



State Advocates Learning Community Call re: **Serving Additional Children**

Thursday July 26th, 2018

Overview: Panel discussion with Jennifer Greppi, [Parent Voices](#) (CA), Kim Kruckel, Patti Prunhuber (CA), Child Care Law Center, Shay Everitt, [Children at Risk](#) (TX) and Melanie Bronfin, [Louisiana Policy Institute for Children](#) (LA).

- *Tell us how your state will use the new CCDBG dollars to serve more families on the wait list. How many families will be served compared to the current wait list?*
 - **California:** 1.2 million children in California are eligible for child care assistance but are not receiving it so, the state focused on using the CCDBG increase to move children off of the extremely long wait list.
 - California has both contracts and an alternative payment program, which provides eligible families with vouchers that can be used for child care centers, family child care homes, and FFN providers.
 - Last year the state offered 33,000 of these vouchers but they were able to add 13,407 in 2018 -11,307 of those vouchers are due to federal dollars. These slots are not a permanent addition as they end on June 30th, 2020.
 - We felt that families were better off with two years of child care than none. It will help some mothers get their AA degree and others to gain more stable financial footing.
 - **Texas:** The wait list has about 68,000 children, which grew to that high number in part because the Texas Workforce committee put a freeze on enrollment in advance of the 12-month eligibility kicking in. Only about 26% of all eligible children are being served through the subsidy program.
 - The new CCDBG money is being used to take 28,000 children off the wait list by December.
 - **Louisiana:** Last July, the state created the wait list with 6,200 children for the first time. Louisiana is only serving 15,000 children.
 - \$28 million of the \$40 million of the CCDBG funds will be used to move 4,400 children off the wait list.

- We expect that once the wait list is cleared it will go up again.
- *Was serving more families a priority for advocates before the new CCDBG dollars became available? If you were working towards an increase in families served what was your strategy?*
 - **California:** After 2008 the statewide wait list was defunded so hundreds of thousands of families around the state are no longer on one centralized list. It has always been a priority to provide child care assistance to eligible families. However, the recession led to the state defunding the wait list making it difficult to track the need. We used a twofold strategy.
 - Gave support to families who were already accessing child care assistance by making sure the state agency administering child care adopted had 12-month eligibility guidelines and worked for the “unfreezing of the state’s eligibility guidelines which had been frozen for 10 years. Once this stability was in place, they wanted to push harder for more families to have the ability to access subsidies. Having the federal number to jump start was a huge benefit.
 - Parents were calling in droves every day about their waiting for child care assistance. They listened to parents’ experiences of being on the waitlist and brought them to the Capital to have their voices heard by government officials. Developed a photo essay called “waiting for change.”
 - Access was already this year’s top priority for advocates, and new federal money helped jumpstart the campaign.
 - **Texas:** Children at Risk has been doing this work for the past three years, and waitlists have varied across the state—some high and some at 0. This is because there are 28 different Workforce Boards and they have such local control that there are 28 different waitlist management practices.
 - Many decisions are made across 28 workforce boards, and advocates noticed that localities had very different approaches to managing and collecting data about the need for child care.
 - Advocates saw that the quality was very bad and focused on improving the quality of care first before increasing the number of children served.
 - State agencies always talked about the struggle versus affordability and quality. We got to address both with the new funds-serving more children and increasing rates.
 - **Louisiana:** We took a very different approach. The state had shrunken child care assistance from almost 40,000 children to about 15,000. With no wait list, they made it very difficult to apply. But the state (in response to advocacy) had taken

steps that set the stage. They decreased the number of hours of work required to be eligible, increased the eligibility income level, and created the waitlist – all of which created and documented new demand. Advocates also engaged the business community. The state government was very interested in improving access to and quality of child care; however, they were nervous about spending state dollars. So when the federal dollars came, that gave the Department of Education cover to do what they probably already wanted to do.

- For the past three years, we worked with the business community to emphasize the important role child care plays in the work force.
 - We did a *Losing Ground report* and showed the cost to employers of not having child care.
 - The fight for state money helped set the stage for federal money.
 - Pushed with employers, Chambers of Commerce, people supporting increased child care assistance to help push and lobby for funds.
- *Has there been pushback on this use of funds? From Whom?*
 - **California:** Most of the pushback came from internal departments because there was a misconception that the increase in CCDBG funding was one time only because of initial messaging by HHS. Then there was a quick turnaround from the feds that this was not one time, but the damage was done, and they had to spend time convincing the state that it was not one-time funding. They had to accept a two-year time limit for the subsidies. There is still a long way to go with pushback from internal department vs. outside advisors.
 - **Texas:** There was no pushback about serving more children; however, advocates are reviewing budgets to make sure that state agencies haven't overextended the local boards by increased reimbursement rates and setting high local targets for removing children from the waitlist.
 - **Louisiana:** There was no push back from the legislature, Governor, State Board of Education or the Department of Education who is responsible for child care because they were already primed to increase funding due to the work of child care advocates over the past few years. CCDBG funding was viewed as a relief and there was minimal concern about whether it was a onetime only increase. Using the \$28 million out of the \$40 million means they will have some carryover and can keep the subsidies going.
 - *How does the federal money impact your agenda to increase state funding?*
 - **California:** The Early Care and Education coalition pushed for the Billion for Babies Campaign which asked for a billion dollars to increase access to child care and a multitude of quality initiatives. They were able to get just under \$1 billion but that was only able to help 13,000 more children, mostly infants and toddlers,

where the need is the greatest. Advocates also worked to make sure that the CCDBG money wasn't used to pay for the promise the state made three years ago. California is looking for different ways to fund care through local ballot initiatives which were successful in San Francisco but not in Alameda, but they came very close to winning there.

