhood programs; it does not have the authority to make policy, programmatic or financing reforms. Spark NH serves in an advisory capacity and has no authority over government.

In February 2018, Spark NH invited leaders in the early childhood system – both those working in government and early childhood advocates-- to join an Early Childhood Governance Task Force. See

² U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Table S0101 Age and Sex.

³ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 5-year estimates Table S1101: Households and Families

⁴ Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, and 2012 through 2016 American Community Survey. Accessed at [Kids Count Data Center](#).

Appendix 1 for a list of task force members. This group held 5 meetings between February and July 2018 with the goal of making recommendations to policymakers for an effective early childhood governance structure for New Hampshire.

At these meetings, the Task Force was aided by Harriet Dichter, an expert in early childhood governance, who is part of the Impact Project, an intensive consulting service that New Hampshire participates in, offered by the State Capacity Building Center of the Administration for Children and Families. The group reviewed the current state of early childhood governance and evaluated its strengths and weaknesses, and how or whether governance contributed to its vision and priorities for young children and their families. The Task Force learned about governance in other states. The Task Force decided to create and present some New Hampshire specific models for improved early childhood governance for consideration. The models are a Coordination/ Teaming Approach, a Consolidation Approach and a Single Entity Approach. Each approach is explained in Section VI below.

III. Task Force Analysis of New Hampshire's Early Childhood Programs and Services

For purposes of the work to improve governance, the Task Force focused on programs/services for expectant parents and children from birth through grade three. This is the period that science tells us is critical in child development. The Task Force looked at programs and services administered by state government for young children and families spanning the domains of health, early learning and family support.⁵

As referenced above, these programs are spread out across DHHS and DOE in numerous divisions, bureaus, and sections. Appendix 2 shows where programs in the state that touch young children are currently located in New Hampshire government. It includes all early childhood related programs at DHHS and DOE and separately those that are proposed to be included in re-design models. While governance ideally includes all programs that touch young children and their families, many of these span well beyond the period of early childhood. Programs that affect other ages as well do not lend themselves well to being moved in consolidation or single entity governance approaches. Examples of such programs include Medicaid, TANF, SNAP, etc. While not directly included in the design models, these type of programs should be included when considering best practices for coordinated service delivery.

The Early Childhood Governance Task Force examined New Hampshire's current early childhood system. Participants recognized that most state government professionals in our early childhood system know each other and want to work together to make programs work better for young children and

⁵ These included Family Centered Early Supports and Services (Part C), Special Medical Services, Partners in Health, Child Care Scholarship, Head Start Collaboration, Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV), Family planning, Birth Conditions, Child Health, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, Injury Prevention, Newborn Screening, Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring (PRAMS), Prenatal Services, Sudden Infant Death Syndrome Program, Women Infants and Children Food and Nutrition Service, Children's Behavioral Health Services, Child Care Licensing, Preschool Special Education (Part B 619), and public preschools. We also included programs that are critical to the well-being of young children whose program scope spans beyond the ages we identified in our definition of early childhood. These include Medicaid, Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or Food Stamps), Child Protection, Comprehensive Family Support (short term home visiting), Kindergarten – Grade 3 public schools, Free and Reduced Lunch, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.

families. It was acknowledged that these connections depend on current relationships and not on any formal structure for coordination.

Some task force members expressed concern that currently early childhood programs and services are spread across multiple departments, divisions and bureaus and that therefore the system is fragmented. This extends to the local level. Though the task force did not have time to address plans for changes at the local level, participants felt that work would need to be done at all levels of the system to make the delivery of early childhood programs work better for young children and their families.

From a family perspective, a fragmented system may mean that families participating in one program or service are not aware of other services for which they might be eligible, transitions may be difficult as due to lack of coordination across programs. Programs may have different eligibility requirements and may be physically spread out so that families may need to go through many doors and provide the same information over and over again to access services for which they may be eligible. Data is also fragmented such that the state is sometimes unable to tell if children and families who are eligible for services are receiving them or whether the same families are in multiple programs.

Task Force members spoke about the difficulties the current early childhood system poses for the workforce of providers of early childhood programs and services across health, early learning and family support. Because the workforce is siloed by program, professional development requirements and opportunities as well as the evaluation and maintenance of quality are difficult to coordinate. Additionally, the workforce could be better supported to cross train and learn about other programs so they can better help young children and families access other programs which might help them to succeed.

Task Force members noted that children live in families, and that the needs of young children should be closely connected to the broader array of family supports and services (i.e. cash assistance, housing, SNAP, health care, etc.). However, with considerable fragmentation in early childhood, this makes building connections with those programs all the more difficult. Early childhood programs can ensure children get and stay on the right developmental course, and data shows that when this happens the child outcomes are better, and the return on investment for government is very strong. Without coordination, however, it is easy for children and families to get lost in the maze of government programs, to fall through the cracks and for smaller developmental concerns to grow into more costly societal burdens. Appendix 3 illustrates this point by showing a family confused by which program might help their child, whether they are eligible for it and how to apply.

IV. Governance Approaches from Other States⁶

States are examining early childhood governance—which is defined as how the state addresses decision-making authority and accountability—as part of ongoing early childhood reform efforts aimed at a myriad

⁶ Sources that helped to inform this section include: H. Dichter, *State Systems Building Through Governance* (2015) in *Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families*, a BUILD E-Book, retrieved from <http://www.buildinitiative.org/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/E-BookChapter1StateSystemsBuildingThroughGovernance.pdf>; Gaines, E., Allen, O., Patel, N., Logan, N. (2017, December). *2017 State Policy Survey: Child and Youth Policy Coordinating Bodies in the U.S.* Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment, retrieved from http://forumfyi.org/files/ccn_survey_report_2017.pdf; E. Regensteinst and K. Lipper for the BUILD Initiative, *A Framework for Choosing a State-Level Early Childhood Governance System* (N.D.) retrieved from <http://www.buildinitiative.org/WhatsNew/ViewArticle/tabid/96/ArticleId/628/A-Framework-for-Choosing-a-State-Level-Early-Childhood-Governance-System.aspx>; State Capacity Building Center, *State Early Childhood Systems: Examining Program Integration* (2017) retrieved from <https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/governingstateearlychildhoodsystemsrevisedcoded.pdf>

of programs for young children and their families. Central to those states that have opted to examine and make changes in their governance approach is a desire to assure better coordination, if not integration, across these programs, as well as a high-quality, accessible, adequately funded, cost-effective system and services.

More specifically, states see that changes in their early childhood governance may assist them in addressing problems and advancing systemic solutions. Early childhood governance can be part of the solution to challenging problems that can mar the benefits of early childhood programming for children and families and can create over-burdened public sectors approaches that do not adequately leverage public expenditures. Table 1 provides a summary of issues that lead states to decide to prioritize governance in early childhood.

Table 1. Why States Undertake Early Childhood Governance Reform

Fragmentation	Addressing dispersed authority and accountability for key early childhood services. States find that with the authority and accountability for early childhood typically scattered across multiple state agencies and with different offices/bureaus/divisions within these agencies that fragmentation occurs at the state, program and family level.
Coordination	Connecting the various parts of the EC system. In their effort to address fragmentation, states set a goal of improved coordination.
Alignment	Cohering the system-wide elements such as quality standards, measurement, eligibility, and data. In their effort to address fragmentation (see above), states set a goal of alignment.
Integration	Merging previously distinct areas into one (i.e. a step beyond alignment). In their effort to address fragmentation (see above), states set a goal of integration and seek new ways to merge and integrate their work.
Sustainability	Allowing the EC system to sustain itself over political and administrative changes. States find that their early childhood services and systems are too fragile to withstand political and administrative changes, and seek governance changes to foster sustainability.
Efficiency	Improving allocation decisions, reducing duplications of effort, and helping to realize return on investment. States find that their current scattered, diffuse oversight for early childhood service and systems impairs core principles around sound government stewardship.
Accountability	Assuring public accountability in areas such as quality, availability, accessibility, and outcomes. States find gaps in their accountability approaches with inconsistent approaches, for example, and use governance as a way to improve accountability.
Quality	Promoting consistent quality across the full continuum of early childhood services. States find that quality across their early childhood services is not consistent, and that their quality standards and expectations may not conform to the available evidence best, and use governance to focus on more consistent quality across the diversity of early childhood programming.
Equity	Ameliorating inequities in the distribution, access, use and outcomes of services.

