

Successful Children and Youth Policy Team

February 3, 2016, Meeting Summary

Key decisions and actions are in **bold**.

SCYPT Members in Attendance:

Gloria Addo-Ayensu, George Becerra, Nanette Bowler, Karla Bruce (for Chris Leonard), Tisha Deeghan, Judith Dittman, Jack Dobbyn, Francisco Duran, Pat Harrison, Cathy Hudgins, Tammy Derenak Kaufax, Rick Leichtweis, Jane Lipp, Jeff McKay, Megan McLaughlin, Mary Ann Panarelli, Fahemeh Pirzadeh, Jeffrey Platenberg, Douglas Tyson, Andrew Wehrlen (for Ed Roessler)

Member Updates

Jeff McKay noted that the Town of Herndon offers programming for children on days when school is closed due to inclement weather. He informed the SCYPT that he has requested County staff to identify opportunities for Fairfax County to offer similar services. Pat Harrison stated that the County is also interested in opportunities to provide meals to children and youth when schools are closed; Jeff Platenberg said FCPS is also studying this issue. Pat Harrison and Jane Lipp agreed to connect to jointly discuss the issue. Megan McLaughlin cautioned that a difficult part of the process will be identifying which schools to open/communities to operate in.

Megan McLaughlin noted that she and Tammy Derenak Kaufax had been scheduled to meet with Superintendent Garza to discuss SCYPT, including FCPS's membership on and participation in the team. The meeting was postponed due to the snow and has been rescheduled for February 4.

Megan McLaughlin also mentioned that there is an ongoing drive to get 500 laptops donated for local homeless youth. She will pass on additional information.

Action Item – Adoption of Revised SCYPT Charter

Jesse Ellis presented an overview of the revised SCYPT charter. Proposed changes to the charter were based on SCYPT and workgroup discussions over the past year focused on the team's accountability/governance structure. The proposed charter includes more specific responsibilities for, and processes for selecting, co-chairs; a formal executive committee; and the addition of new members, including university, community college, teacher, family, and business representatives.

Jesse Ellis noted that the SCYPT will begin to meet every other month, with the Executive Committee meeting in the "off" months.

Three changes to the proposed charter and process of identifying new members were discussed and adopted as amendments to the proposal:

- To avoid missing particular groups, the sentence preceding the list of community outcomes was changed from “We also aim to ensure that disparities – whether based on race, ethnicity, socio-economic status, geography, or any other circumstance – are identified and eliminated” to “We also aim to ensure that disparities are identified and eliminated.”
- To promote the reflection of community diversity in parent representatives, SCYPT members and staff will work closely with the Fairfax County Council of PTAs to develop a method of selecting their parent member.
- An additional parent member, to be appointed by the Head Start Policy Council, was added to the SCYPT.

Additionally, a request from the Unified Prevention Coalition of Fairfax County to be added to the SCYPT was denied, as the non-profit sector has representation on the team.

The proposed charter, as amended, was unanimously approved by the team.

Action Item – Endorsement of Recommendations for School Readiness

Anne-Marie Twohie, director of the Office for Children, presented an update on the implementation of the strategies the SCYPT endorsed in 2013 to increase the access to and quality of services to promote school readiness. The Board of Supervisors included over \$700,000 in the FY 2015 budget and over \$900,000 in the FY 2016 budget to implement the plan. Additionally, FCPS shifted resources and braided funds to further expand services to implement the plan. Also highlighted were a new regional effort to implement recommendations from a [National Academy of Medicine and National Research Council report](#) on strengthening the early childhood workforce, and a joint research effort with the University of Virginia to assess early childhood education and school transition.

Megan McLaughlin expressed continued concern about the Head Start wait list (currently about 580 children), and suggested a task force to identify specific strategies targeted to reducing the wait list. Anne-Marie Twohie highlighted local cash match requirements, reimbursement rates, and physical space as the major barriers to Head Start expansion. Jeff McKay recommended that the appropriate venue to address this is through the County’s [Lines of Business](#) (LOBs) review, which is ongoing, and that resources needed to continue to move the needle on this effort should be a part of the Department of Family Services/Office for Children LOBs presentation.

