



Working Group on Early Childhood Governance – Meeting 7

September 28, 2023

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Agenda

- Welcome, Introductions, and Announcements
- VOTE: Accepting August Meeting Minutes
- Presentation of interim comprehensive draft report on early childhood governance (FLP & Watershed)
- Discussion of interim draft report
- VOTE: Approval to submit interim comprehensive draft report
- Next steps for reviewing and revising report
- Public Comment
- Adjournment

Recall: The FY23 budget establishes a working group on early childhood governance to review current approach and identify proposals for future structures.

Overview of Budget Article

FY23 Budget Requirements

By October 1, 2023, the early childhood governance working group must deliver a report on early childhood governance. The report includes:

- Coordination + administration
- Governance + organizational structure
- Fiscal cost of proposals
- Implementation of data systems

The Article names the members: DHS, RIDE, OPC, RIDOH, DOA, Chair of the Children's Cabinet, and RI Kids Count. It notes that staff of the Children's Cabinet will staff the group to complete the duties and the Early Learning Council will be an advisory body.

It provides \$250,000 to enable completion of the report and recommendations.

Working Group Mission & Scope – Adopted 11/30/22

Mission

The goal of Rhode Island's Working Group on Early Childhood Governance is to examine systems, structure, and authorities that govern and administer early childhood programs (as defined in the Scope). The Working Group will use this information to make recommendations that would advance RI's vision for children enter kindergarten educationally, social-emotionally, and developmentally ready to succeed, putting them on a path to read proficiently by 3rd grade that sets Rhode Islanders up for successful completion of postsecondary education. The Working Group will conduct a comprehensive review of the current conditions and identify gaps and opportunities for improvement to best achieve the goals set forth in the ECCE Strategic Plan and the Governor's 2030 Plan. The Working Group shall develop a report that includes recommendations regarding the governance of early childhood programs in the state. The recommendations shall address, but need not be limited to:

- The coordination and administration of early childhood programs and services;
- The governance and organizational structure of early childhood programs and services, including whether, and under what circumstances, the state should consider unifying early childhood programs under one state agency;
- The fiscal structure of proposed recommendations; and
- The implementation of early childhood data systems, for strategic planning, program implementation and program evaluation.

Scope of Analysis:

The Working Group's efforts will focus on the following core programs:

- **Child care licensing** (DHS)
- **Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)** (DHS)
- **Head Start / Early Head Start Collaboration** (DHS)
- **RI Pre-K** (RIDE)
- **Comprehensive Early Childhood Education Standards (CECE)** (RIDE)
- **Early Childhood Special Education – IDEA Part B, 619** (RIDE)
- **Early Intervention (EI)** (EOHHS)
- **KidsConnect** (EOHHS)
- **Family Visiting** (RIDOH)

To conduct a comprehensive review, the Working Group's scope will also include analysis of the gaps and opportunities of the supporting systems for ECCE programs, including but not limited to:

- Workforce development, career pathways, and higher education pathways (in collaboration with the Governor's Workforce Board report in April, 2023)
- Professional development and technical assistance
- Quality evaluation, improvement, and support (with focus on Quality Rating and Improvement System, the RI Early Learning and Development Standards, and the Workforce Knowledge and Competencies)

Vote on Adoption of August 22 Minutes



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Rhode Island System Analysis

September 28, 2023

Rhode Island Systems Analysis

Rhode Island has ambitious goals for improving early childhood. The State's vision is for all children to be educationally, social-emotionally, and developmentally ready to succeed, putting them on a path to positive long-term outcomes.

Accomplishing these goals require that Rhode Island have an effective system of early childhood governance. In order to strengthen that governance system, Article 10 of the enacted Fiscal Year 2023 Budget established an Early Childhood Governance Working Group to support the development of an Early Childhood Governance System Analysis.

The System Analysis is being developed by Foresight Law + Policy and Watershed Advisors pursuant to a contract with the state. **This presentation accompanies a draft of the report, to support the collection of feedback in order to finalize the report.**

Agenda

- Report Overview
- Report Contents:
 - Early Childhood Governance
 - Experiences from Other States
 - Current State and Future Opportunities
 - Cross-cutting Considerations
- Discussion

Report Overview

Report Process

To arrive at the current draft, the team conducted the following activities:

- Information gathering with a wide range of Rhode Islanders engaged in the work of the early childhood system, summarized by the Landscape Analysis
 - Interviews were conducted with more than 70 people
 - Multiple public listening sessions were conducted
 - A survey was made available on the Children's Cabinet website
- Soliciting initial feedback on the draft Landscape Analysis in July and August to build consensus about the current conditions affecting providers and families
- Making recommendations, via this draft report, for potential next steps for Rhode Island

Next, we will engage the community on these proposed recommendations in order to finalize the report by December.

