

MEETING NOTES

October 28, 2024

BIG PICTURE UPDATES - LIFE AFTER LITTLE ROCK

Centerline Liberties National Issues Survey - Maternal Health Polling Results - <https://centerlineamerica.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Centerline-Liberties-National-Issues-Survey-Maternal-Health-Memo.pdf>

NCIT POLICY RESEARCH SUBCOMMITTEE

The first thing they wanted to do after the June meeting in AR was to assess existing assets within NCIT members following the convening in Arkansas.

1. **Focus Areas:**
2. **Understanding Current Membership:**
 - Identify who is present and their respective roles.
 - Explore the types of research being conducted, including methodologies, databases used, and target populations.
3. **Data Sharing Practices:**
 - Investigate how collected data is shared with relevant groups.
4. **Action Plan:**
 - Conducting an **Asset Survey** to gather detailed information from individual members on behalf of their organizations.
 - Survey Topics:
 - Age focus of research
 - Content areas of work
 - Types of research conducted
 - Needs for improving research efforts
5. **Current Status:**
 - The survey is open, with a positive response rate so far. Acknowledgment of Phil Noyes from the Voices for Healthy Kids team for assistance in survey setup and distribution.
6. **Next Steps:**
 - Compile and analyze survey results to gain insights into the available assets across networks.
 - Use findings to better organize policy research efforts to support the five states effectively, identifying gaps in data and directing resources towards policy initiatives.

Please take the Policy Research Committee Survey by Nov 8th:
https://americanheart.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8qe0fFL2SWIoHuS

NCIT WEBSITE FOR FIVE STATE INITIATIVE

We now have a website for the Five State Initiative - https://ncit.org/resources/five_state_power-sharing-initiative/. On the website you can find the following and more!

- One-pager and more information on the Five State Power Sharing Initiative
- Notes from the June Meeting
- Current Advocates both state and national partners

If there anything you would like us to add to the website, please email Andrea Guarnero
Andrea.Guarnero@heart.org

STATE TEAM UPDATES

ALABAMA

Overview: The team met in late September and set 30, 60, and 90-day goals and discussed common policy initiatives.

- **30-Day Goal:**
Read and follow up on the recent email communication.
- **60-Day Goal:**
Ensure all team members participate in a follow-up call.
- **90-Day Goal:**
Plan a virtual or in-person meeting. Recognized the timing might overlap with the holiday season, suggesting a potential delay until the beginning of the year.

Long-Term Focus: Aim to collectively understand and align on each other's policy agendas over the next year.

Key Discussion Points:

- The need for funding to support a "quarterback organization" that would facilitate group convenings and collaborative efforts.
- A shared policy priority identified was advocating for an increase in the childcare subsidy in Alabama, which received unanimous agreement from the group.

ARKANSAS

Overview Since the last visit, significant progress has been made following the creation of a gubernatorial task force focused on maternal health. The task force included four subcommittees and held monthly meetings, leading to the generation of recommendations. While the team's work was partially reflected in the Governor's report, there is a consensus that it could have been more fully realized.

Key Developments:

- **Influence of the Walton Family:**
The impact of Walmart and the Waltons on the task force's initiatives is notable. Olivia Walton and Senator John Bozeman held a roundtable in October to follow up on the task force's findings.
- **Community Engagement:**
Several groups are working to create spaces for discussion around legislative sessions and collaboration with the Waltons. For instance, Arkansas United is focusing on convening Hispanic mothers and daughters to engage in this dialogue.
- **Policy Challenges:**
There is concern about Arkansas's lagging status on presumptive Medicaid eligibility for pregnant women and children, and the postpartum extension remains a significant challenge.
- **Positive Developments:**
 - **Doula Care:**
The Doula Alliance of Arkansas has formed and is advocating for doulas, aiming for Medicaid coverage and reimbursement. The Governor highlighted this in her report.
 - **Community Health Workers:**
Initiatives to support community health workers are underway, with potential for reimbursement as well.
 - **Interim Study Proposal:**
Arkansas Advocates are proposing a study on baby bonds and strategic financial support linked to economic growth.
- **Future Policy Focus:**
There is cautious optimism regarding childcare policies and the potential for collaboration with Excel by 8 to engage businesses in workforce and provider policy discussions.
- **Nutrition Security:**
The connection between nutrition security and economic policies is emphasized, especially given Arkansas's high food insecurity rates.