As states analyze the best path forward in early childhood governance, they typically address at least three critical aspects of governance-- form; durability; and functions- in evaluating improvements to state early childhood governance.

- Form refers to the structure of the administrative entity or entities that oversee the programs and services that constitute the early childhood system.
- Durability is the dimension of governance that allows it to be sustained over time and across political and economic shifts.
- Function refers to the actions that are taken by the administrative entity (e.g., fund allocation, accountability, collaboration, planning, regulation, outreach and engagement of stakeholders, family engagement, quality improvement, standard setting, implementation support, etc.).

At the same time, states are also aware that successful early childhood governance requires adequate resources, authority and accountability; legitimacy in the eyes of stakeholders; and sufficient capacity, expertise and capability to do the work.

Early childhood governance in the states typically fits into one of three models. The first—and most prevalent model—is one of **fragmentation**. Different state agencies, along with multiple offices within these agencies, have siloed responsibility. This best describes New Hampshire today.

Coordination. A second model -- known as coordinated governance-- continues the concept of dispersed authority and accountability throughout one or more state agencies, and typically with multiple offices in these agencies. Under the coordination model, authority and accountability remains within each of these distinct units and programs. However, there is an effort to create a coordination mechanism. These coordination mechanisms can take different forms and have different functions. Examples of coordination include Children’s Cabinets, a governor’s early childhood office, or one agency designated as the coordinator across peer agencies. Specific examples include:

- Children’s Cabinet
 - Delaware has a Children’s Cabinet specifically for early childhood that is authorized by state law. The purpose of this group, which is comprised of the heads of six agencies— Education; Health and Social Services; Children, Youth and Their Families; Management and Budget; and Controller General;-- along with the Chair of the Early Childhood council (ex officio) is to establish a comprehensive and coordinated early childhood system. The group’s role is to promote interagency collaboration in the delivery of early childhood services to young children and their families including young children with disabilities, to support and coordinate the implementation of the recommendations of the State early childhood plan (which is a shared responsibility of the state’s early learning council). Staffing of the group is provided through specific staff and each of the three main agencies are required to pay these expenses. Source: <https://www.doe.k12.de.us/cms/lib/DE01922744/Centricity/Domain/366/IRMC%202017%20Annual%20Report%20Final%20Approved%2041218.pdf>
- Governor’s Early Childhood Office
 - In Illinois, the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (OECD) leads the state's initiatives to create an integrated system of quality, early learning and development programs to help give all Illinois children a strong educational foundation before they begin kindergarten. Key activities of this office include management of the Early Learning Council; oversight for the QRIS and home visiting; coordination and collaboration with state agencies focused on children and families (such as Illinois Department of Human Services, Illinois State Board of Education) to address common issues; and leadership for priority issues and competitive grants.
- One Agency as Lead
 - Oregon has gone a different route, designating its Early Learning Division as its system leader for all of early childhood. This Division is responsible for planning and implementation of the state’s early learning programs but the early childhood system is

conceived of more broadly and includes services offered through other state agencies, such as health and social services.

A recent survey of 40 children's coordinating bodies from 32 states reveals a total of 12 children's cabinets (that also included Early Childhood Advisory Councils) (16), Interagency Councils and Commissions on issues from birth to adulthood (8), Interagency Councils and Commissions focused on older youth (3) and P-20 Councils (1). A quarter of the respondents reported two or more coordinating bodies. The report from the survey notes the important role of staffing, "Across these coordinating bodies, those that report staffing of six or more staff are better positioned to support a broader scope of work than policy alignment and coordination. They are sometimes able to incubate collaborative initiatives and programs that can eventually be housed in a member agency."⁷

As with all forms of governance, the coordination approach has both assets and challenges. Assets of the coordination approach include:

- **Placing a high value** on expertise associated with each of the distinct programs and the offices and organizational structures that support them
- **Not involving structural reorganization**
- **Facilitating interagency collaboration and cooperation**, particularly when oversight is a higher level coordinating office. This may facilitate interagency collaboration and cooperation, leading to a focused mission, improved awareness of early childhood, and improved inter-agency communication and problem-solving

At the same time, there are commonly acknowledged challenges for this approach although the model can be developed to anticipate and overcome these common challenges. Common challenges include:

- **Time and effort** involved in making decisions and creating common priorities that are fully-owned by all of the impacted people and organizations.
- **Achieving trust** across the various organizations that are participating in the model.
- **Authority on cross-cutting issues.** Coordination involves working on cross-cutting issues, and it may be difficult to tell who has authority to make decisions and move the work forward.
- **Matching the various agency and program missions.** The participating "host" agencies may have different overall missions that may make it difficult to harmonize the programs and maximize impact for children and families, and achieve unified data collection and other state-level coordination that can improve efficiency and impact. For example, education versus supporting workforce versus supporting family versus comprehensive child development.
- **Prioritizing budgetary resources may be challenging across multiple organizations and lines of authority.** Leaders requesting budgetary resources may have competing priorities and may not highly value early childhood requests.
- **Stakeholder mobilization may be uneven**, and focus on some but not all programs. Likewise, stakeholders may find the accountability diffuse, and may need additional sophistication to identify who is in charge
- **Aligning programs and achieving common definitions and actions** for key issues such as quality and accessibility outcomes may be difficult.
- **Assigning accountability may be difficult.**

⁷ Gaines, E., Allen, O., Patel, N., Logan, N. (2017, December). 2017 State Policy Survey: Child and Youth Policy Coordinating Bodies in the U.S. Washington, D.C.: The Forum for Youth Investment, retrieved from http://forumfyi.org/files/ccn_survey_report_2017.pdf

- **Having a dependable champion in the government for the work. Depending, on who the lead coordination entity is,** may be impacted by the individual in the leadership roles, so that the prioritization for coordination may rise and fall depending on the particular leaders.
- **Moving from vision to policy and program implementation may be difficult.**
- **Staffing capacity to work together may be limited.** State agencies may find it difficult to justify assigning staff to work on these issues, or may believe that the day to day press of the work makes working together “optional” rather than ‘essential.’”

Consolidation. A third model—consolidated governance--places the authority and accountability in one executive branch agency. There are variations on this model that includes consolidating all of the early childhood programs into an existing agency versus creating a new, independent agency. Specific examples include:

- Consolidation into an existing state agency, either the state education agency or a human services agency
 - Maryland provides an example within the early learning aspects of early childhood, having created an office that brings together all child care and pre-k programs into the state education agency in an early childhood office.
 - Arkansas unifies its early learning programs, including child care and pre-k, through its human services agency.
- Creation of a new independent agency is another approach that is used to achieve consolidation.
 - Georgia has a stand-alone agency, the Department of Early Care and Learning, that brings together all of child care, state pre-k, and federal nutrition programs for young children.
 - Connecticut’s early childhood agency includes child care, early intervention, home visiting, and family support services.

Some of the positives associated with this approach:

- **Easier to achieve goals** of coordination, alignment, integration and accountability if programs are housed under one roof, with one leader accountable.
- **Reduces duplication.**
- **Reporting structure make it easier** to achieve a unified vision, create unified performance goals and metrics.
- **Creates higher level EC positions within state government,** promoting EC as a priority from a functional viewpoint
- **Provides focal point for stakeholder engagement** and support.
- May remove staff time spent on “turf” issues as staff are all part of one unit
- **Facilitates the relationship of policy and implementation** across all areas within the consolidation

Common challenges in implementing a consolidation approach are noted below. As with a coordination approach, these can be minimized if addressed during the planning stage.

- **If the host agency** does not embrace the mission, may still lack effectiveness.
- **Start-up, one-time costs** may be needed to plan for and successfully implement a consolidated structure.
- **Start-up timeline may be rather lengthy** due to the need to unravel “what is.”
- **EC funds may be seen as more broadly available** to all of the host agency and may not lead to increased resources.
- **May take staff away from building broader connections** and linkages to areas outside of early childhood, especially during the start-up phase.

