

**Division of Elementary and Secondary Education - Special Education Unit
Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities
Early Childhood, January 2021**

Current Activities for Early Childhood Program Advisors/619 Coordinator:

- **Multi-state Inclusion Cohort:** The State Leadership Team (SLT) is currently working to establish action items related to the previous indicator analysis work. The SLT chose to prioritize three Indicators of Quality Inclusion the team felt were crucial to address immediately. Sub-committees have been formed for Indicator 1: to formalize processes for the State Leadership Team, Indicator 3: to increase Family Engagement, and Indicator 12: to increase Public Awareness around inclusion.
- **Early Childhood Behavior Support Discussion Group:** The early childhood special education program is convening a cross-sector collaborative to create a comprehensive user-friendly platform that guides early childhood teachers in accessing behavior support services that are age-appropriate and discourage suspensions and expulsions.
- **G.U.I.D.E. for Life PreK Edition:** The preschool GUIDE for Life document is posted on the G.U.I.D.E. for Life web page and is linked to the Early Childhood Special Education page.
- **ECSE Overview Brochure:** The early childhood special education program has created and posted a document for use by outside agencies responsible for referrals to ECSE.
- **Connecting Across Professions Telehealth Lecture Presentation:** Danita Pitts is scheduled to give a presentation on February 16, 2021, for UAMS that gives an overview of child find, eligibility criteria, early childhood special education program services and least restrictive environment considerations for medical providers. The presentation will then be housed in the UAMS Distance Learning Center for use by other medical professionals as continuing education credit. The goal is to expand public awareness and promote consideration of inclusive settings.
- **National Institute for Early Education Research's (NIEER) State PreK Leaders' Peer Learning Community on Using Data on Teaching and Learning to Inform Policy for Preschool Programs:** Representatives from the early childhood special education program, Arkansas Better Chance program, and The Center for Exceptional Families meet frequently with NIEER and a multi-state cohort to discuss issues seen, data implications, and policy regarding the current COVID pandemic.
- **Early Childhood Special Education Website:** The early childhood special education program has been updated to be more user-friendly.

Current Early Childhood Special Education Technical Assistance:

- **Site Visits:** All programs have been contacted this semester to participate in 1:1 meetings to discuss specific program needs, questions, and concerns. Twenty-three of thirty-two programs participated. A second round of visits will be scheduled during the second semester.
- **Early Childhood Virtual Discussion Group:** Monthly meetings are held to give any early childhood special education updates and released guidance, and to allow participants to generate questions, discuss, and plan for current circumstances.

Current Statewide Collaboration Projects:

- **AAIMH** (Arkansas Association of Infant Mental Health) Analyze mental health needs of infants/toddlers/preschoolers and available support services.
- **BehaviorHelp** A workgroup created to support a single point-of-entry support system for teachers struggling to manage challenging behaviors in child care center classrooms.

- **AECCIG** (Arkansas Early Childhood Collaborative Impact Group: formerly Arkansas Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (AECCS) Medical Home Workgroup) Work on drafting recommendations and providing feedback for the plan and standards for Better Beginnings.
- **ELAN** (Equity Leaders Action Network) led by Head Start. Addresses inequities in preschool services for African American boys.
- **Excel by Eight (E8)** Formerly known as the Pritzker Grant, this is a planning grant and initiative to allow a team to develop a well-informed plan for infant and toddler support within the broader realm of developing successful children overall.
- **Learn the Signs, Act Early Network!** A grant designed to bolster early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including through use of the Learn the Signs, Act Early (LTSAE) parent developmental monitoring tool, and to advance the promotion of existing resources that enhance resiliency among families with young children during COVID-19 response efforts.
- **TECI (Teaming for Early Childhood Inclusion) Project** This project is led by the Partners for Inclusive Communities and is designed to build capacity within the early childhood education network for successful inclusion of children with disabilities.

Professional Conference Participation by the Early Childhood Team:

- Improving Data, Improving Outcomes (IDIO) Virtual Conference – October 19-22, 2020
- National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Virtual Annual Conference – November 8-10, 2020