



CT Office of Early Childhood Parent Cabinet Meeting Minutes February 2, 2026 *Rescheduled due to Snow Closure*

Time & Location: 6pm, Zoom

Co-Facilitators: Parent Cabinet members: Amber Alessandro (region 5) & Mallory Paige (region 5)

Members Present at start: Regan (left early), Jenny C. (region 1), Shannon, Raquel (region 2), Tiffanie, Jessica (arrived late) and Christina (region 3), Cris, Kelly S. (region 4), Mallory, Amber (Region 5), Stephanie (region 6). Absent: Tricia (Region 4). Vacancies: Region 5 and 6

Mission: *To build strong connections, listen intentionally, and partner with Connecticut families of young children, communities, and OEC to incorporate the expertise of all parents throughout the early childhood system to ensure family-driven equitable policies and programs.*

Meeting Purpose (*Why is this meeting needed?*): Kick off the new year, share updates from OEC leadership, review Parent Cabinet initiatives, and engage members in planning and community-building activities.

Intended Outcomes (*What do we want to achieve by the end of this? What will success look like?*):

- Members have clarity on OEC updates and any questions answered
- Members provide input on final updated logic model and community conversation planning
- Members learn more about Local Needs Assessment and begin to think about how they could help
- Members give input on outreach strategies

Agenda Item/Topic	Facilitator	Notes	Key Takeaways and Implications for Parent Cabinet Members
Welcome & meeting logistics	Chenae Russell, Parent Cabinet Coordinator,	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminded attendees that the meeting is public and only members and presenters may speak 	

	OEC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraged camera use, use of chat, reactions, and raised hand features. • Reiterated group norms/collective agreements and mission. • Acknowledged recent January birthdays: Amber (Jan 22.) 	
PC member Announcements, Highlights	Amber Alessandro, PCM + Chenae R.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third newsletter published; Spanish translations in progress. • 2025 evaluations completed; results to be shared next meeting. • New member onboarded: Yesenia Fuentes (Region 6). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share out newsletter • New member to join next meeting
OEC Updates & Announcements	<p>Interim Commissioner Elena Trueworthy, OEC Deputy Commissioner David Morgan, OEC Karen Pascale, Head Start Collaboration Office Director, OEC</p> <p>Cris Jimenez-Porrata PC member on Advisory Board Maggie Adair, Communications & Legislative Program Manager, OEC</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of David Morgan as Deputy Commissioner for Early Childhood Access & Family Engagement. • Expansion of Early Start childcare spaces: 1,039 new slots awarded to 56 applicants (\$18.1M total funding). • Birth to three Single Point of entry Request for Proposals (RFP) for an agency to help coordinate calls for referrals for families closed 2/2. Requests for Proposals (RFPs), Requests for Applications (RFAs), and Requests for Information (RFIs) - Connecticut Office of Early Childhood • Preschool Development Grant awarded to Connecticut to strengthen early childhood systems. • Endowment Early Childhood Education Endowment (\$300M): sustainability goals, workforce stabilization, equitable access, quality improvement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advisory Board oversees governance, investment strategy, and reporting. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocacy strategies: testimony, legislator engagement, parent leader collaboration.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Public hearing was held in December.<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cris highlighted the feedback from providers and families- the issue of being on enrollment lists for care 4 Kids which puts a strain on the positions available that the providers have with waiting for families to get off which impacts the workforce needing those spaces filled. The importance of the work of the advisory board for the whole system for families and workforce.• Parent Cabinet Coordinator submitted written testimony in support of the work of the endowment on behalf of the Parent cabinet.• Federal updates: Care 4 Kids program enhancements and funding stability.• Legislative session starts 2/4 with Governor's budget revealed• Interim Commissioner will be testifying about her background in front of the Executive nomination Committee to go to Senate for confirmation as Commissioner.• Legislative priorities include sustaining the \$300M endowment and workforce support.• There was a recent behavioral health webinar that	
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		<p>highlighted Head Start principles and family wellness with Parent Cabinet leader and Head Start Policy Council member Mallory Paige (region 5) on a panel.</p>	
<p>Subcommittee Updates (W.E.L.L. & Data)</p>	<p>Co-Chairs- Lorna Thomas-Farquharson, Program Manager, Behavioral Health Initiatives, OEC + Mallory Paige PC member region 5</p> <p>Co-chairs- Coral Wonderly, Data Scientist, OEC + Stephanie PC member, region 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • W.E.L.L Subcommittee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mallory and Lorna shared the rename of previous Community & family Engagement subcommittee to Wellness, Engagement, and Lasting Leadership or W.E.L.L. Subcommittee. The subcommittee is planning its first of a series of regional community conversation on Feb 28. • This subcommittee is working in connection to the OEC behavioral cross-division group • Data subcommittee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coral and Stephanie unveiled updated logic model visualization explaining how it aligns with strategic goals and data-driven decision-making. • Stephanie also shared refining outreach forms to capture more accurate data on family engagement and program impact." The subcommittee presented recent data showing increased participation in Parent Cabinet outreach events, highlighting the effectiveness of new engagement strategies. • Shared tip for PC leaders to submit into outreach form right after each engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirmed WELL Subcommittee community conversation date: February 28, 2026. • Agreed to share updated logic model visualization with all members. • Consensus on improving outreach forms for better data collection.