- **Level of respect, influence and capacity of the host agency** may impact effectiveness.
- **Having a dependable champion** in the government for the work. Depending on who the lead coordination entity is, may be impacted by the individual in the leadership roles, so that the prioritization for coordination may rise and fall depending on the particular leaders.

As states grapple with decisions about maintaining the status quo in their approach to governance, they find that defining the problem that they are trying to solve is critical. For example, if the state's goal is coordination, this may take less authority than a state that is focused on accomplishing alignment or integration at the state, regional and local level. And states also devise solutions that are unique to their context. For example, Pennsylvania has a one-of-a-kind twist on consolidation through an early childhood office jointly sponsored by the Education and Human Services agencies that is found on each organization chart, draws money from both agencies, and brings together staff and programs—in one physical location—from both agencies with one leader jointly appointed across the two agencies to lead the effort. This office has one of the broadest scopes and mandates, bringing together all of child care, pre-k, home visiting, family support, early intervention, and preschool special education, and its unique structure seeks to leverage financial resources in full from both of its sponsoring agencies. Likewise, Oregon created a Division of Early Learning, which brings together most early learning programs, but also charged the head of the division as the state's early childhood systems leader in order to get a fuller system of early childhood services in place. To achieve a greater focus and inclusion of the efforts outside the early learning division, a Children's Cabinet was initiated by the division to ensure all of the early childhood programs are meaningfully included in the work. This approach combines elements of consolidation with coordination.

States vary in the scope of services covered by their governance approach. For the consolidated models, the scope typically includes early learning (i.e. child care licensing, child care assistance, child care quality (Quality Rating and Improvement System, professional development, pre-k, state Head Start) and often home visiting. Early intervention (Part C) for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities may be included as may preschool special education (Part B). Connecticut, which is one of the newest of the offices (created in 2013), includes all of early learning, home visiting and Part C. Part B is led by the state education agency.

For states pursuing a coordination approach, some have opted to have an early learning focus, such as the Illinois governor's early childhood office which focuses on home visiting and quality early learning. Illinois brings program leadership to certain efforts, such as home visiting, that are implemented by another state agency, and also serves as the staff for the state's early learning council. The most recent state survey of coordinating bodies for children (of all ages, including early childhood) shows that the majority focus on academic, social, emotional and behavioral well-being of children. It should be noted, however, that the survey includes all coordinating bodies for children and while it includes early childhood coordination, it is not limited to early childhood. The state survey finds that coordinating bodies make an effort to include data gathering and analysis as part of their function. Across all children's coordinating bodies, 70% collect data on child and youth indicators, more than 60% collect performance measure data, and 40% collect fiscal data.

Phase-in is another issue that states face as they undertake changes in governance. Thoughtful planning and preparation for a change in governance is essential. And states find that phasing in the changes may be helpful. States have phased in their governance efforts, especially around the inclusion of programs. Phase-in appears to be particularly helpful for those undertaking consolidated governance as a way of facilitating an orderly, planful change. For example, Pennsylvania first brought together the following programs that were housed in its human services agency and created a high level office of child development that included all child care functions (child care assistance, quality, licensing) and early intervention (Part C). It then created the two-departmental unified office (spanning its human service and

education agencies) that ultimately included pre-k, kindergarten, and preschool special education Part B, and also brought in home visiting from another agency. In this second phase of the work, when programs were brought together across three state agencies, a timeline guided the work and it took six months to systematically bring in all of the programs.

States that decided that their early childhood vision and effectiveness will be enhanced by including a focus on early childhood governance shows that there is no single pathway for change. States spend time evaluating their own context to determine what changes will best match their vision, resource availability, policy goals, and, in the best judgment of those working on governance, will provide the greatest responsiveness to children and families, be sustained over time, and allow for public accountability.

V. Guiding Principles That We Want Embodied in a Well-Coordinated Early Childhood System

The Early Childhood Governance Task Force identified a vision for New Hampshire:

All young children and families are healthy, learning and thriving now and in the future; families have access to the supports and services they need for optimal development, including a multi-tiered system of support and targeted as well as universal services.

As the group considered whether governance does or does not play a role in achieving this vision, it concluded that New Hampshire's governance approach is integral to the achievement of this vision. The Task Force identified and adopted these principles for improvements in New Hampshire governance.

1. **Makes the importance of early childhood visible:** Ensures that early childhood programs do not get lost in a maze of other government programs so that their importance is acknowledged and they garner sufficient resources and support so young children get the support they need to be healthy, learning and thriving.
2. **Leadership:** Provides high level, focused, adaptive leadership.
3. **Problem Solves:** Identifies problems and implements solutions that overcome state and federal barriers in program design, implementation, financing and regulation.
4. **Prioritizes Quality and Equity:** Drives all its work in support of quality and equity.
5. **Responds to Needs of Stakeholders:** Incorporates and is responsive to family, provider and other stakeholder involvement.
6. **Finds Resources:** Proactively finds and leverages all resources to meet the needs of children and families, and assures capacity and sustainability at all levels—governmental, infrastructure and service providers.
7. **Serves All Children and Families:** Promotes easily accessible, equitable, quality services for families, valuing easy understanding of what's available, easy enrollment in services, and support for transition between and among services. Every door is the right door to access needed services.
8. **Collects and Reports Data:** Supports complete data collection and data sharing across programs. Longitudinal data—including outcomes for children—is collected and distributed. Data informs

ongoing quality improvement, as well as systems and program planning and helps to realize the early childhood principles.

9. **Provides Accountability and Measurement:** Accountability and measurement includes examining outcomes for children, individual programs and services and the early childhood system as a whole.

VI. Possible Models for Early Childhood Governance in New Hampshire

This section lays out three possible models that the Task Force developed. Each of these three models would help advance the Task Force's principles, but each brings with it unique characteristics. The three models—1) coordination of early childhood across the NH Departments of Health and Human Services and Education, 2) consolidation of early childhood within the NH Department of Health and Human Services and also within the Department of education, and 3) developing a new entity for early childhood—are discussed below.

A. Coordination of Early Childhood Across the NH Departments of Health and Human Services and Education

1. How Would this Model Work?

This model would leave intact all the early childhood programs and services within DHHS and those early childhood programs currently within the DOE. An Executive Order would initially be created to establish the framework and purpose of collaboration, and after the first phase of the model is implemented, legislation would be necessary in the next phase, as part of the sustainability of the effort. The coordination would take place both across these two agencies, as well as within the agencies, and would also be supported by the governor's office. At the interagency level, there would be a group consisting of key deputies and key managers, and it would also include the governor's office. Within both DHHS and DOE, each would constitute intra-agency teams bringing together managers, other relevant staff, and key deputies. These various teams would need to encompass high level decisional staff, subject matter experts, as well as those responsible for data, finance and other infrastructure functions.

At the highest level, the interagency coordination team would need to identify its key priorities and outcomes, and identify appropriate benchmarks and timelines for progress. It is expected that these key priorities would reflect the guiding principles and include, for example, a focus on the development and sharing of data as well as work to more meaningfully provide services to families who could benefit from more than one early childhood service. The interagency team would then engage additional inter-agency teams, at a lower level, to come together to create the solutions. Intra-agency teams would also be supported in this model, working on agency-level priorities that are connected to the inter-agency, state level priorities and mission. This intra-agency team work, like the inter-agency work, would be subject to timelines for benchmarks and progress.