Report Overview

- Executive Summary
- Introduction
- Landscape Analysis
- Governance Options in the National Context
- Governance in Rhode Island: Current State and Future Opportunities
- Cross Cutting Considerations
- Conclusion

Timeline

Date	Action
September 27	Early Learning Council Meeting
September 28	Working group reviews draft recommendations and provides feedback
October 1	Submit most Comprehensive Interim Draft to General Assembly and Governor for review
Month of October	Solicit additional feedback from 1:1 interviews and public sessions
Date TBD (likely early December)	FLP and Watershed will present final report findings in person
Date TBD (December)	FLP and Watershed will finalize report Final draft complete

Report Contents

Early Childhood Governance

Early Childhood Governance

- **The current early childhood system has many strengths to build on:** There are strong relationships among early childhood staff to foster interagency collaboration.
- **But there is room for growth:** The sentiment outside of state government is that the fragmentation among agencies has constrained the state's ability to support children and families.
- **The state's approach to governance matters:** 1) Governance impacts the state's ability to achieve its vision for early childhood services; 2) Equity demands a system that supports policies to improve services for the children and families that most rely on state-funded services; and 3) it is critical that the state use public funds effectively and efficiently.

The Current Early Childhood System

- **Excluding one-time federal funding, in Fiscal Year 2023 Rhode Island spent approximately \$130M on its early childhood system.** This included \$71.4M in federal money, \$53.5M in state funds, and \$5.8M in other funds.
- **The largest single early childhood funding stream is the Child Care Assistance Program.** In 2023 \$72.6M was spent on child care assistance through DHS. The state spent \$22.5M on early intervention, \$22.3M on Rhode Island Pre-k, and \$15M on early childhood special education.
- **Thousands of children use the system.** Rhode Island has 52,500 children under the age of 5. At a given time over 6,000 are likely receiving child care subsidies, and over 2,300 receiving pre-k. Approximately 1,200 receive federally funded Head Start services. Special education serves almost 3,000 children, and Early Intervention almost 4,000.

The Current Early Childhood System

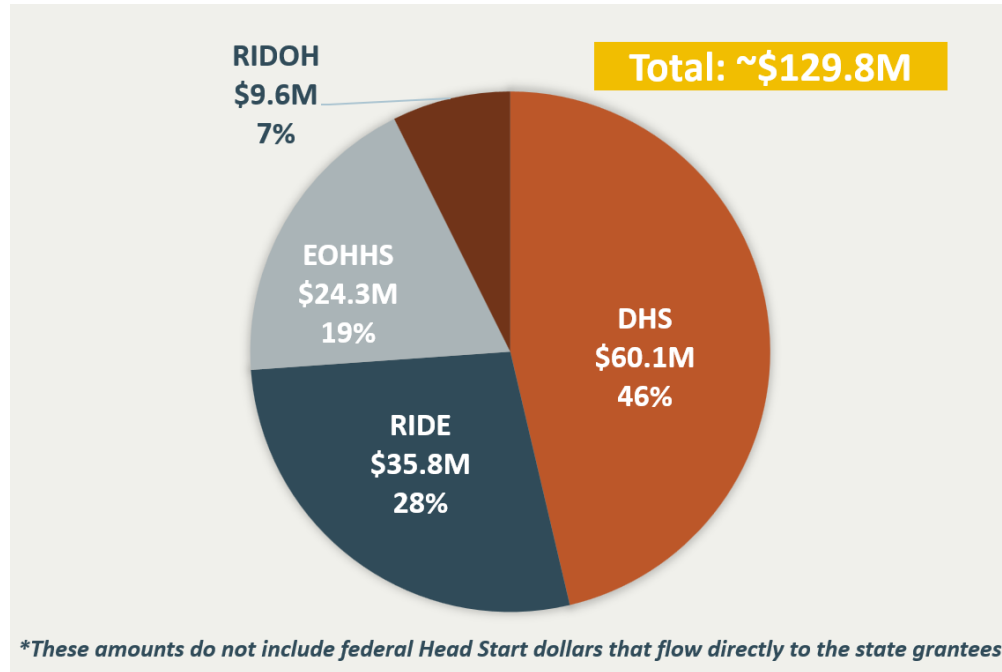


Figure 2: Total estimated Rhode Island ECCE spending in SFY2023, excluding one-time COVID-19 federal funding