- **Legislative Collaboration:**
Efforts are ongoing to connect with economic leaders and explore how to fill legislative gaps with business engagement, particularly in relation to the Walton family's influence.

Excel by 8 Summit Update

- **Event Focus:** A major summit is scheduled in a couple of weeks, concentrating on:
 - Maternal health
 - Infant and toddler health
 - Childcare
- **Childcare Initiatives:**
 - **Business Coalition:**
The coalition has approximately 75 members and is actively working on childcare-related strategies. Allison has joined the group and aims to learn from other states' experiences.
 - **Tax Credit Opportunities:**
The coalition is exploring tax credit options to incentivize businesses to contribute to their employees' childcare costs.
 - **Teacher Retirement System Participation:**
There is a proposal to allow early childhood educators outside of school systems (like those in childcare centers and family homes) to participate in the teacher retirement system, similar to Pre-K teachers in public schools. This would support and recognize the role of early childhood educators.

FLORIDA -----

Staffing Changes: Philip Noyes Philip.Noyes@heart.org, senior policy analyst, is taking over as the Florida State Captain.

Group Engagement:

- The Florida State group has met to clarify notes from the Arkansas meeting and discuss future engagement strategies. They aim to establish a regular meeting schedule to foster information sharing and build trust among partners.
- There is a focus on expanding the group's membership to include newer voices and grantees who have not yet participated in meetings. Efforts will be made to involve other NCIT members in the discussions.

Policy Priorities: A policy priorities document has been created to outline key focus areas for various organizations and coalitions over the next couple of years. Special thanks to Holly for her assistance with the initial landscape analysis.

Florida Summer EBT Initiative Overview: Florida has not yet opted into Summer EBT, alongside a few other states, and there is a strong need to address summer hunger and improve family financial stability during the summer months. The aim is to support economic outcomes and student education.

Partnerships:

- Collaboration with NCIT and the American Heart Association has been crucial in providing technical assistance for the Summer EBT campaign.
- The Florida in-state group, which includes various NCIT partners, is working to recruit additional stakeholders to bolster support.

Previous Efforts: Florida was the last state to opt into Pandemic EBT, primarily due to concerted efforts from a coalition that mobilized public and political pressure.

Current Strategies:

- **Active Campaign for 2025:** The focus is on getting Florida to opt into Summer EBT for 2025, even before the legislative session begins in December.
- **Supportive Actions:**
 - An op-ed supporting Summer EBT has been drafted with the help of the American Heart Association's state director, Tiffany, to raise awareness.

- Leveraging the extensive network of the American Heart Association for outreach to legislators.
- **Local Impact Data:** A one-pager is being developed to illustrate the local impact of Summer EBT, showing how many children would benefit, the economic benefits, and addressing local food insecurity. This data is crucial for convincing legislators of the program's importance.

Advocacy Focus:

- The strategy has shifted to work directly with legislators, providing them with localized data and compelling narratives to advocate for appropriations for Summer EBT.
- A Zoom briefing is planned for December, co-hosted by the American Heart Association and United Way, to further engage state-based organizations and their lobbying efforts.

Legislative Support: Efforts are underway to find Republican champions in the legislature who can advocate for the initiative, with positive indications from a few legislators.

Conclusion: The campaign for Summer EBT in Florida is ongoing and supported by NCIT and American Heart Association partnerships, with an emphasis on local data and legislative advocacy.

MISSISSIPPI -----

Overview: Since the meeting in Arkansas, significant strides have been made to enhance Mississippi's early childhood system, focusing on producing tangible benefits for children, families, and communities.

