

**CITY OF NORWALK
NORWALK EARLY CHILDHOOD COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
JANUARY 14, 2009**

ATTENDANCE: Betsy Bain, Chair; Linda Wilock, Nwlc Department of Youth Services Director; Mary Budrawich, Nwlc Public Schools Early Childhood Specialist; Lauriston Avery, Five Mile River School Director; Evelyn Balamaci, Department of Social Services Operations Manager; Hyla Crane, Stepping Stones Educational Director; Crissy Davis, Tumble Bugs Director; Cathy DeCesare, Norwalk/Wilton United Way; Christine Dudek-Ratushnuk, Nwlc Health Department; Barbara Fitzpatrick, Star Rubino Center Director; Adele Gordon, Norwalk Smiles Director; Dr. Sally Grosse, Sherelle Harris, Norwalk Public Library Branch Children's Librarian; George Hensinger; Betty Karkut, Mid Fairfield Human Services Council Director; Patricia Kierecki, N.E.O.N. Head Start; Shari Konn-Andreade, 2-1-1 Early Childhood Specialist; Bea Krawiecki, Nwlc Public Schools Special Education Administrator; Curtis Law, Nwlc Housing Authority Director; Ligia Masilamani, Family and Children's Agency Senior Manager; Mary Oster, Naramake Family Resource Center; Pam Silverstone, N.E.O.N. Child Development Health Manager; Joan Parris, Norwalk Community College Early Childhood Director; Betsy Perry, Mid Fairfield Child Guidance; Lynn Sadlon Mortiz, Fox Run Family Resource Center Director; Jeanne Taylor-Hard, Paula Trujillo

STAFF: Barbara Smart, Rosalie Witt

OTHERS: Carolyn Fuller, MFCGC/System of Care; Rev. M Norris, Bethel AME Church; David Sarncek, Norwalk Community Health Center; Mary Peniston, Norwalk Public Schools; Sandra Urbro, Fox Run Family Resource Center Parent Educator

CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Bain called the meeting to order at 9:55 a.m.

UPDATE ON BEHAVIORAL HEALTH ISSUES

Mr. Greenbaum from the Child Guidance Center of Mid Fairfield County came forward and addressed the group on Behavioral Health and Primary Care. He introduced Mr. Larry Cross and Dr. Andrew Lustbader

Mr. Cross said that at the Norwalk Community health Center, the word Community was key. He then acknowledged the two NCH Board members who were present. One of the major issues of children not being ready for kindergarten, which is related to success in school. A grant was received for a two year period to address this problem. Mr. Cross then gave a brief overview of the scope of the grant and how it was being implemented. This included training to the pediatricians and intervention with family social situations. 1,100 children were served during the two year span of the grant. 120 cases were identified from the screening and approximately half of those were agreeable to receiving services. Mr. Cross said that there was strong resistance from the families regarding the suggestion of developmental or social issues.

With the children who did receive services, having the families continue to received the services proved to be problematic. Most of the children would attend for one or two sessions and then discontinue. Mr. Cross said that he suspected that there was a larger group of children in need of services than the 11% that were identified.

Dr. Andrew Lustbader, the head of the Mid Fairfield County Child Guidance Center came forward. He said that he was very impressed with how the community had decided to take a stand about providing services for all the children of Norwalk who need it. He then reviewed the details of the national model. When children are in need of services, often a private physician will refer the patient to a specialist most of the time. However in the public sector, the rate of those who will follow through is lower.

Dr. Lustbader said that the focus of his agency was to provide a level of supervision to nurse practitioners and pediatricians to help support families with children with problems. The pediatricians would then make referrals for the children identified as in need of services. He then proceeded to give a detailed description of how the screening, evaluation and treatment is handled at his agency. Many of the children are desperate for help and often the families are resistant. Success is measured by the number of discharges.