Programs that could be included at DHHS include

- Family Planning, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS
- Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS
- Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS
- Women, Infants and Children Food and Nutrition Service, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS

- Comprehensive Family Support Services, Division of Children, Youth and Families, DHHS
- Children’s Mental Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health, DHHS
- Family Centered Early Supports and Services, Division of Long Term Supports and Services, DHHS
- Child Care Licensing, Division of Human Resource Management, DHHS
- Child Care Scholarship, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS
- Child Care Quality, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS
- Head Start Collaboration, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS

Programs that could be included at DOE include:

- Preschool Special Education, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Migrant Education, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Other public preschool, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Child and Adult Care Food Program, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Programs associated with the Bureau of Student Wellness, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Title I, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Homeless Children, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Higher Education, Division of Educator Support and Higher Education, DOE
- Title II, Division of Educator Support and Higher Education, DOE
- Data, Division of Education and Analytic Resources, DOE

2. Key Actions: What Would Enable these Changes?

Executive Order. The coordination approach, to be accomplished through multiple levels of “teaming” across the two states agencies, and within each state agency, would be initially authorized through the issuance of an executive order. The executive order is critical as a way to formalize the expectations and accountability, and would be expected to identify the purpose of the coordination, and not just the process, and to specify the specific goals and outcomes that the coordination is intended to accomplish. The executive order would be expected to specify work consistent with the guiding principles, which importantly include a focus on the development and sharing of data within and across departments (consistent with confidentiality and privacy) as well as improved mechanisms to improve based on the experiences of families with young children.

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) – MOUs would also need to be developed to guide operationalizing of the executive order within and among departments, divisions, bureaus and programs.

Planning for Staffing, Resources and Accountability. Along with the executive order, advance planning is needed to ensure effective coordination across the two agencies, as well as within each agency. This would include amending job descriptions to ensure that staff understand that the coordination responsibilities are not “add-ons” that are only to be addressed when all other work is done. In addition, time studies may be needed to determine whether the staffing responsibilities involved in this complex coordination work can be accomplished within the current staffing complements, whether additional staff may be needed, or whether some current functions may be reduced in order to accommodate the staffing demand for the work. As part of the start-up support, professional development/training on how to implement coordination through this multi-layered process may be needed, and the identification of project managers to help the various groups stay focused and on track may also be needed. Specific charters are also envisioned to assure clarity and accountability for the work to be accomplished. Phase in would be anticipated with clear, early deliverables and outcomes envisioned to help test whether the approach can work, and to build confidence in coordination as an

accountable, action oriented solution. For all of this work, a consistent framework and action is needed across all participating agencies, as reflected in the executive order and charters (or other documents) to help assure effective implementation. This would apply not only to the infrastructure for the work but also to the use of common language.

Funding. As part of the coordination work, additional work will be necessary at the funding level. For example, project management staff that are likely to be needed across the two agencies should be collectively funded. In addition, the coordination is likely to include an examination of funding streams and how they are used, and thus the work should explicitly address financing, including in the executive order and various charters.

Enhanced Role for Spark NH. To address critical questions of sustainability and accountability, other actions are needed to enable these changes. Coordination in the public sector could be complemented through an enhanced role for Spark NH by reassessing its Executive Order to assure that it can advise the teams formed in the public sector, and to strengthen its high level influential leaders both inside and outside government.

Legislative Engagement. To ensure that the coordination is as successful as possible, the legislature could be brought in from the very beginning, either by creating an oversight committee for this work, adding more legislators to Spark NH, or adding oversight through an existing legislative committee.

Integral Role of Governor and His Staff. The governor's office should also be involved in the coordination model, and additional work will need to be done to identify and specify its role in the executive order. The initial recommendation is that the inter-agency high level team be convened by a trio consisting of the governor's office and a lead from each agency at the level of the commissioner or deputy commissioner's office. Currently, however, the governor's office does not have a single lead person who works both with DHHS and DOE, and thus work is needed to adjust the structure in the governor's office to enable this to occur.

Authorizing Legislation. It is envisioned that this change could be institutionalized through legislation, after the initial phase-in is concluded.

3. Considerations

There are many potential challenges to a successful coordination approach. These have informed the actions noted above to support a strong early approach to planning, phase-in, staffing and implementation.

This approach requires strong ongoing buy-in, and time, from many players functioning at many different levels within the two state agencies so that the process is pro-active and yields meaningful results. The leadership and staffing models could produce positive results, but require significant distribution and delegation of leadership. At the same time, two key facets of governance—authority and accountability—are quite diffuse. In short, for this model to succeed, many individuals will need to prioritize the approach, and sufficient capacity is necessary within both agencies for employees through each organization to add this to their existing work. Clarity will be needed about decision-making, and defining clear, accountable outcomes for work on a regular basis will be critical.

4. Relationship to Guiding Principles

- a. **Makes the Importance of Early Childhood Visible:** This approach could build the visibility of the early childhood system and services by advancing a common agenda and agreed upon priorities and outcomes for young children. High level leadership from the executive branch is needed to make this successful and would allow for greater attention to the needs of young

children. At the same time, unless care is taken in the planning and execution of this approach, it could devolve into a process that lacks sufficient authority and accountability to advance a priority on the needs of New Hampshire's young children.

- b. **Leadership:** this approach requires multiple leaders at all levels of government through both agencies to successfully drive the work. It must provide specifically what collaboration looks like at every level, and provide support for this to occur on a routine basis. Leaders will need to be available to plan and meet on a regular basis, and to include the necessary program level leaders and to authorize them to make decisions, or to provide a timely decisional process to support the work. The model distributes and diffuses leadership, which can help stimulate new and innovative thinking, but also may require additional accountability mechanisms to ensure and measure progress.
- c. **Problem Solving:** This approach leverages deep expertise across the various parts of the organizations to try and identify barriers and gaps, and then applies this expertise in a cross-agency and intra-agency manner to come up with new solutions. It has the advantage of bringing together large numbers of people who, through coordination, would share information and would be supported through a mandated need (via executive order initially and later through legislation) to talk and to act together. This approach also maintains the contextualizing of problems and solutions for young children and their families within the broader child and family serving systems.
- d. **Prioritizes Quality and Equity:** Teams would need to work to negotiate shared indicators and outcomes, develop common vocabulary, shared definitions of and joint understanding of both equity and quality. This approach allows each program to develop its own diverse workforce, and it could allow the varying public agencies to work more cooperatively together to engage with communities where there is a lack of available quality programs or where inequities exist. However, to ensure this model of coordination achieves outcomes that improve quality and equity we must create mechanisms that ensure accountability for those outcomes.
- e. **Responds to Needs of Stakeholders:** Through coordination, each participating program would be able to share its strategies around stakeholder responsiveness and engagement, and as part of its success, emphasis would need to be placed on authentic family engagement in providing feedback on and helping to develop state policies, and to contribute to on the ground solutions that meet their expectations for access and for quality. As teams work cooperatively to implement new strategies, there is an excellent opportunity for learning best practices from one another and more fully incorporating them throughout the state structure. At the same time, as the approach is diffuse, unless there is a specific outcome and accountability focus point created around family and stakeholder engagement, there could be good learning that does not result in uniform application and progress throughout the entire system.
- f. **Finds Resources:** In this model, teams would ideally work in a manner that would limit or remove "turf" issues. Addressing these issues can make it easier to share resources or to develop new resources for areas identified as the highest priority that relate to the specific outcomes and priorities that would emerge from the executive order and the leaders from the two state agencies and the governor's office who will drive the process.
- g. **Serves All Children and Families:** The different programs have different focus points and priorities, and this approach could allow for a better understanding amongst the state staff of various program targets, as well as discussion and potential action about how to successfully reach all children and families. The degree of focus on this principle will depend on the

executive order and its framing, as well as the leaders from the two state agencies and the governor's office who will drive the process. Additionally, while there are some programs that are distinct in an age-focus on early childhood, there are other programs that include early childhood services along with services to children of other ages. This particular model is particularly adaptive to this mix of early childhood only programs and programs that include but are not limited to serving this age cohort.

- h. **Collects and Uses Data:** To support this model, legal expertise is needed to negotiate appropriate releases to allow data sharing routinely and easily. The model could potentially facilitate greater cross-agency planning and data-sharing work, such as the creation of a unique identifier at birth that would be used in both agencies, creation of longitudinal and outcomes studies, etc. A data warehouse to allow for de-identification and disaggregation could be built with input from each program. And it is possible with the two agencies engaged, that it would make it simpler to use data for continuous quality improvement. At the same time, the model does not specify how new resources would be raised or secured for work, and as with other principles, the specification of progress and prioritization in this area depend not only on the executive order but also the work of the two agency leads along with the governor's office.
- i. **Provides Accountability and Measurement:** Staff across programs would need to devote time to understanding existing accountability and measurement approaches, negotiate what could be done in common, and identify and secure the resources to address these commonalities. As with the other principles, the executive order and the leadership would drive the extent of the work in this area.