Three Models of Early Childhood Governance

Unification Models

Coordinated

- Early childhood funding streams and functions live in multiple, distinct agencies – requiring coordination across those agencies
- Sometimes a centralized office helps to facilitate coordination

Consolidated

Early childhood funding and functions are consolidated into an existing agency that has other responsibilities (typically the state education agency or a human services agency)

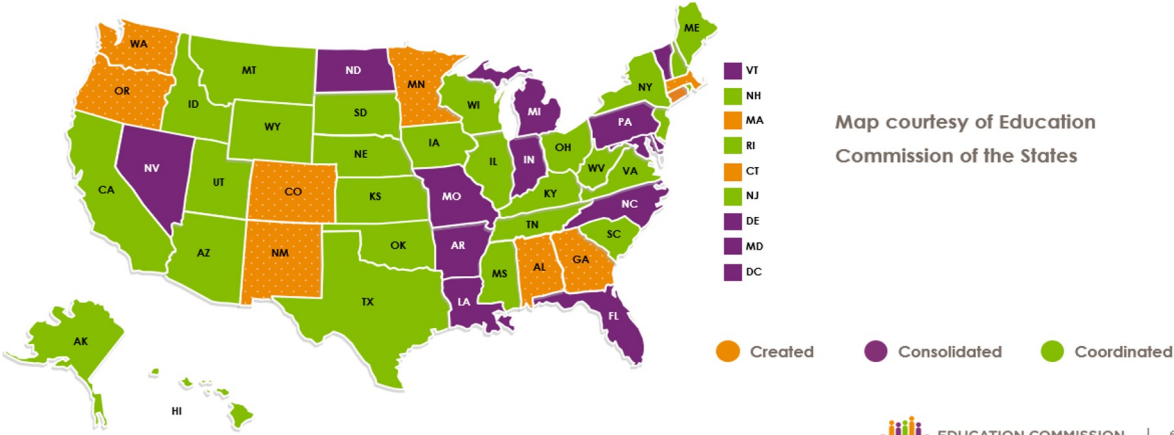
Created

- Early childhood funding and functions are consolidated into a single agency created to focus on early childhood services
- Agency has a sole or primary focus on early childhood, without other responsibilities

National Landscape: Early Childhood Governance

Roughly half of the states use a coordinated approach and the other half have consolidated or created governance structures.