<p>Local Needs Assessment (LNA) Overview Part 1</p>	<p>Karen Pascale, Head Start Collaboration Office Director, OEC Malissa Griffith, Parent Outreach Initiative Program Manager, OEC Jess Bialecki, Director of Early Childhood Education, Social Impact Partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies service gaps and prioritizes resources across regions; aligns with PDG goals and OEC priorities for equitable access and family engagement. <p><i>Quote (Jess): "This toolkit empowers regions to make data-driven decisions and advocate for equitable access."</i></p> <p><i>Quote (Karen): "We want to ensure every family's voice is heard in shaping local services."</i></p> • Toolkit Components <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Survey templates for families/providers ○ Facilitation guides for community conversations ○ Data dictionary for consistent reporting ○ Consent scripts & privacy guidance ○ Report template with findings, recommendations, and an action plan • Training Timeline & Modalities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Late February: live virtual webinars + recorded modules ○ Office Hours: weekly drop-ins for Q&A/TA ○ Completion target: late spring 2026 • Roles & Responsibilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Regional Leads: coordinate outreach & data collection ○ OEC/Partners (Karen/Jess): TA, QC of data, synthesis ○ PC Members/Ambassadors: recruit participants, co-facilitate groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkit and training to be released by end of February; completion deadline late spring 2026. • Parent leaders think how they can support LNA
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Regional Breakouts & Feedback		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How do you see the PC role with the Local Needs Assessment? ○ How do we feel about focusing engagement on LGP community table meetings +/- non-LGP communities? ○ Ideas on engagement in non-LGP communities? ○ What digital platform (no social media) would you suggest for keeping communication with parent ambassadors in real time, sharing files etc.? How do you feel about Slack if you have used it? • Members discussed outreach strategies and engagement with parent ambassadors; feedback to be compiled via Padlet/email. 	Share notes and continue conversation on community outreach strategy next meeting
Closing & Next Steps	Chenae Russell, Parent Cabinet Coordinator, OEC	<p>All Members: Complete meeting evaluation form.</p> <p>Amber/Tiffany/Chris: Collect breakout group feedback and</p>	

		<p>submit via Padlet or email.</p> <p>Karen & Jess: Share LNA toolkit and training schedule.</p> <p>Chenae: Email updated logic model and evaluation link to members.</p> <p>Subcommittees: Continue planning for community conversation and outreach calendar.</p> <p>Next meeting date: February 23, 2026 Focus: Legislative session updates, continued planning for outreach and engagement.</p>	
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