

Successful Children and Youth Policy Team

September 25, 2019, Meeting Summary

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

SCYPT Members in Attendance:

Kimberly Adams, Gloria Addo-Ayensu, Leslie Atkins, Michael Becketts, Bob Bermingham, Telaekah Brooks, Karla Bruce, Tisha Deeghan, Judith Dittman, Francisco Durán, Kelly Henderson, Jessica Hudson, Teresa Johnson, Alexis Vaughan Kassim, Rick Leichtweis, Nikki Lehman, Rick Leichtweis, Megan McLaughlin, Fahemeh Pirzadeh, Dave Rohrer, Deb Scott, Douglas Tyson, Daryl Washington, Jenna White (for Michelle Leete)

Administrative Item:

One administrative item was presented as a consent agenda, which was unanimously approved by the SCYPT:

- **The SCYPT charter was amended to add one new member: the Director of the Fairfax County Public Library.** Jessica Hudson, who serves in that position, immediately joined the SCYPT as a member.

Action Item – Endorsement of School Readiness Resources Panel Recommendations

Anne-Marie Twohie (Office for Children) and Telaekah Brooks (Venture Philanthropy Partners), members of the School Readiness Resources Panel, shared their team's findings and recommendations to expand access to early childhood education in Fairfax County. The panel was convened by a request from the Board of Supervisors this spring. The panel consisted of stakeholders from a variety of sectors, including the faith community. They presented their recommendations to the Board of Supervisors Health, Housing, and Human Services Committee on September 17, and will present to the School Board later this fall.

The panel established a goal of "all families with children under age 5 living in households with income below 300% of the Federal Poverty Level have access to publicly funded early childhood programs in the public and private sector." Recommendations to progress towards that goal were made in six areas, including legislative action, land use and development, dedicated early childhood fund, public-private partnerships, community engagement, and ongoing reporting.

Megan McLaughlin requested that, as the panel continues its work, it inventory and map out where we are serving families and where the gaps are. Leslie Atkins stated that there often seem to be openings in child care centers at houses of worship and asked if we have data on available slots. Ms. Twohie replied that the panel is still collecting data on provider capacity and availability.

Ms. McLaughlin also noted that the estimated cost for a year of child care was \$18,000 and asked where that number came from. Ms. Twohie replied that it is the current reimbursable rate

for full-day/five-days-per-week/year-round care. She also noted that the panel's recommendations fit within the context of the Equitable School Readiness Strategic Plan (ESRSP), which emphasizes the right services for each family. The \$18,000 model may not be what each family wants; there needs to be an array of services available. Gloria Addo-Ayensu emphasized that we need to understand what families are doing and what they want; sometimes child care is provided through informal networks, for example. Ms. Twohie stated that one ESRSP strategy is to get feedback from families not currently connected to the system to ensure appropriate supports are included. She mentioned social emotional playgroups as one strategy in the ESRSP that is designed to support families that do not have children enrolled in formal early care programs. Michael Becketts asked if there are strategies for pre-natal and infant care, and Ms. Twohie noted home visiting programs as one set of programs.

Karla Bruce commended the panel for not replicating what is already in the ESRSP and noted that the panel's review of other communities and hard look at universal pre-k reinforced Fairfax's approach, which emphasizes a mixed delivery system and services from birth.

Jenna White stated that, in some cases, older children often miss school to take care of younger siblings, so this is also a school attendance and academic success issue. Ms. Twohie stressed that the diversity within the provider community is a real asset in Fairfax.

Kelly Henderson mentioned that we often discuss how we are not taking full advantage of the Virginia Preschool Initiative (VPI) program and asked Ms. Twohie to explain why. Ms. Twohie replied that we currently access about 63% of available slots/funding through VPI, but that there are multiple reasons that number is not higher. The per-pupil reimbursement rate is low; Fairfax contributes \$3,100 per student in order to draw down \$3,100 from the state; that amount does not come close to covering the actual cost. Physical space is also an issue, as FCPS has maxed out their current capacity for pre-k classrooms. Virginia only allows VPI programming in center-based programs, so Fairfax cannot fully apply it to our mixed delivery system. And only teachers with a state license are eligible for VPI payment, so our provider base is further limited.

Francisco Durán mentioned that a statewide committee established by Governor Northam is set to deliver recommendations on this topic later this month; he recommended the SCYPT review those when they are available.

Ms. McLaughlin recommended that the County and FCPS work together to draft proposed legislation (not just recommend legislative action, but actually draft it) for their legislative teams to propose to state lawmakers. Tisha Deeghan and Dr. Durán stated that County and FCPS legislative affairs staff are already working to emphasize this in their positions.

Without objection, the SCYPT voted to endorse the goal and recommendations of the School Readiness Resources Panel. Staff will begin working with legislative, budget, and program staff to advance the proposed strategies. The SCYPT will receive regular updates and reports on progress.

Action Item – Endorsement of School Readiness Resources Panel Recommendations

Jim Gillespie and Peter Steinberg, of the Healthy Minds Fairfax office, provided an update on the implementation of key strategies in the SCYPT-endorsed Behavioral Health System of Care

Blueprint. They requested SCYPT endorsement of funding requests that will be presented to the County Executive for proposed inclusion in the Fiscal Year 2021 budget: \$150,000 for the family support partner program (\$200,000 annually beginning in FY 2022), and \$125,000 for evidence-based practices training for behavioral health care providers.

Judith Dittman asked who the target audience is for the trainings. Mr. Steinberg replied that providers with various licensures are included, and that the trainings are promoted broadly. Trainings are for both public and private providers.

The funding for the family support partners program is to make up for the ending of a grant; Jessica Hudson asked if the expectation was always that the County would pick up the funding once the grant ended. Mr. Gillespie responded that yes, we had expected to use some local funding to continue services, but that Children's Services Act funding can also be used to supplement funding. (The requested amount is for less than the total grant funding, to account for CSA funding availability.) Medicaid is also considering increasing reimbursement rates for this kind of service, so that may be another source of funds in the future.

Jenna White commended the work on trauma-informed practices and noted there is a new Guide for Virginia Leaders on Becoming a Trauma-Responsive School. This work is very much connected to other countywide focuses on equity, attendance, closing the achievement gap, and more.

Megan McLaughlin said she appreciated the work and wanted to verify that subject matter experts are included in the workgroups developing the recommendations. Mr. Gillespie confirmed that key stakeholders and behavioral health professionals and experts are very much involved in the workgroups and on two oversight groups: the Children's Behavioral Health Collaborative and the Community Policy and Management Team.

Bob Bermingham stated that he is regularly asked why engagement in the juvenile justice system is down, and he explains that it is in large part due to these efforts. He said this is an opportunity to celebrate the work we have done, that we are doing a better job addressing issues in the behavioral health system as opposed to in the juvenile justice system.

Without objection, the SCYPT voted to endorse the proposed funding for Healthy Minds Fairfax.

Items and Announcements Presented by SCYPT Members

Megan McLaughlin raised the issue of increased prevalence of vaping among students and asked if Healthy Minds Fairfax was the best arena in which to address the issue, or if it needed a specific SCYPT response. She plans to work with the School Board and Board of Supervisors to consider a consensus message. Kelly Henderson stated that families are generally pretty aware, but that root causes of use also need to be addressed; a comprehensive approach is necessary. Jesse Ellis recommended that an inventory of existing efforts be shared with the SCYPT Executive Committee, which can discuss potential next steps at its next meeting in early November.