5. Lessons Learned from Other States

States that participated in the Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge implemented similar cross-agency models. They found that when there was clear expectation and accountability that the coordination could be successful. These states also reported that when the immediate pressure from the Challenge dissipated that the coordination mechanism itself was much harder to sustain. Participation in meetings dropped, and it became harder to make change. This suggests that leadership and a meaningful strategy to remain focused on outcomes and deliverables is necessary for this model to be successful.

In addition, from the work done on children's coordination strategies, such as children's cabinets, staffing and adequate resources are critical to success. Dedicated and focused staffing is reported as a meaningful asset in advancing the work in coordination strategies.

B. Consolidation of Early Childhood Within Each of Two Agencies: the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education

1. How Would this Model Work?

This model would create two early childhood divisions, one in DHHS and one in DOE. This would mean that all the programs and services distributed within DHHS would become part of a single Division in DHHS and, separately, those early childhood programs currently within the DOE in a single division within DOE. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) would be drafted and signed to ensure that there would be ongoing coordination between the two divisions to guarantee the best transitions for children and families and the most effective provision of services. The MOA would further provide that once these consolidations have occurred, the agencies would collaborate on an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses to identify gaps in necessary services for young children and their families and whether these

could be improved by further restructuring. MOAs within each agency between the consolidated offices and other programs that significantly affect early childhood (at DHHS: Medicaid, Child Protection, Special Medical Services, for example; at DOE K-3 education, Free and Reduced Lunch, for example) would also be required to ensure that young children and families were accessing the services for which they were eligible and which would best affect child outcomes and head off later costs. Locating programs under one roof at each agency could improve their ability to coordinate, align, realize efficiencies and identify gaps.

At DHHS, the new office would operate from the principle that the foundations for good health and early childhood development begin prenatally and that when we intervene in early childhood to strengthen parent-child interactions, and make effective early childhood programs such as child care, Head Start, family resource centers and voluntary home visiting available throughout New Hampshire, we can positively affect the developmental trajectory and well-being of both young children and their families. We also know that when there is a focus on early learning, health and family support simultaneously within early childhood related programs that children and families do better. This approach could be linked to early childhood work in regions and at the local level and to the public health networks. A new name for the division would need to be decided such as the Division of Child Development and Child and Family Wellness.

Programs that could be included at DHHS include

- Family Planning, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS
- Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS
- Lead Poisoning Prevention Program, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS
- Women, Infants and Children Food and Nutrition Service, Division of Public Health Services, DHHS
- Comprehensive Family Support Services, Division of Children, Youth and Families, DHHS
- Children's Mental Health Services, Division of Behavioral Health, DHHS
- Family Centered Early Supports and Services, Division of Long Term Supports and Services, DHHS
- Child Care Licensing, Division of Human Resource Management, DHHS
- Child Care Scholarship, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS
- Child Care Quality, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS
- Head Start Collaboration, Division of Economic and Housing Stability, DHHS

Programs that could be included at DOE include:

- Preschool Special Education, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Migrant Education, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Other public preschool, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Child and Adult Care Food Program, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Programs associated with the Bureau of Student Wellness, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Title I, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Homeless Children, Division of Learner Support, DOE
- Higher Education, Division of Educator Support and Higher Education, DOE
- Title II, division of Educator Support and Higher Education, DOE
- Data, Division of Education and Analytic Resources, DOE

2. Key Actions: What Would Enable these Changes?

At each agency, a close analysis of the parameters of the funding streams for each program, legal and regulatory requirements, eligibility limits, ability of funding to be blended or braided with other funding and other barriers and facilitators to enabling programs to work together to optimize child and family well-being would need to be done. An understanding of how all programs can and cannot work together must be reached to determine how best to ensure that each program and combination of programs is brought to bear to ensure that all children and their families can access the services for which they are eligible and transition between them easily, in ways that encourage optimal success. This analysis may uncover the need for legislative or regulatory changes to enable necessary restructuring.

In order for this approach to succeed and sustain, legal changes should be made to ensure that each of these consolidated early childhood entities remains highly visible and that the importance across both agencies is emphasized, regardless of other political and administrative changes over time.

Further, an analysis would also need to be done to determine what barriers there are for families to access the services, what gaps there are in the type and number of programs and services available to optimize child and family health and well-being. This approach would identify efficiencies in administration and service delivery and would work to help prevent later crises and costs. This requires high level authority to restructure administration of programs within these parameters and the capacity to make changes to make the system work better for children and families.

Issues of coordination of IT and data systems would need to be addressed and adequate resources would need to be brought to bear to allow consolidation. Further, stakeholder engagement would be necessary to determine the best way to re-organize programs to meet family needs and close gaps in services.

This two-agency consolidation approach would be a first step toward analyzing functions, accountability, funding, law and regulation to determine how best to serve young children and families across the state.

Finally, it is recommended that executive order, and/or legislative or regulatory change be made to enable the consolidated office to be sustained over time and to ensure accountability.

3. Considerations

After participants in the consolidation subgroup discussed whether consolidation should be in one agency or the other the group decided to propose a model that included consolidation at each Department. It was acknowledged that this would present some difficulties as far as coordination of services but that an MOU would begin to address those issues. However, this approach would address the scattered services within each agency, and in addition, would allow the DOE to start to build its capacity to address early childhood. To date, DOE has had modest experience with early childhood. In order for coordination between the two departments to work best, sufficient resources would need to be devoted to ensure that administrators have the capacity to make coordination a reality. (This is also true for the coordination model described previously).

Even if consolidation of named early childhood related programs occurs within each agency, it was acknowledged that further coordination with programs that span beyond early childhood would be necessary to realize the vision that all children are healthy learning and thriving. For example, while it would be very difficult to separate out the early childhood parts of Medicaid to be included in a consolidation, Medicaid is a critical piece of the service array necessary to ensure child health. Thus,

coordination between the Division of Medicaid and the consolidated offices at DHHS and DOE would be indicated.

Both agencies would need to prioritize this coordination to ensure that it occurred. Consolidated offices would need to be given sufficient authority and capacity to enable significant re-organization of staff and service delivery to meet federal requirements while meeting the principles enumerated in Part V above. This is likely to require significant resources in the short term but could lead to greater accountability for child and family outcomes and should reduce duplication, increase efficiency, and reduce costs in the long term.

4. Relationship to Guiding Principles

a. **Makes the Importance of Early Childhood Visible:** Bringing together all of the programs that are related to early childhood in one office each at DHHS and DOE could acknowledge the importance of putting young children on a successful life course as early as possible as well as supporting their families in providing nurturing and stable environments. These programs are currently hard to discern within the diffuse organizational structure they currently inhabit, the consolidated offices could promote greater visibility for early childhood and will also underscore the programs' preventative approaches. Another way in which the two early childhood office approach assists with visibility relates to measurement of program effectiveness and child outcomes easier and therefore increase capacity to advocate for increased resources. In order for this to happen, the consolidated offices at both departments would need be vested with high level authority and be kept prominent relative to other divisions. These changes would also likely require an increase in resources at the outset to ensure that restructuring of programs occurs at every level of the system.

b. **Leadership:** This approach requires two effective leaders to be successful, one at each agency. Identifying leaders with the vision, policy, program, financing and data expertise, as well as change management knowledge may be challenging. This approach brings with it clear, identifiable leadership and organizational placement that would enable stakeholders to know where to turn inside of each agency to discuss issues of accountability, vision, etc.

c. **Problem Solving:** This approach brings together in each of the agency offices staff with a breadth and depth of knowledge of their particular programs, and can facilitate the identification of barriers and gaps without the constraint of differential expectations from leadership. Thinking about two offices, one in each agency, could also facilitate the necessary coordination and collaboration across the two agencies. For example, cross staff training as a way to improve service quality, could occur more easily with only two parts of each primary agency involved.