- Patti- They are concerned about the danger of backfilling even if they did not see a lot of state funds in access. They are doing a defensive campaign for a 3-year budget deal that was a multi-year commitment to investments made in prior years.
- **Texas:** The state does not invest beyond what is required by the federal match and Texas has had a tight budget for the last few legislative sessions, so advocates would start every conversation with the intention of remaining fiscally neutral. They had to push the government to make smarter and better investments. There might be a surplus next year, but the funding is restricted to certain items. It gives us a little wiggle-room, but legislation is much more likely to succeed if it has no fiscal note attached. So that will still be our main strategy.
- **Louisiana:** The increase in CCDBG did make it difficult to also increase state funds. Advocates tried to increase the state budget without publicizing the CCDBG increase but they were still unable to lock down a \$5-million state funding increase. Louisiana has been struggling with budget issues however we are only spending \$28 million of the \$40 million from the CCDBG increase.
- *How are you messaging around the use of the new dollars? How is the state messaging the new availability to families?*
 - **California:** We were very excited about the reauthorization and the legislature said that without new money they were not interested in new standards. So, we said, we all agree on these great new standards and now we have some funding to implement them. What is not as encouraging is that the state has not issued a management bulletin or other instruction to the field yet. There was a lot of warning language that the new children were just a two-year commitment. We hope that when local organizations get the new funds in their contract that they will do outreach to families. We really want to show how it is benefiting families. Advocates want to put a survey on the ground to see how things are going and to see how families are benefiting. They were very excited about new CCDBG funding and now they must measure the impact. They want to show that the state vouchers meet the needs of families.
 - **Louisiana:** There hasn't been an official announcement about the wait list yet. There is talk about opening it commensurate with the beginning of the school year. There was lots of discussion at the end of the session. However, the press

has picked up on the CCDBG usage and the Department of Education released a survey asking people how they would like to use the new funds—offering the options of reimbursement rate increases, paying for new children, background checks or a new professional development initiative. To some degree, they want to validate what they are already planning to do and see how important the rate increases are.

- **Texas:** Messaging to families is very localized, and we do not yet have a solid grasp on how well messaging has been going. Local workforce boards are just scrambling now. We as advocates are messaging the new funding and offering a huge thank you to the state. At the same time, we are still emphasizing the point that we need to build upon what has been done with this increase. Interestingly, the state government issued a press release that did not acknowledge that the improvements to the child care system were mostly due to increased federal money and implied that all of Texas child care was high quality.
- *How do you plan to follow the use of these dollars to document the impact?*
 - **California:** Advocates are planning on tracking how fast the money is being spent and where it is going. They were going to look at the quantitative results, but our question has prompted them to look at the qualitative side. In 2014, after the CCDBG reauthorization they formed a huge stakeholder group and now will combine our talents and capacity to do evaluation.
 - Parent Voices is really considering going back to recreate a photovoice campaign about families who rely upon (or need) child care assistance. In 2013 after reauthorization stakeholder groups combined talents and capacity to do a photo campaign to demonstrate what families faced on waitlist. They did this to give a real picture of what means for a 6-year-old to a 2-year-old and they are looking to redo that campaign.
 - **Texas:** In the spring, we submitted a data request to get information about children (demographics, where they are getting care etc.) and information about providers (#of children they are serving, if they are in QRIS etc.). We plan to request this information again next spring to see a comparison of spending pre and post the CCDBG increase. We also will gather qualitative data about the use of spending from local boards. You have given me a lot of great ideas. In the spring, we submitted a big request to our lead agency to collect child level and provider level data. It should give us a snapshot in time as of April 2018. We hope to do it again in a year. We will go to talk to our 28 Local Workforce Boards. We might do another data request for mid point data.
 - **Louisiana:** It is a great idea to create stories that we can use for advocacy. It will be clear for us how many families we move off the wait list. In terms of

monitoring the amounts of money, we haven't give much thought to it yet. Now it will be easier to monitor.

- **Questions and comments**

- California is having trouble getting data about the length of the stay of subsidies. Other states are also looking for a solution to this problem.
- Are most advocates using funds to raise rates? Or have other states used it to decrease the size of their waitlist?
- Is anyone's state agency collecting how long children are staying in one center with the subsidy? TX asked for this data and told they could not track it.
 - Montana has not been transparent about their use of the CCDBG funds, the state may be using it for rate increases, licensing, or background checks.
- Karen Schulman noticed in her report about state implementation of CCDBG funds that the increase in CCDBG was combined with a decline in the use of TANF funds for child care. Once we adjust for inflation, the country is spending the lowest amount of money on child care since 2001. Even though we have made substantial progress recently, we still are making up for lost ground.
- The next state advocates call will be in September, please continue to reach out to Helen if you have any updates about activity in your state.