National Landscape, 2023



Map courtesy of Education Commission of the States



Three Models of Early Childhood Governance

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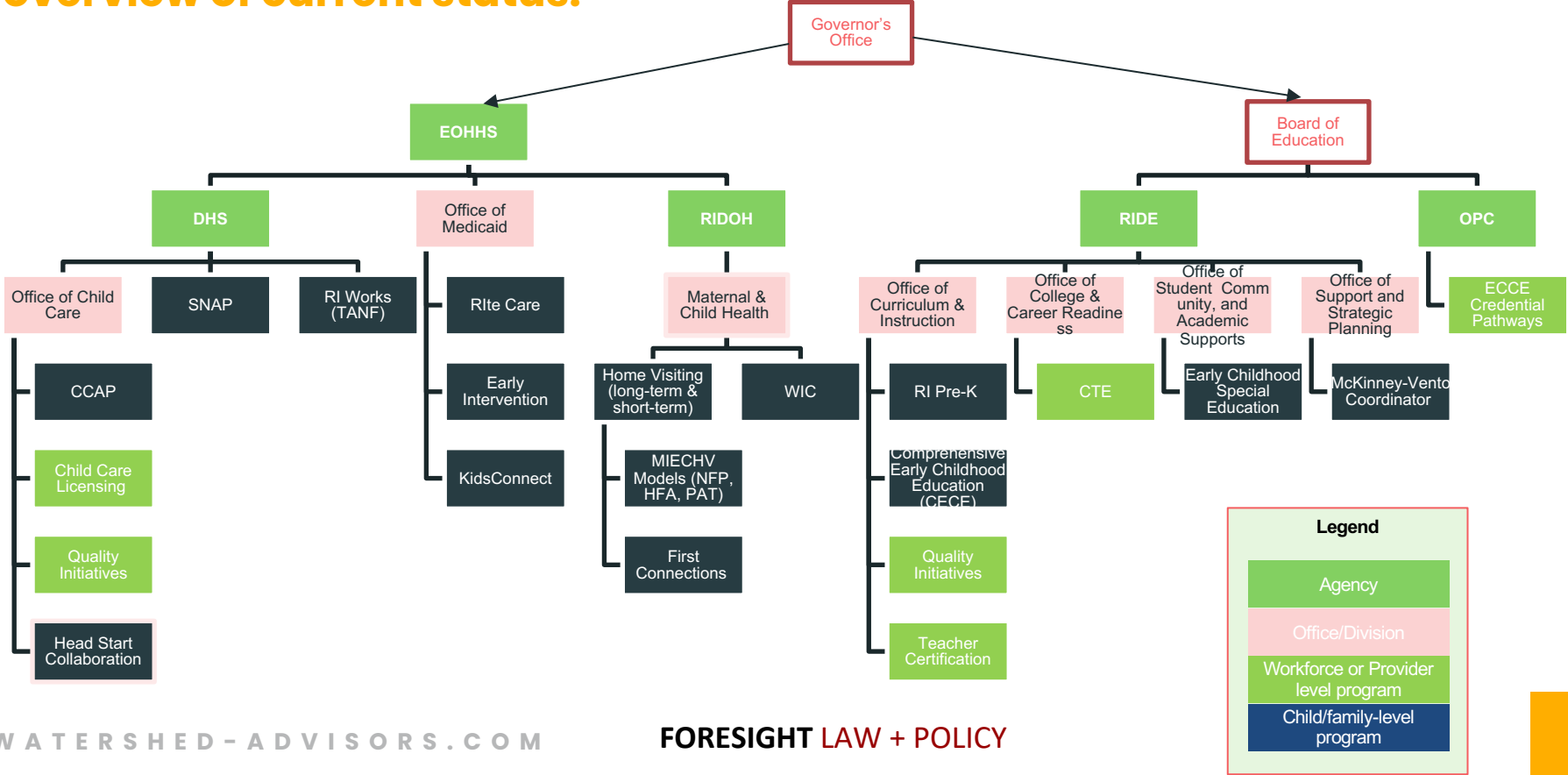
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- Early childhood funding and functions are consolidated into a single agency created to focus on early childhood services
- Agency has a sole or primary focus on early childhood, without other responsibilities

Rhode Island currently uses a coordinated approach across EOHHS, DHS, RIDE, and RIDOH. Each agency has responsibility for important funding streams serving young children in the state.

Currently, early childhood programs are embedded within several state agencies. The below graphic is not comprehensive, but provides an overview of current status.



Legend

- Agency
- Office/Division
- Workforce or Provider level program
- Child/family-level program

Experiences from Other States

Experiences of Other States:

Potential benefits to unification

Based on interviews with leaders in seven other states (CO, CT, MA, NM, NC, ND, OR), potential benefits include:

- More alignment between pre-k and child care
- More coherent policies for workforce development, professional development, quality ratings, and data integration
- High level early childhood system leader can define state's early childhood agenda and marshal resources toward persistent challenges
- Increased communication, accountability, and transparency with stakeholders
- Easier to track use of all funds, including federal funds, toward state's goals
- Increased clarity for the legislature on early childhood issues, and better access to expertise for the executive branch

Experiences of Other States:

Potential challenges to unification

Potential challenges identified in other states includes:

- Unifying ECE can result in other siloes - for example, when unified outside the education agency, it could lead to difficulty working with LEAs
- Governance change not insulation against turnover at the state level
- A governance change can add complexity to the already nuanced relationship between K-12 and early childhood
- New unified structure does not necessarily equate to greater investment, and can cost resources

Experiences of Other States: Considerations

Should the state choose to change, other states suggested that in a transition Rhode Island would need:

- Political leaders and external champions who will support the agency during transition and keep progress on track
- A well designed structure to ensure the agency's accountability structure
- Strong administrative leadership trusted by the Governor and staff to support the transition
- A transition window with clear action plans and responsibilities
- Strong interagency collaboration after a unification
- Clear, consistent, and frequent communication during the transition period
- Local implementation that can support the state's vision

Current State and Future Opportunities

Core Functions of State Government

State government serves these critical functions. As Rhode Island evaluates which governance model is most likely to help it succeed, it should consider:

- Collaboration
- Money management
- Setting standards for service quality
- Supporting professionals
- Engaging and supporting families and stakeholders
- Communications and public relations

Current Model of Coordination

Impact on Core Functions (1 of 2)

The current model in Rhode Island allows the state to leverage different kinds of expertise from different agencies. Maintaining the current model would eliminate transition costs and avoid disruption.