d. **Prioritizes Quality and Equity:** Consolidation could allow for better accountability and measurement of outcomes relative to disparities, quality, and equity. Each office would be responsible for this work within its agency, and would be well positioned to assure a coherent approach within each agency. Harmonizing these across agencies would require the development of a common vocabulary and shared definitions of and joint understanding of both quality and equity.

e. **Responds to Needs of Stakeholders:** Consolidation could allow for structures to be built for family engagement and feedback across health, early learning and family support programs within DHHS and likewise, within the early education work of DOE. Since these structures do not currently exist, resources would need to be devoted to ensure authentic family engagement. Additionally, accountability mechanisms would need to be implemented to ensure that family engagement is implemented at every

level of the system to drive continuous quality improvement. This approach provides a targeted way to truly include and respond to stakeholders within DHHS and DOE, and permits high level coordination across the two organizations.

f. **Finds Resources:** In this model, by bringing together the key early childhood programs within each agency, the leaders and staff are well positioned to share resources, information and strategies to maximize all available resources for the work, and to make solid proposals that relate to the specific outcomes and priorities that would emerge from the creation of these offices. Consolidation of programs into each office could be expected to reduce “turf” battles and prioritize child and family needs. As discussed above, these will not occur without the application of additional resources.

g. **Serves All Children and Families:** Consolidation brings with it several opportunities in this area. With all the programs relevant to each agency in one place, identifying who is currently being served and where the service gaps are, becomes easier with the staff and programming all in one place. This would allow a clearer ability to show unmet needs of families and make the case to meet them. Issues such as family accessibility are able to be addressed in this model, and the pathway to easier entrance into programs as well as easier transition between programs should be simpler in this model as the staff would be working in one office under one leader, and would share common priorities for the office. However, analysis would have to be done about how to coordinate programs that are geared just to children age eight and younger and those that serve a broader population. Since this model focuses mostly on the integration of services for the 0-8 age group, structures (through executive order, legislation or other cooperative agreement) and systems would need to be built to coordinate with other relevant programs for young children and their families.

h. **Collects and Uses Data:** Consolidation could make data integration more feasible – enabling each agency’s early childhood authority to ensure data is collected consistently to drive quality improvement and the highest accountability for desired outcomes. This would likely require significant investment of resources in examining privacy requirements and addressing differences in data collection, storage and use. It may necessitate the creation of a data warehouse or other restructuring of both data and technology systems at every system level, which are likely to be significant costs.

i. **Provides Accountability and Measurement:** If data collection and stakeholder feedback were improved as a part of consolidation, the approach would allow for greater accountability because measurement would improve and more family feedback would be available.

5. *Lessons Learned from Other States*

Consolidation and integration have occurred, in different ways, across several states. States with a consolidated governance model have been disproportionately successful in winning federal early childhood grant competitions, such as the Race to the Top: Early Learning Challenge, that required cross-sector work. By self-report, these states indicated that they were able to accelerate their progress in working on multiple early childhood programs at once. This included extending effective partnerships with health programs that were typically outside of the consolidations that had been achieved. Successful consolidation requires considerable up-front planning time, and the phase-in for the programs may take some time to achieve. Consolidation brings with it specific focus on early childhood with its distinct organizational focus, but it also requires deliberate strategies to build connections to other programs serving older children as well as other types of services and supports that might benefit families with young children.⁸

⁸ H. Dichter, *State Systems Building Through Governance* (2015) in *Rising to the Challenge: Building Effective Systems for Young Children and Families*, a BUILD E-Book, retrieved from

C. New Entity Bringing Together Relevant Programs from DHHS and DOE

1. How Would this Model Work?

This model would achieve consolidated early childhood governance by creating a new, independent executive branch agency, placing the authority and accountability for the designated early childhood programs in one place in, for example, a NH Department of Early Childhood (DEC). As noted above, this model provides an easier opportunity to reduce duplication, to achieve a unified early childhood vision, to promote early childhood as a priority, and to provide a focal point for stakeholder engagement and support. One of the main purposes of establishing the new entity would be to ensure the best outcomes for young children and their families. The DEC would have its own budget and a commissioner who would be on an equal level with other agency heads, such as education, health and human services, safety, etc.

This new agency would promote a coordinated early childhood system across all three domains of family support, early learning, and health, and thus would bring into the new agency bureaus and divisions from both DHHS and DOE that focus on early learning, health and family support. Because so many of these programs and services serve children older than early childhood – older than grade three – it is understood that it will be unrealistic to assume one roof will be plausible or advisable for all the programs and services highlighted in the above models. Therefore, as part of the creation of a DEC, a purposeful and clear plan must be written as to how the early childhood programs that remain within DHHS and DOE will be aligned and connected with those now to be housed within DEC, including formal Memoranda of Understandings (MOU) and other legal agreements.

This model is not suggested to be an initial step of improving early childhood governance in New Hampshire, but to be considered once at least one of the two models mentioned above are tested: coordination of early childhood across DHHS and DOE and consolidation of early childhood within each of the two agencies. It is, therefore, premature at this time to list which programs and services might best be housed within a DEC. However, some preliminary work suggests how to identify the programs and services to be directly included, and how to identify those that would remain within DHHS and/or DOE. First, the programs that would move into the new agency would be those with a specific age focus on early childhood education, either as the sole focus or the dominant focus. For example, child care encompasses services for school-age children but the dominant focus is early learning and thus it would likely become part of the new structure. Second, other programs that significantly include older children, such as Medicaid, or are part of an overall health, human services, and educational support system, such as housing, would be connected through MOUs or other legal agreements with DEC outlining how they will coordinate their work formally in order to improve early childhood governance. (The coordination model described previously could form the basis for how the new agency would relate to the services and programs in DHHS and DOE.) Third, there would be one final ring of programs that contains those named other programs within DHHS and DOE and other NH departments that may best be connected with the work of the programs within the first two inner rings, but do not need formal coordination agreements. Other NH departments that should be considered for connection to DEC include the Departments of Corrections, Safety, Business and Economic Affairs, Labor, Employment Security, and Cultural Resources.

2. Key Actions: What would Enable these Changes?

Planning, Will Building, and Enabling Legislation. The creation of a new, independent executive branch agency will require:

- a thoughtful and deliberate planning process that includes government and stakeholders to come to consensus about why – what problem are we trying to solve – and how best to implement this consolidated approach in New Hampshire, including the development of agreed-upon criteria about which programs should be housed under one roof;
- the building of political and public will to promote the proposed design; and
- the passing of enabling legislation.

The planning process, the building of will, and the passing of legislation would likely take several years as it did in other states, but could be well worth the effort as it has been in other states as well. As noted previously, it is suggested that this process not begin until at least one of the two models of improved early childhood governance are tested and the beginnings of a reform approach are accepted by establishment of a change strategy.

3. Considerations

The establishment of a new, independent executive branch agency would be an important legacy that sends a strong message about how critical early childhood development is to New Hampshire today and tomorrow. The purpose of the DEC is to improve outcomes for young children and their families. This new focus both increases public awareness and could lead to sufficient resources to reduce the opportunity gap, ensuring every New Hampshire child has the chance to reach his or her potential.

At the same time, there are major start-up challenges to this model. The planning for a DEC will take time and must address the common challenges of implementing such an approach, which include intentional planning, the building of public and political will, and the passage of enabling legislation. In addition, transitions from existing organizations to new ones can take considerable time once agreement is secured to move forward, and designing and implementing the change will require a high level of skill and commitment. Careful set up of the new agency may also be a challenge as infrastructure support is needed in areas such as human resources, finance, etc. Finally, if not given status on par with other, long-standing agencies, the purpose could be comprised and the message could instead be that early childhood is less important. Additionally, if not given equal status, the visibility of a DEC budget could rather lead to diminished resources, worsening outcomes for young children and families. Great care must be taken that the creation of a new agency is done well and that the design is effective and has clout.

