

**Bright from the Start  
Providers Roundtable Meeting  
July 28, 2008**

**Bright from the Start Updates**

***Introductions and Welcome***

Purpose: For the agency to interact directly with providers of early care and learning in the state of Georgia. Providers invited to participate will rotate on and off the roundtable.

Minutes: Will be taken and posted on Bright from the Start's website for access by all early care and education professionals.

The twin mission of the agency can be summarized as serving more children and raising quality. Commissioner Robinson is available for speaking engagements [now limited due to budget cuts]. Invitations to speak should be directed to Todd Blandin at 404-656-0377 or [todd.blandin@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:todd.blandin@dec.al.ga.gov).

***Clark Howard Feature and Commissioner's Statewide Visits***

A Clark Howard story on the new search feature of Bright from the Start's website was shared with the group, <http://www.wsbtv.com/video/16658644/index.html>. The televised story resulted in increased traffic to the website.

***Nutrition Education***

Leslie Lowe announced a new activity DVD on Healthy Eating for Life will be made available to teachers.

***Technology Updates***

Enhancements to the provider search engine on Bright from the Start's website were demonstrated. More enhancements will be coming to the website in the upcoming year. Any incorrect or missing data should be reported to Craig Detweiler at 404-651-7409 or [craig.detweiler@dec.al.ga.gov](mailto:craig.detweiler@dec.al.ga.gov).

BftS is working with the Department of Education to include Pre-K in the unique student identifier that is used to track K-12 children. Also, DOE's data warehouse will eventually include Pre-K assessment data for each child.

***Pre-K Update***

There is now more continuity between assessing children in Pre-K and Kindergarten with the implementation of G-Kids in Kindergarten. Pre-K Child Assessment information is beginning to take the place of a week-long intake assessment at the beginning of Kindergarten.

Sharing assessment information online is being piloted with 4,000 students (including Clinch, Muscogee, and Baldwin counties). Online assessment will go statewide next year. Inputting children's information online also makes the Pre-K Progress Reports much easier.

BftS received funding for an additional 1,000 Pre-K children this year.

More rosters are being implemented this year, which will help with tracking Pre-K numbers and waiting lists. The ability for providers to purge their waitlists will also improve.

Georgia's Pre-K Program will expand its ability to keep track of professional development and early learning credentials. The agency is interested in this for all child care teachers.

As of July, Georgia has received more than \$10 billion for education since the founding of the Georgia Lottery for Education.

Georgia's Pre-K Program is working with community partners to support early learning collaborations. All interested providers are encouraged to become involved in these.

The agency is defining a "Pre-K child" as a child who has participated enough to have benefited from the program. This will provide more accurate reporting.

### ***Head Start and Rule Revisions***

Janice Haker has been named Head Start collaboration director. The agency would like to see more children benefiting from blended Head Start/Georgia's Pre-K programs. This will allow the agency to serve more children.

A goal of the department is to be ranked in the top 10 nationally in the quality of our rules and regulations. The rule changes announced this summer will become effective in 2009. The areas they impact include parent communications, fire drills, and providing developmentally appropriate activities to young children in all developmental domains. The Family Day Care Home rules will require all new registrants to have a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential in addition to their high school diploma. The new rules will also include an exemption for religious organizations that provide accredited child care programs.

### ***Legislation***

HB 1169, which was passed this year, impacted very few programs. It states that the before and after school programs of accredited private schools are not required to be licensed by BftS. HR 791 created a house study committee to assess Georgia's Pre-K Program and its impact on children. The study committee will examine any issues or needs that should be addressed by legislation.

HB 904, which did not pass but will likely be reintroduced, would have extended requirements for criminal background checks to all employees of child care providers. It would have required every employee to have both a state and national check. The agency has proposed a revision to allow a state check alone to suffice for all employees who have resided in the state for at least 3 years.

### ***CCR&R Alignment***

The agency is taking a fresh look at the duties of the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and how they're structured. BftS is seeking to strengthen services and accountability and to ensure that the

CCR&Rs represent the mission and vision of the agency. A study group, including R&R representatives, is underway.

An attendee stated she believes the R&R system on the whole is working and provides essential services and resources, in rural areas in particular. She added that the person to person interaction the R&Rs provide is especially important in outlying areas. Another provider agreed, stating her region's resource and referral agency has a strong presence in their area.

### ***Budget Status***

Leslie reported on a mandatory 3% budget cut for all state agencies this year and 4% for next year, making it all the more urgent that the agency focus all of its dollars on directly impacting children.

### **Roundtable Discussion**

Following the updates, attendees were invited to open discussion.

***With the licensing revisions, are you looking at changing ratios?*** BftS is looking further down the road at those kinds of changes and what kind of supports providers would need to comply, perhaps 2013 or 2014.

A provider commented lowering ratios is necessary for quality. Another added that with the state of the economy lowering ratios, which increases costs, would result in fewer children being served. A family provider commented that they already have a lower ratio but are not able to keep raising their rates in this economy.

***Would the CDA requirement be extended to classrooms in centers?*** BftS has not looked at this for centers yet.

***What kinds of initiatives is BftS looking at for raising quality statewide, other than Pre-K?*** BftS is examining how to bring our existing quality initiatives together for a statewide system view of quality. That includes reviewing the Standards of Care program, continuing the Quality Rating & Improvement System research, and looking at how we support national accreditations.

The Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute is evaluating quality in Georgia this year. BftS recognizes that Georgia will need phased in timelines for any statewide drive to raise quality.

***I have seen the value of Resource Coordinators working with programs with a high percentage of children at risk. Our program has been working at getting a higher percentage of Resource Coordinators available. How does BftS assign Resource Coordinator grants to sites?*** 50% of the score for determining allotments came from a program's success using Strengthening Families. Some programs lost funding simply because they didn't document what they were doing. Continuation funding is not automatic.

***Is there anything being done to educate schools on where to send English Language Learners for resources?*** Providers are encouraged to contact local Hispanic community centers, churches, and school

system international centers. To help affected families directly BftS has funded a class at Refugee Services and worked with DeKalb International Center. The department has also hired a bilingual person to call parents on Pre-K waiting lists.

***With the coming requirement in January 2009 that incoming family providers have a CDA, what about existing providers?*** Existing providers will be grandfathered in. Also, BftS will now be doing yearly visits and addressing providers with repeated rule violations.

***Since some providers get credit every year for taking the same class over and over, shouldn't there be set modules in the yearly training?*** Yes. The professional development registry will help with that.

***Other Comments.*** A provider indicated that the Pre-K Special Allotment was a tremendous help. Mary pointed out that the allotment for classroom materials meets the agency's top priority of directly impacting children.