



Hub State Spotlight: Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children

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The NCIT Newsletter offers *Spotlights*, a regular monthly feature that provides an ongoing opportunity to share the work happening at the state or community level, and foster connections among grantees. This document highlights the work of the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children, the state grantee for Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children Prenatal-to-Three Goals

Our big goal is to increase the number of Pennsylvania infants and toddlers from families with low incomes receiving high-quality services by 25 percent by 2023 and 50 percent by 2025. That will lead to about 89,000 at the end of 2025. A lot of the work focuses on informing families that the services are available and that we are pursuing policy goals we hope will improve their lives. The policy agenda the Pennsylvania state team is tackling includes the issues related to child care, home visiting, children's health insurance, perinatal health, nutrition (WIC), and lead screening and abatement.

Challenges to Achieving Our Goals

Pennsylvania is unique in that prior to the Pritzker grant, we had coalitions up and running—and accomplishing a lot) for our child care work (the Start Strong PA coalition) and home visiting work (Child Care Begins at Home). Determining how to incorporate the maternal and child health pieces into those campaigns was a bit of a challenge at first. We're excited because we just launched our perinatal and child health campaign, Thriving PA, which helps to tie this work all together into our larger early learning table.

It was challenging just getting those folks connected to the work. We've all known each other for a very long time and have worked together for quite a while but bringing new voices to the table was also a challenge we faced at the beginning. It's gotten a lot better though, and it's been great to see that coming together.

Another challenge for us has been bringing the parent voice to the table. It's difficult to get parents engaged because they don't always have the time to really devote to some of this work. We've done a lot of community outreach through our partner, the United Way of Pennsylvania. We also are working with the Center for Schools and Communities to start a family leadership learning community. That kicked off recently and has helped us bring parents into the work and engage them in how to be advocates and leaders for their family and community. Parents who participate in our focus groups who are interested in being more involved in the work were asked to apply for this learning community. The focus of the learning community is on making its members feel comfortable with and empowered by using their voice, as well as what methods they can use to communicate their level of satisfaction with what's going on.

We're hoping this will lead to parents being more engaged in individual work subcommittees. We have quite a broad agenda. That, in and of itself, presents a challenge--we're doing everything from child care to children's health insurance and WIC. Mostly we want parents to feel comfortable bringing their experiences to the table.

Our Stakeholders

We have a leadership table that is made up of the subcommittee lead organizations, as well as state agency representation, parents, and other influential individuals who are a part of our larger collaborative table.

- Allies For Children, in Pittsburgh, is leading our nutrition and WIC work.
- Maternity Care Coalition, in Philadelphia, is leading our perinatal work.
- Children First, also in Philadelphia, is leading our lead screening and abatement work.
- Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children is leading the children's health insurance and home visiting work.
- Trying Together (the community grantee), in Pittsburgh, is leading the child care work and Pennsylvania Association for the Education of Young Children (PennAEYC) is co-chairing that work.
- We partner with United Way of Pennsylvania on our community engagement work.
- The Center for Schools and Communities is working with us on the family leadership learning community piece.

Pennsylvania chose to bring all these organizations together, which institutionalizes the work in a positive way. But it's challenging making sure that the organizations aren't focused only on their particular piece of the work. On the other hand, as Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children came into this work, we definitely had more expertise in the child care and home visiting space as opposed to the perinatal and child health space. So, we focused on bringing those experts to the table that have been working in those policy areas for a long time. It's been great to see all those organizations working together so well and how our policy areas have intersected in the larger birth-to-three space. It has been beneficial for us as a broader collaborative to have them at the wheel.

We're also working closely with our state. We have representation from Governor Wolf's office at our leadership table. We also have representation from our Department of Human Services and more specifically, our Office for Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) and the Department of Health. That team has been fantastic at helping us take our issues further and sharing data. Data has been a critical component of this work. Pennsylvania has a robust data agreement and we are excited that the team helped keep this work moving along. The team members also sit on all our subcommittees and have been engaged.

Bringing Parents to the Table

Bringing parents to the table helps us understand what policies look like on the ground, i.e., how they're being implemented and what their outcomes are. We need to make sure that parents are in the feedback loop to ensure our policy goals are having the intended impact. We do have parent voice on our leadership table, which has been very helpful. And we've been fortunate that we have a parent who is very active in the child care and early education space. She also has a daughter with special needs, so she brings a lot of that expertise to the table, but certainly we want to hear from other parents and work on getting them more engaged at the leadership level. I think that's going to come with time and additional engagement opportunities.

In child care, we held 12 listening sessions across the state for parents and providers to inform our table about how the American Rescue Plan Act dollars should be spent for Pennsylvania. Our goal was to bring providers and parents to the table to say to them that we are receiving historic funding for child care and we want to make sure that we're using it in the best way possible to promote high quality, access, and affordability for parents and providers. Through those listening sessions, we came out with several recommendations that we put forward to our Administration and OCDEL at a critical time during our fiscal year budget process and as OCDEL was developing plans on how to spend the approximately \$1.18 billion in funding our state received.

Supporting Families of Infants and Toddlers and Pregnant Women Who Face Significant Barriers to Supports and Services

We're doing great work through our community engagement focus groups. United Way of Pennsylvania is leading that work and being intentional about where we are going in the state to get feedback. During the planning grant phase, we went all across the state to speak with parents and we have continued that effort throughout the implementation phase. We have been strategic in getting feedback from both urban and rural communities. We also are looking at diverse communities, where we have made it a priority to find translators so that we can ensure all voices are being heard and families feel comfortable sharing their experiences.

Moving forward, we're going to be doing more targeted outreach, looking at each individual policy issue area. We're starting with child care and lead screening and abatement and speaking with those subgroup leads and committees, asking where the populations are that we need to engage with and how we get those voices to the table. United Way of Pennsylvania has been great. It has a presence in just about every county throughout the state and it's well connected to its communities. In addition, it knows that if it doesn't have the expertise, or the opportunity to bring those parents to the table, it can depend on its partnerships with various organizations within the community to help bring them to the table.

We've done a lot of work with the Census and looking at some marginalized populations through that work. We were part of a broader coalition that was doing all the Census gathering, so we've established good relationships with a lot of those partners that have access to those populations.

Looking a little deeper into perinatal health, one of our policy areas, immigrant communities are more likely to go to birthing centers as opposed to hospitals and more traditional healthcare providers. Community outreach and having a diverse set of stakeholder groups at our collaborative table has informed our policy work. These stakeholders will raise important points as we are discussing them because they have the direct touch points with the communities where we might not. We've been fortunate to have this level of outreach in Pennsylvania and it is influencing our equity work.

Connection Between the State and Community Work

Whether you're engaging at the grassroots or grassroots levels, there's an opportunity to see what is working and what can be replicated at other tables. We've talked with TryingTogether, thinking through some of the folks that have been identified at the state level, or the reverse at the county level, and how we can leverage the back and forth there. Additionally, looking at the strategy and tactics that we've seen work well at one table and how they may be duplicated at the other table has been helpful.

Our Commitment to Race Equity

When we made a commitment to race equity, we quickly realized community engagement was a central part of that. In addition, the stakeholder partners that we've been working with for decades are now being

brought into conversations on this topic. All our partners are enthusiastic about ensuring not only that we bring parents and providers into the conversation, but also that everybody has the same desire to make sure we're looking at everything through a race equity lens.