4. Relationship to Guiding Principles

- Makes the Importance of Early Childhood Visible:** A stand-alone entity with sufficiently high-level leadership would make early childhood programs more visible and would also highlight their importance. A public awareness campaign would be launched to spread the message of the importance of the early years, therefore making the case for needed resources and support. A marketing campaign would publicize the new DEC, using a single phone number and email address. A caution noted above is that, without strong leadership within the DEC or gubernatorial support, the visibility could be diminished if it is viewed as less important than long-standing agencies.
- Leadership:** This model will require a newly-appointed Commissioner who will lead the Department. Leadership in other departments, divisions and bureaus will need to coordinate in order to best serve young children and their families.

- c. **Problem Solving:** Barriers and problems can be more easily identified and solutions can be implemented because most of the relevant programs are in one place. Isolation could be decreased for some programs. It must be noted that isolation could be increased for some programs that move into DEC if their work was already well coordinated with other divisions of DOE or DHHS if a formal agreement and coordination with those divisions in their former department was not well planned or articulated.
- d. **Prioritizes Quality and Equity:** This structure would allow for professional development standards for the early childhood workforce to be built and implemented across programs. It would also allow for consistent equity standards.
- e. **Responds to Needs of Stakeholders:** A single entity would allow for more consistent stakeholder feedback on programs. Regular needs assessments will be able to be conducted. Lessons learned from families and providers can potentially be carried to other programs and services.
- f. **Finds Resources:** A new single entity will allow for funding to be blended and braided. Better data and family feedback will give information that can be used to better support the need for increased funding. A potential drawback of creating a DEC is that its budget will be more visible and, therefore, perhaps more vulnerable.
- g. **Serves All Children and Families:** Programs for pregnant women and children birth through third grade will be under the Department of Early Childhood. There will be one access point for families, one intake office for all services, one main phone number and email address. Service coordinators/ family educators could be assigned to families which could allow for more efficiency and would likely result in better outcomes.
- h. **Collects and Uses Data:** Data is collected and shared in a consistent way in all EC programs throughout the Department. A single authority structure allows for more consistent quality control, more understanding of privacy and legal limitations, making it easier to address barriers to better integration. Data is used to drive quality of systems and programming.
- i. **Provides Accountability and Measurement:** Having programs in one place, under a single authority will allow for analysis of effectiveness of programs and accountability. This will allow for more consistent and high-quality evaluation. Child outcome data can be used consistently to drive quality improvement and to advocate for increased resources.

5. *Lessons Learned from Other States*

Several states have created independent state agencies that bring together many early childhood functions into one executive branch office. The most recent state to do this is Connecticut, which was preceded by Georgia and Massachusetts, among others. Change at this level typically requires a high degree of consensus about the benefit of a single organization to lead state early childhood efforts, with legislative as well as gubernatorial approvals through enabling legislation. The building of public and political will to enable the change then allows the new agency to start its work from a place of strength and broad support. This model requires sufficient planning to garner the necessary support, and may be preceded by either a coordination or consolidation model, including the variations being proposed for consideration in New Hampshire. These distinct early childhood agencies typically achieve cabinet level status, which puts them on par with education, transportation, human services, and other critical aspects of state government. This is seen as enabling ongoing attention as political administrations shift and change.

And, as a cabinet level agency, working with others typically becomes easier as the agency head is on par with other agency heads.

VI. Conclusions and Next Steps

Science tells us that intervention in early childhood can better children's developmental trajectories. The earlier in a child's life issues in child development or family support are addressed, the better the result on child well-being. Economists tell us that programs targeting the early years have a high return on investment. Prevention approaches are always more efficient than later remediation. As a result, it makes sense for government to create structures of governance that facilitate early access to programs that affect child well-being.

New Hampshire's current approach to early childhood governance is not serving either young children and families or the state in the most efficient or effective way possible. Fragmentation early childhood programs within different departments, divisions, and bureaus can make programs harder for families to access. Siloed programs have difficulty coordinating with one another and sharing data to create accountability and to benefit child and family outcomes.

Currently New Hampshire's state level early childhood programs are broadly diffused departments at DHHS and DOE making it difficult for programs to coordinate and for families to access and transition between services. This fragmentation occurs at every level of the system.

All the governance models presented in this report would begin to address these issues, although each would need resources and capacity for them to be effective and to achieve the intended outcomes. All would need more development to ensure that they meet the vision and guiding principles that the Task Force identified as essential to governance going forward. All would be a good investment in the future health and economy of New Hampshire. In considering the next steps for these recommendations, the Task Force also notes that the models presented in this report could be "mixed" and "matched." For example, one state agency could implement a consolidated office while the second state agency could opt for the first coordination approach within its agency. In this scenario, both agencies would deploy a coordination strategy across the two agencies. Finally, as noted earlier, the task force recommends that further work be done to define how any changes would extend to every level of the early childhood system.

The Task Force recommends the following:

1. **New Hampshire DHHS and DOE, in collaboration with Governor's Office, Conduct Additional Analysis on the Coordination and Consolidation Approaches, and Make Changes in Early Childhood Governance.** At present, the options described under coordination and consolidation—or some combination of them-- would each provide a near-term pathway for improving the role of governance in realizing the outcomes that New Hampshire is seeking to achieve for its youngest children, their families, and the communities in which they live. These options should be further developed, in a collaborative manner, by the governor's office and the state agencies who would oversee them. The Task Force recommends a report back in early 2019 about what solution the governor's office and the two agencies seek to advance. These reports would take place at face-to-face meetings of the Task Force and would provide an opportunity for review and feedback by the Task Force.

2. **New Entity Approach is Put On Hold At This Time.** The third option—new entity—while it may have value, should be held “in reserve” for further consideration after New Hampshire implements governance changes in line with the coordination and/or two-agency consolidation approaches generally described in this report. While some Task Force members believe that this solution is the preferred one, all agreed that it is too early in New Hampshire’s efforts to consider the role of governance in achieving its vision for young children and families to move to this approach as a first step.
3. **Re-examine the role of Spark NH.** Spark NH’s executive order could be strengthened, regardless of steps within the executive branch agencies, so that it may continue to link government with the early childhood field across health, early learning and family support and bring together private and public stakeholders to better collaborate and coordinate and make the system work better for young children and families. Key aspects of strengthening Spark NH include creating a more diverse group of individuals on the Council to enhance the effectiveness of the organization. Whatever governance changes are adopted, ensure that Spark NH is authorized to serve as an advisor to that structure and approach.
4. **Plan for a Regional Approach to Early Childhood Governance.** While specific recommendations for how governance should be implemented at the local and regional level are beyond the scope of this report, it is clear that for governance to best support young children and their families, every level of the system must be better coordinated. To this end, it makes sense for government to look to coordinate with existing collaboratives such as public health networks, early childhood regional initiatives and other existing infrastructure to help to guide this work. Such groups could inform outcome measures and quality improvement and support advocacy for early childhood at the local level for additional resources and public/private support.

Appendix 1: Members of the Early Childhood Governance Task Force

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Michelle Merritt, President and CEO, New Futures

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Terry Ohlson Martin, Co-Director, NH Family Voices

Lara Quiroga, Local Program Director, Project LAUNCH Manchester

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Rhonda Siegel, Administrator/Title V Director, Maternal and Child Health Section, Division of Public Health Services, Dept. Health and Human Services

Chris Tappan, Associate Commissioner, Human Services and Behavioral Health, Dept. Health and Human Services

Trinidad Tellez, Director, Office of Health Equity, Dept. Health and Human Services

