

Getting to Know You
Alameda County Early Care and Education Planning Council
September, 2014

Twenty four (24) Steering Committee members and one ex-officio member responded to a survey in writing or via phone during the months of June and July. The questionnaire was open ended and resulted in an uneven number of responses in each of the 13 questions. Therefore, this report lists responses to pertinent consolidated questions, noted on a descending scale in each category. The survey instrument is available from the Planning Council.

The cooperation, interest, and input from the Steering Committee provided a rich and comprehensive review of member interests, talents, and dedication. The results will be used in Council strategic planning. Please note questions F and G below.

Purpose of the Survey:

- Solicit input on direction and topics the Council should explore
- Solicit input on Council member needs, wishes, and questions
- Assist Council and staff in planning for the future

Members represented:

- 10 work directly with children or supervise teachers
- 8 social services, health, or ECE resource providers
- 5 professional development/college instructors
- 2 funders (local government or private foundation)

Question A: What motivated you to apply to join the Council?

1. Wanted to know more about policy, advocacy, and quality in our field
2. Become more acquainted with the breadth and parts of ECE
3. Wanted to build bridges with other fields
4. Supervisor or colleague encouraged me to apply

Question B: What did you know about the Council before joining?

1. Specific activities (AB212, Quality Statement, data collection); familiarity with meetings
2. Very little or nothing
3. Reputation of the Council – staff, diversity of stake holders, work products

Question C: what surprised you about the Council?

1. Knowledge, dedication, and diversity of staff & members, wide scope of the work
2. Extent of advocacy/political work and influence
3. Openness and friendliness of the group

4. That it is housed with GSA; how small the staff is for work accomplished; thought there would be more community representation (not just state subsidized); expectation that I become a political advocate

Question D: What do you want to learn from your participation in the Council?

1. More about public policy and funding streams (private, public, TK, etc.)
2. Council organization – who does staff report to, what are the funding and mandates, what roles do the County bureaucracy, County Board of Supervisors, and County Office of Education play in Council's work; Council history and purpose; how members can be more engaged and participatory; how Council works with FCC, CBO's, and how it leverages resources for the field.

Question E: What would you like to contribute to the Council?

1. Help find ways to create resources and support for an extensive range of categories: non-subsidized programs, higher education, parents, quality, children w/special needs, dual language learners, state contractors, community care licensing, professional development, immigrant families, infants and toddler, funding gaps, QRIS, etc.
2. Help strengthen Council functions and organization: lead where I can, lead short term task forces, support and increase engagement of Council members, assist with strategic thinking (where we are, where we want to go, how the work could evolve), contribute to public policy discussions, learn how to be a leader.

Question F: What areas are important work for Council over the next two years?

1. Cross-discipline work, including multi-disciplinary data development (social services, health, education, public schools, higher education, family engagement and the two generation model, family child care, and family friend, and neighbor care)
2. Public policy and funding
3. Quality issues – how to include non-subsidized programs and fcc, how to work with children with special needs who are not diagnosed or have an IEP
4. Workforce (pay, respect, tuition stipends)
5. Internal organizational issues (full participation); leadership development; how to get all of the stake holders involved; facilitate collaboration whenever possible
6. Local funding to reinstate the Centralized Eligibility List

Question G: What are ways to pursue the important work over the next few years and how can the Council make it easier for you to participate?

The overwhelming responses to this question were: 1) external outreach, and 2) possible new ways to organize meetings and activities. Listed below are several salient suggestions **in no particular order**

External:

- Hold public forums and roundtable discussions with ECE and other agencies about the necessity of cross-discipline work

- Develop new relationships and projects with family support organizations (CalWorks, Community Care Licensing, housing)
- Develop pro-active movement on new legislation -- work with others to try to “level the playing field” on ages funded at state level and how to fill in the gaps in funding
- Include health and family economics in all Council materials and products
- Start working with housing, environmental health, and agencies working to prevent toxic stress
- Conduct public discussions on importance of diversity in ECE (and how to)
- Educate Community Care Licensing on importance of quality (and what it is)

Internal suggestions:

- Institute small group discussions at each Council meeting
- Have experienced members provide “expert panels” on topics (child care and mental health; how CalWorks really works and how ECE could collaborate on new projects; Parent Voices and other parent organizations, etc.)
- Make time for increased discussion before taking a vote on legislation or public policy issues, even if the public policy committee recommends supporting or not supporting the issue
- Emphasize how policy relates to program (how might this bill or policy impact my program or the kids and families I work with?)
- Stay away from acronyms and jargon when introducing policy and other topics
- Consider instituting a different voting system – the “flags” may be encouraging uniformity and people may feel group pressure
- Find ways to get members to understand and appreciate the “whole county” – perhaps panels on each geographical area, conducted by members who discuss needs, demographics, resources, unique characteristics, etc.
- Develop a buddy system that matches members from different disciplines; create coffee hours
- Organize short term task forces or study groups on topics not necessarily related to Committee work; report to full meetings
- Do away with mystery guest; keep extended introductions
- Send out agenda and minutes in advance
- Assign sitting arrangements in order to encourage people to get to know each other
- Have members report on committee and project work (E.G. QRIS, Ab212, Cares Plus)
- Steering Committee members in each area of the county share an assignment to invite colleagues to meetings in order to encourage community wide participation
- Find ways to keep timed off members involved; ask them to relate to new members (big sister, big brother) or present on a special topic
- Follow through on member non-participation policy
- Use conference calls and other technology to conduct meetings
- At every meeting, briefly discuss how the Council has a diverse and sometimes disparate representation; getting everyone to speak with one voice is sometimes difficult, but the Council is a safe place to present differences and share knowledge; it’s the only way to learn and change things for the better

- Remind members that even if they feel uncomfortable speaking out or entering discussions, it is their right and responsibility to express themselves
- Don't spend a lot of time worrying about when to hold meetings – we are all too busy

Question H: What would you like to learn about parts of the County that you are not familiar with, and what would you like to learn about other Council members?

- Most of those responding with written surveys did not state an interest in this question. Those interviewed over the phone were enthusiastic about the possibility and wanted to have more dialogue among members (**see Question G – internal suggestions**)