Key Activities:

- **NCIT Document Finalization:**
 - The group has met four times to finalize the NCIT document for Mississippi.
- **Collaboration for Grants:**
 - Convened a coalition of organizations to apply for the Pritzker Children's Initiative grant for Paid Family and Medical Leave. While the main grant application was unsuccessful, a smaller grant was received, allowing participation in a cohort with eight other states.
- **Forum for the Future:**
 - The Mississippi team serves as the backbone organization for the Forum for the Future, committed to transforming the early childhood system. This includes ensuring access to affordable, quality childcare and fostering a stable, competitive childcare workforce.
 - The coalition consists of approximately 80 to 90 members, advocating for sustained resources and investment in the childcare system.
- **Focus Areas:**
 - Supporting early learning collaboratives and examining the true cost of childcare in Mississippi.
 - Addressing childcare wages and prioritizing initiatives related to healthy families and strong babies.
- **Steering Committee Development:**
 - A steering committee is being formed to identify 3 to 4 priority areas for the coalition, gathering feedback and support to align on future initiatives.
- **Collaboration with Initiatives:**
 - Exploring synergies between the Forum for the Future and the 5 Set Initiative to enhance collaborative efforts.
 - **Alignment of Focus Areas - PN 3 vs. PN 5:** The 5 State initiative focuses on PN 3, while the Forum for the Future targets PN 5. Discussions emphasized how to align efforts without duplicating work or causing confusion.
 - **Key Issues - Medicaid Expansion:**
 - Both groups aim to support a coalition working on Medicaid expansion in Mississippi, which is a top priority this year.
 - Strategies to engage organizations not traditionally focused on healthcare to recognize the value of Medicaid expansion and support this initiative were discussed.
 - **Resource Sharing - Advocacy Resources:**
 - Mississippi Early Learning Alliance (MELA) has provided access to a substantial mailing list for advocacy updates.
 - The Forum's Advocacy Council can offer ongoing legislative updates to both groups, ensuring everyone stays informed and connected.

Upcoming Meetings: Due to time constraints, a large meeting before December isn't feasible; however, plans for a significant gathering after the legislative session next year are in motion, with financial resources allocated for this purpose.

Technical Assistance: There's potential for bringing in resources from the National Collaborative for Infants and Toddlers, which could provide valuable technical assistance to Mississippi groups.

Identifying Gaps:

- Acknowledgment of missing partners in the current coalition, particularly in the area of nutrition. Efforts are being made to find and engage these essential groups.
- The Mississippi Black Women's Roundtable has shown interest in addressing preemption issues, potentially adding to the coalition's focus.

Next Steps: A commitment was made to meet with various organizations in Mississippi to assess existing resources, identify gaps, and explore how to bring additional partners to the table.

TEXAS

Team Introduction: As a new member of the Voices for Healthy Kids team, Petra has been inspired by the momentum established in Little Rock and the ongoing efforts in various states. Each state presents unique needs and challenges, and I'm eager to contribute to our work in Texas.

Recent Engagements: Recently, Petra connected with Alec Puentes from the American Heart Association in Texas. They discussed the local political landscape and the urgent needs for investment in infrastructure to support ongoing initiatives.

Key Needs Identified

1. **Long-Term Funding:**
 - Texas requires sustained investments to maintain momentum and partnerships. There are few statewide funders, making it difficult to secure ongoing resources.
2. **Establishing a C4:**
 - A suggestion was made to explore the creation of a C4 organization to facilitate long-term project management and funding.
3. **Messaging Resources:**
 - There is a need for state-specific messaging and templates to educate lawmakers on the importance of early childhood investments.
4. **Mentorship and Leadership Development:**
 - Ongoing support for new leaders and mentorship programs is crucial. This includes sharing lessons learned from successes and failures in advocacy efforts.
5. **Peer-to-Peer Mentorship:**
 - Fostering interstate connectivity through mentorship can enhance collaboration and effectiveness in advocacy.

Momentum Maintenance: The focus is on setting clear expectations and maintaining energy within the teams. Every state has unique challenges, and Texas requires tailored strategies to move forward.

Goals and Planning: The team aims to collectively set attainable goals and identify key priorities in the P3 space. Developing a prevention plan and ensuring that future funding aligns with these P3 policies is essential.

Next Steps

- Establish a cadence of meetings to maintain momentum.
- Consider creating a 30, 60, 90-day action plan to outline communication structures, decision-making processes, and team objectives.