The landscape analysis indicated the following takeaways regarding core functions:

- **Collaboration:** Stakeholders generally praised the ability of state government to collaborate with stakeholders – and also believe that collaboration within state government has improved in recent years.
- **Money management:** Stakeholders do not believe that the current system of money management is optimizing quality experiences for children and families in an equitable manner.
- **Setting standards for service quality:** There is a sense that quality rating in the state has improved over the years, but that there are still challenges and disconnects.

Current Model of Coordination

Impact on Core Functions (2 of 2)

The landscape analysis indicated the following takeaways regarding core functions:

- **Supporting professionals:** Like many states, Rhode Island is struggling to support its early childhood workforce. While many of the problems on this front go beyond what administrative agencies can control, we did hear that fragmentation in the system has hampered the state's efforts to best support its professionals.
- **Engaging and supporting families and stakeholders:** We heard some stories of success in engaging and supporting families and stakeholders – but here, as in other areas, those efforts were siloed across agencies, not part of a coherent statewide approach.
- **Communications and public relations:** None of the individual state agencies is well set up to communicate broadly about the benefits of the early childhood system as a whole.
- **Integrating early childhood data:** Having services hosted by different agencies requires interagency data use agreements to provide a holistic view of the system.

Consolidation or Creation Model

Impact on Core Functions (1 of 2)

Rhode Island choosing to consolidate or create a new governance model could have the following impact on core functions:

- **Collaboration:** Certain problems cannot be solved in the current structure. A governance change would take certain issues that currently require interagency collaboration and turn them into issues a single agency can address.
- **Money management:** Unification can make it easier for the state to budget for early childhood holistically and to think about interaction among program funding streams.
- **Setting standards for service quality:** Unification improves the likelihood that Rhode Island will be able to implement a more comprehensive approach in quality evaluation and improvement work.

Consolidation or Creation Model

Impact on Core Functions (2 of 2)

Rhode Island choosing to consolidate or create a new governance model could have the following impact on core functions:

- **Supporting professionals:** The state can more comprehensively support workforce initiatives through unification. This work could be driven by an overarching set of expectations, rather than the regulations governing specific funding streams.
- **Engaging and supporting families and stakeholders:** Through a change in governance, the state could build upon its good work in engaging families and stakeholders through a more coherent approach.
- **Communications and public relations:** The state could have the opportunity to engage with the public and families on early childhood issues in a holistic way. It currently does not have a unified communications and public relations approach.
- **Integrating early childhood data:** Creating a unified agency would make it incrementally easier to integrate data from core early childhood programs.

Challenges of Change

As Rhode Island considers embarking on a governance transition, the state will need to discuss the following challenges that would be forthcoming:

- Deciding what to include in a unification
- The process of transition
- The costs of transition (including state and philanthropic costs)
- The relationship between early childhood and K-12

Cross-Cutting Considerations

Cross-Cutting Considerations

- **State-Community Connections:** Regardless of the state's governance model, the state will need to consider its partnership with community leaders and providers.
- **Interagency Connections:** There will be a need for interagency connectivity no matter what governance approach the state chooses. One way or another, the state will have to strategize how to address issues that fall at the junction points among multiple agencies.

State-Community Connections

- Community-level collaboration can support improved coherence at the local level. Some states support capacity for individual communities to work on issues including improving professional development, increasing access, supporting the workforce, analyzing local data, and making it easier for families to access the system.
- In a small state like Rhode Island, local infrastructure might not need to be as extensive as it is in other states. But there are still some decisions that are best made locally, and stronger local collaboratives could facilitate that decision-making.

Interagency Connections

- The state has numerous forms of interagency collaboration, including the Children's Cabinet, the Early Learning Council, and collaborative tables for key early childhood staff.
- As part of the governance conversation, the state may want to revisit the mandate of these bodies – taking advantage of their respective strengths. This can occur regardless of whether or not Rhode Island changes its governance model within state government.

Discussion

Discussion

What do you want the Rhode Island early childhood system to look like in 5–10 years?

- State governance model
- State–local collaboration
- Interagency collaboration

Next Steps

We look forward to your additional feedback!

- The full report will be posted on www.kids.ri.gov/cabinet/governance-analysis
- Please share our survey about the report: [Survey](#)
- Or email us:
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 - nasha.patel@watershed-advisors.com
 - lizzie.cosse@watershed-advisors.com

Vote on Submission of Interim Report

Public Comment