Cathy Hudgins asked how to best address families that aren’t aware of or that don’t try to take advantage of programs. Pat Harrison noted that the estimate is that about 4,000 Fairfax County children are in need of such programs. Anne-Marie Twohie responded that the diversity represented on the Collaborative Council will be critical to identifying strategies to reach these families in the upcoming strategic plan.

George Becerra asked how parents can become aware of quality initiatives and learn how to identify providers of quality. Anne-Marie Twohie noted that Virginia Quality is intended to be a consumer tool, and statewide efforts are beginning to identify ways to make it useful.

Tammy Derenak Kaufax emphasized the importance of data accountability and the need to invest in a longitudinal data system.

Without objection, the SCYPT endorsed the recommendation to continue the implementation of the identified strategies.

Opportunity for Action – Disconnected Youth

Jesse Ellis presented data on “disconnected youth” (or “opportunity youth”) in Fairfax County, typically defined as youth and young adults ages 16 to 24 who are not in school and not employed. The issue has become prominent nationally, and several federal and local initiatives and funding opportunities present opportunities for collaborative action.

Judith Dittman described the youth she works with at Alternative House, where they have a wait list of 60 youth in need of housing. Homelessness and aging out of foster care are key drivers of the problem. Disconnected youth have higher rates of physical and mental illness and substance use, and have poor access to health care. Because job training programs are mostly targeted to retraining, they are not often accessible to this population. A concerted, holistic effort is needed to support these youth.

Nannette Bowler agreed and noted that strategic efforts targeted to specific subpopulations could be effective. For example, nearly half of the children and youth in foster care are older than 13.

Elizabeth Gaines, from the Forum for Youth Investment, shared information on multiple opportunities, including the Performance Partnership Pilot (P3) program, a federal initiative that allows jurisdictions flexibility in administering federal funds to serve disconnected youth.

At Pat Harrison’s suggestion, Jesse Ellis will convene a workgroup to more closely examine opportunities for action.

Opportunity for Action – Wi-Fi in Low Income Areas

Jessica Werder, Office of the County Executive, and Maribeth Luftglass, FCPS, discussed the issues and challenges regarding providing free internet access to targeted communities. Some programs exist (e.g., those offered by Cox and Comcast), but they have stringent eligibility requirements that do not adequately address the needs of the 15,000 FCPS students without home internet access. Maribeth Luftglass shared a [video](#) on FCPS’s Access for All initiative.

Jeff McKay noted that most of the 15,000 students are clustered in specific communities, and that a pilot program of a closed network in a specific community could be evaluated for its impacts on identified outcomes such as home internet use and student achievement. Wanda Gibson, Fairfax County Department of Information Technology, cautioned that *internet access* should be the goal, because wi-fi hotspots may not penetrate homes.

The multi-disciplinary team of County and FCPS staff working on this issue will return in June with a full list of options for action that the SCYPT can weigh in on.

Action Steps/Assignments

- Jesse Ellis will convene a small group, including (but not limited to) George Becerra and Megan McLaughlin, to develop key points for working with the County Council of PTAs on identifying a parent member of the SCYPT.
- Jesse Ellis will finalize the charter document and discuss outreach for new members with the Executive Committee.
- Jesse Ellis and Jack Dobbyn will coordinate and set up a process for selecting the next community member co-chair.
- Jesse Ellis will convene a working group on Disconnected Youth.
- Anne-Marie Twohie will develop a “dashboard” of key metrics regarding school readiness/early care and education initiatives, to be shared with the SCYPT in June.
- Megan McLaughlin will send Jesse Ellis information on the laptop donation drive, to be shared with the team.
- The internet access working group will return in June with specific options for SCYPT to discuss.