Dr. Lustbader was then asked about the percentage of patients who were boys and the percentage of boys on medication. He then spoke about the researcher, Mark Rydell, who he works with at Yale, who collected the information in relation to this. It was noted that approximately half of the cases at Mid Fairfield County were hyperactivity or ADHD cases. Dr. Lustbader said that often hyperactivity and attention disorders were often signs of other psychological problems.

A discussion regarding the Husky program, ADHD, medication and the private and public sectors questions then followed.

Mr. Cross then introduced two staff members of Mid Fairfield County Child Guidance Center. Dr. Gail Melanson came forward and said that she was a developmental psychologist. She said that she worked with the school, the parents and others to provide consultation services to preschools and daycare. Primarily her focus is on those children who are challenges in the classroom such as acting out, which usually social/emotional issues. The goals are to help the child remain in the program rather than being expelled and prepare for kindergarten and regular school. Dr. Melanson said that her focus is just on Norwalk and the surrounding area.

Ms. Betsy Parry, who works for the Early Consultation Services, and is a member of the Council, came forward. She said that her area covers down to Greenwich. Ms. Parry then reviewed the scope of her job and the services she is able to provide for families. Most of Ms. Parry's work is actually done in the classroom and includes anger management and social skills.

Mr. Cross then concluded by saying that the Childhood Guidance center had changed their service structure and it no longer has a waiting list. The biggest challenge is providing services to the Latino population. There were several questions about program. Mr. Cross said that he would like to find a Latino with an MSW or a Master's Degree.

MINUTES

**** MS. TAYLOR-HARD MOVED THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 12, 2008.**

The following corrections were noted:

Page 2, paragraph 2 under **GOOD NEWS**: please change the following from "Nathaniel Eli" to "Nathaniel Ely".

Page 2, paragraph 2, under **UPDATES ON GRANTS**: please change the following from "by the government in the funding" to "by the State Government in the funding"

Page 5, paragraph 1, line 2: please change the following from "Department of Education but later moved out into another department, which she believes harmed the FRCs politically." To "the Bureau of Early Childhood but later moved out into another Bureau, which she believes harmed the FRCs politically."

**** THE MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF NOVEMBER 12, 2008 AS CORRECTED PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

GOOD NEWS.

Ms. Bain gave a brief overview of recent good news about early childhood education.

UPDATE ON GRANTS.

Linda Wilock all the slots are filled for School Readiness. Upcoming application dates for the full two years will be announced.

Ms. Wilock said that DSS was recommending eliminating Quality Enhancement Grants.

OTHER GRANTS.

Ms. Bain said that she had attended a meeting at Graustein with Mary Peniston others regarding the funding.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Dr. Grosse said that on Saturday morning, the parent engagement team would be sponsoring another workshop for parents at Steppingstones. It will start at 8:30 and there will be breakfast, childcare provided and free.

Ms. Parris said that the NCC and Norwalk Early Childhood Fall conference was a success with over 300 people registered and close to 300 people in attendance. April 4th will be the next conference. This is a result of the lab school grant that NCC has.

Ms. Harris said that there will be a introduction to the autism program in March at the South Norwalk Library.

Ms. Sadlon said that the Norwalk Family Resources Centers and others would be sponsoring a workshop at Fox Run on how to set up a successful family day care. She asked for help in distributing the flyers into the community. The presentations will be in English, but there will be printed material in Spanish.

Mr. Hensinger said that the State is running a series workshop on Infant & Toddler behavior.

Ms. Gordon announced that on February 7th, Norwalk Smiles will be providing free dental care for Norwalk's children. An appointment is necessary.

Ms. Davis said that Tumblebugs will be offering preschool scholarships for some open spots.

Norwalk Public Schools through Department of Special Education is offering half time programs. Parents with typical children can call the Norwalk Public Schools and speak with Jose. The tuition cost is approximately \$4.00 an hour.

Ms. Bain reminded everyone that the Council is in the second year of the plan. Next year, the Council will need to focus on the plan and updating it.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Bain adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Sharon L. Soltes
Telesco Secretarial Services

