Notes: StateFedConnect Peer-to-Peer Zoom Call, March 2, 2021

Facilitators: Elizabeth Burke Bryant (Rhode Island KIDS COUNT) and Danielle Ewen (EducationCounsel)

Next Call: The next call will be on Tuesday, April 6, 2021, 4:00 ET (first Tuesday of the month at 4 ET). You will receive a reminder and zoom link in advance of the call.

“Ask Me Anything” Call-In: Every other Tuesday at 1:00 ET – (Ask Danielle for call-in info)

March 2, 2021 StateFedConnect Agenda:

- Special focus on Federal Education Funding for Summer Learning: Presentation and Q and A by Bethany Little, Principal, EducationCounsel
- Federal Update (Danielle)
- State Report-Outs and General Q & A (Moderated by Elizabeth)

Overview – Federal Education Funding for Summer – Bethany Little, Principal, EducationCounsel

- Conversation about summer initially focused on “learning loss”
  - What are the best strategies to address learning loss?
  - How to incorporate the growing understanding of the science of learning and development into the design of summer programs?
    - Understanding that children learn through relationships
    - Ensuring a holistic approach to program design even for short-term programs during the summer
  - Are programs acceleration or enrichment or remediation?
  - Children have been out of classrooms for months—goal of summer programs is to get them together in person, maximizing outdoor opportunities for learning
    - What does it look like?
    - What is the local capacity to do this?
    - How to address issues around continued closures of schools and community agencies/state and local rules on social distancing and regulations on size of in-person gatherings?
• How to find and re-engage children?
  • NOTE: the largest drop in enrollment nationally has been in pre-k and kindergarten
• Senator Murphy (D-CT): focus on finding federal funds to provide summer programs
  o Various coalitions engaged—Afterschool Alliance, advocates for students experiencing homelessness and for children with special needs
• Various relief packages (CARES, Consolidated Appropriations Act) have already sent billions to schools but hearing that many states and districts are holding funds in order to address any deficits from revenue losses due to COVID.
  o Suggests targeted funds are needed to address specific needs during the summer months
• American Rescue Plan (ARP) House language:
  o $130 billion for k-12 education, including:
    ▪ 5 percent set-aside (approx. $6 billion) for state education agency (SEA) for learning loss, defined as meeting social, emotional, and academic needs of students; interventions must be evidence-based
    ▪ 20 percent set-aside (approx. $23.5 billion) for local education agencies (LEA) to use for these purposes
      • Including after-school, summer and child care needs
  o NOTE: language may change in Senate version, with interest in:
    ▪ Additional set-aside for summer that can go out immediately
    ▪ Flexible design of programs
  o Because bill is being passed through reconciliation in the Senate, there is very little specific language; therefore implementation will matter
    ▪ USED will provide guidance on allowable uses
    ▪ SEA/LEA will make their own decisions on what should be funded
    ▪ LOTS OF OPPORTUNITY FOR ADVOCACY at federal, state, local levels
• Other federal legislative opportunities:
  o Senator Murphy has a separate summer proposal ($5 billion annual authorization) that will:
    ▪ Define eligible students as anyone in LEA or child care/Head Start
    ▪ Target summer services to the needs of students
    ▪ Coordinate with local early childhood providers

Federal Update – Danielle Ewen

Danielle gave an update on the next COVID Relief bill which is called the American Rescue Plan. Here is a link to the House bill.

She reviewed some of the key items in the House-passed version which passed the Senate on March 6. The Senate made some changes, but in general the information below remains the same.

• It will not include $15 federal minimum wage which was objected to by the Senate Parliamentarian.
Will include $1,400 stimulus checks with full amount going to individuals making $75,000 or less and households making $150,000 or less. Each dependent a person claims on their tax form would be eligible for $1,400.

$128 billion for elementary and secondary education

$39 billion for child care, including approximately $15 billion for CCDBG, and $24 billion for a child care stabilization fund

$1 billion for Head Start

$4.5 billion for LIHEAP

More money for WIC vouchers

There is health care specific language on PPE and Vaccines

COBRA – feds will pay 85% of COBRA

$7.6 billion for Health Centers

$3.5 billion for Mental Health block grants to states with half for Community Mental Health Services Block Grant and the other half for the Substance Abuse Prevention Treatment Program plus funding for other mental and behavioral health-related programs.

Provides additional federal Medicaid funding to states that newly adopt the Medicaid expansion and establishes new option for states to extend postpartum coverage to new mothers enrolled in pregnancy-related Medicaid and CHIP coverage for 12 months (rather than the current 60 days). This 12-months postpartum option is available to states for 7 years. Here is a link to Health provisions in the bill.

Increases Child Care Tax Credit for 2021 to $3,000 per year for child ages 6 to 17 and $3,600 per year for children under age 6.

$100 million for MIECHV

$30 billion in emergency rental assistance and $10 billion for mortgage assistance.

Extends and boosts the enhanced federal payments for unemployment insurance to $400 (from $300). NOTE: This was changed in the Senate bill.

$29 billion to create national COVID-19 vaccination program and an additional $50 billion for virus testing.

Danielle gave a preview of the FY 22 Appropriations process that Congress will be taking up in late summer or early fall. She emphasized that it is important for states to spend the child care dollars that are coming to them from the December, 2020 Consolidated Appropriations Act and the American Rescue Plan to be able to make a strong case for permanently increasing child care as much as possible.

Danielle said the main advocacy push should be that state advocates ask their members to support the American Rescue Plan. She said that with R’s that you know won’t vote for the ARP, you should emphasize that we know you may not be voting for this plan but we do know you are committed to many key items in the plan such as child care and we will continue to be in touch with you on needed early learning, health and development supports for children and families.

Danielle concluded her federal update by saying that strong, ongoing advocacy will be needed for FY22 appropriations.
Elizabeth Burke Bryant asked state advocates to provide updates on how things are going with their legislative sessions and state budget processes, and what impact the coming federal relief is having on state budget discussions. She also said that planning is underway for a virtual meeting of StateFedConnect in July, with more information to follow.

On behalf of the Alliance for Early Success, Elizabeth thanked everyone for participating on the StateFedConnect zoom call, and turned to Danielle for a final word. Danielle said we need strong advocacy on the urgency of $39 billion for Child Care in the American Relief Plan and all of the other key funding for children and families in the Plan, and their strong advocacy for FY22 appropriations. Important to be in touch with your members of Congress. We should continue to reinforce the need for state investments in early childhood as well as the new federal dollars – both are needed. She also said we should really focus on Helene Stebbins’ message on “What if we Made Well-Being Our Bottom Line” in her open letter - “how we need to expand our definition of the bottom line to include the well-being of our people – their access to stable work, quality child care, healthy foods, and safe communities”.

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Alliance for Early Success does not endorse or advocate for specific legislation or candidates.