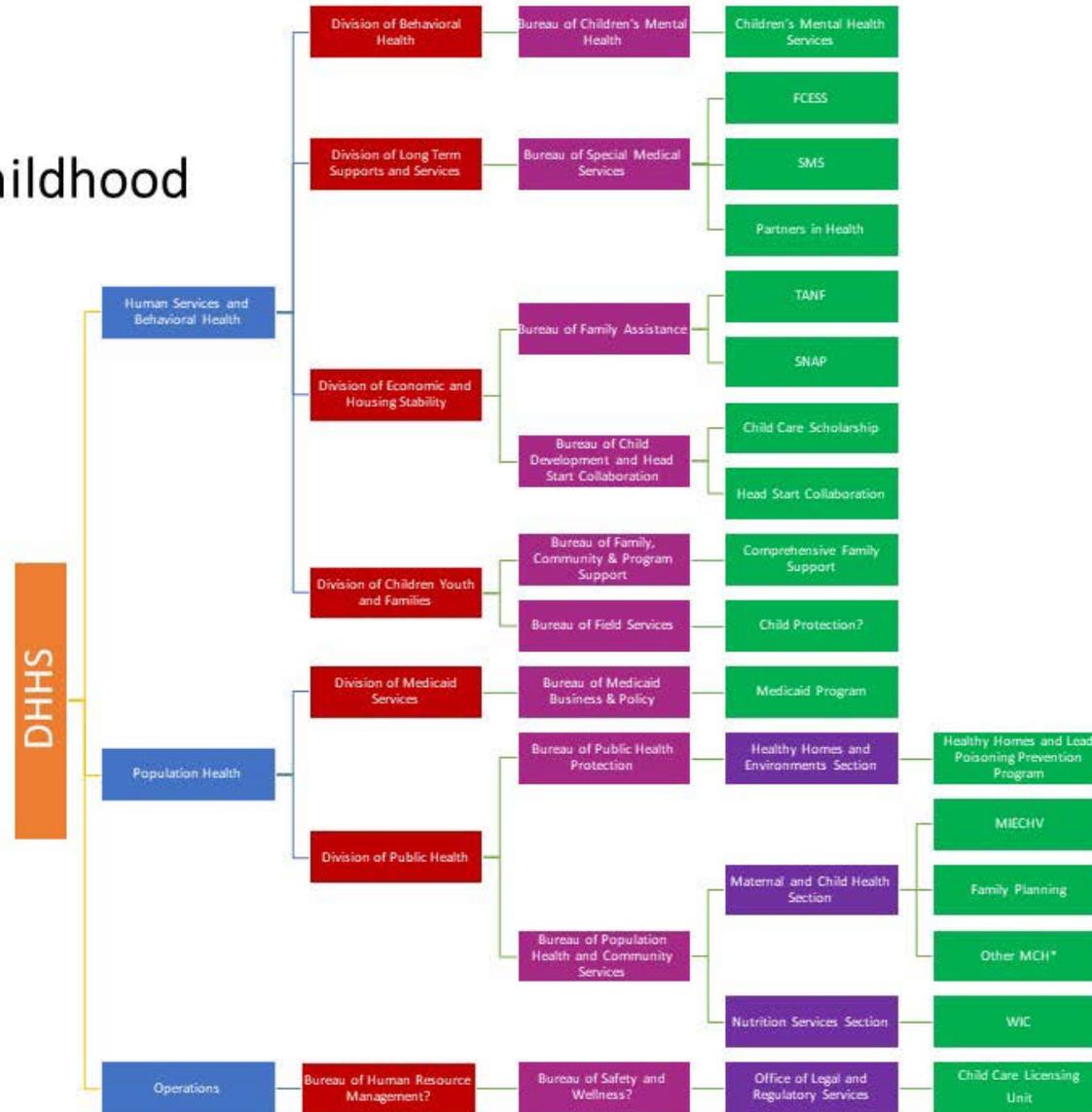
Patricia Tilley, Deputy Director, Division of Public Health Services, Dept. Health and Human Services

Mark Vallone, Retired School Principal, Epping School District, NH Association of School Principals

Kerry Wiley, Program Coordinator, Family Centered Early Supports and Services, Dept. Health and Human Services

Rebecca Woitkowski, Early Childhood Policy Coordinator, New Futures

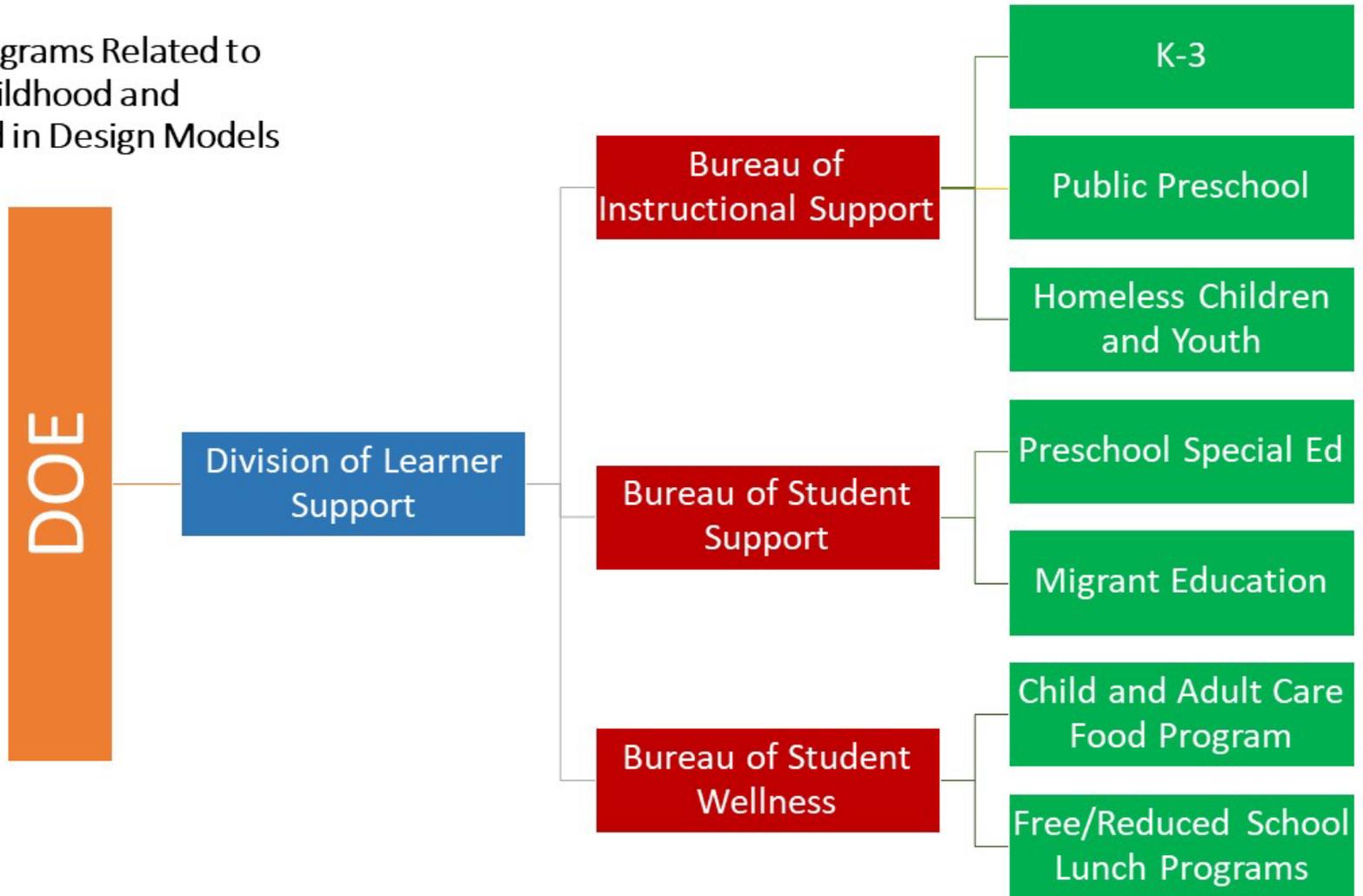
DHHS Programs Related to Early Childhood



DHHS Programs Included in Design Models



DOE Programs Related to Early Childhood and Included in Design Models



Glossary

- FCESS – Family Centered Early Supports and Services (Part C of IDEA – Individuals with Disabilities Education Action)
- K-3 – Kindergarten through 3rd grade
- Other MCH– Maternal and Child Health Section also includes:
 - Birth Conditions,
 - Child Health,
 - Early Hearing Detection and Intervention,
 - Injury Prevention,
 - Newborn Screening,
 - Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring (PRAMS),
 - Prenatal Services,
 - SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome) Program
- MIECHV – Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting
- Preschool Special Ed – Preschool Special Education/Part B619
- WIC – Women Infants and Children Food and Nutrition Service
- SMS – Special Medical Services
- SNAP – Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (Food Stamps)
- TANF – Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

Appendix 3: Illustration of Family

