

# Wisconsin's Early Childhood Advisory Council

## Operating Principles

*Approved March 22, 2016*

ECAC Website:

<http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/ecac>

### **Background:**

The Governor's Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) was established by [Executive Order](#) in November 2008 under the Head Start Reauthorization Act of 2007, which required a State Council to be created that would build upon the existing statewide early childhood programs and services. The Executive Order was subsequently renewed in 2011.

The ECAC builds upon the work of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners (WECCP), the Children's Trust Fund Board, Partners for Wisconsin Economic Success, Wisconsin State Birth to 3 Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC), and other organizations interested in early childhood education and care.

In 2011, the ECAC combined three existing committees into one (1) Steering Committee composed of the prior-co-chairs for each committee. The Director of the Head Start Collaboration Office was also a member due to the emphasis on the Head Start legislation that supported the council work. The ECAC Co-Chairs then appointed two (2) Steering Committee Co-Chairs, both ECAC members. Staffs from the Co-chairing agencies were also assigned.

### **Defined Responsibilities of the ECAC**

- Conducting a periodic statewide needs assessment concerning the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs;
- Identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination among federally- and state-funded child development, child care, and early childhood education programs and services;
- Developing recommendations for increasing the overall participation of children in existing federal, state, and local child care and early childhood education programs, including outreach to under-represented and special populations; and
- Developing recommendations regarding statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood providers.

### **ECAC Approved Foundations**

- **Vision:** Every child will be healthy, nurtured, safe and successful.
- **Mission:** The mission of the ECAC is to help ensure that all children and families in Wisconsin have access to high quality early childhood programs and services.

- **Priorities:** Priorities of the ECAC are that children are safe and healthy; their families are stable, nurturing, and economically secure; and families have access to quality early learning.
- **System components:** The ECAC is dedicated to creating a unified system including early care and education, safe and healthy children, mental health and socio-emotional well-being, parenting education, and family support.
- **Guiding principles:**
  - CHILDREN: Our primary focus is on the best interests of Wisconsin’s children, whose early years are crucial to their success.
  - PARENTS: *Parents* are the primary decision-makers, teachers, and advocates for their children.
  - COMMUNITIES: *Communities* must provide integrated quality services to ensure children’s education, physical and mental health, and family support.
  - SYSTEMS: Public, private, and government entities share the responsibility for implementing comprehensive *systems*.
  - PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Quality *professional development* opportunities support a skilled and stable workforce.
  - FINANCING: Adequate and equitable *financing*, derived from multiple funding sources, supports comprehensive and continuous early childhood services.
  - PUBLIC POLICY: Wisconsin *public policy* should support blended funding streams to create comprehensive systems.

**Meetings:**

- The ECAC will meet as often as necessary but, not less than four (4) times per calendar year.
- Minutes will be kept of all ECAC meetings and will be approved by the ECAC at a subsequent ECAC meeting. The minutes will be posted online at the ECAC website for viewing by the public and members.

**Membership:**

- The Governor’s appointed Co-Chairs are the Department of Children and Families Secretary and Department of Public Instruction State Superintendent.
- Members of the Governor’s Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) are appointed by the Governor as per federal requirements and executive order. The [Head Start Act of 2007](#) specified organizations that should be represented.

- Appointed members may determine permanent designee members by sending a notification to the ECAC staff indicating who the designee will be.
- The designee must have full authority to represent the determined scope of the appointed member.
- The designee will have voting privileges.

### **Substitutions:**

When ECAC members (appointed or designees) are not available to attend a particular meeting:

- The members may send a representative to enable the constituency to have representation at the meetings.
- Substitutes for ECAC members shall not have voting privileges.
- Members who are sending a substitute will send notification to the ECAC staff indicating who the representative will be.
- When a member is absent or elects to send a substitute, it may be counted as an absence on part of the member. Reoccurring absences may result in a withdrawal of appointment.

### **Resignations:**

When an appointed ECAC member steps down, the member must submit a written notice of resignation addressed to the Governor via e-mail to [GovAppointments@wisconsin.gov](mailto:GovAppointments@wisconsin.gov) or via U.S Mail to:

- Office of the Governor  
Appointments Department  
PO Box 7863  
Madison, WI 53707-7863

### **Voting:**

- Each ECAC member/ is entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote.
- A vote of the majority present at any meeting is necessary to approve an action taken by the ECAC.
- In the event of a tie vote, the ECAC co-chairs will cast a single deciding vote.
- No member of the ECAC will cast a vote on any matter which would provide direct financial benefit to that member or otherwise give the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- In the instances where an ECAC member is employed by an organization which is a recipient of financial support from the State of Wisconsin or any affiliates, that member must disclose such potential conflict of interest.

**Accountability:**

The ECAC annually reports to the Governor on its progress and achievements and identifies future work.

**Public Meetings:**

The ECAC and Steering Committee meetings are open to the public and will provide an opportunity for public comment.

- An opportunity for public comment will be held during each ECAC meeting. Prior to the beginning of the ECAC meeting, non-ECAC members may sign-up to address the ECAC. Non-ECAC members will be given up to five (5) minutes to speak, with the actual time limit depending on the number of speakers registered.
- Non-ECAC members are welcome to attend ECAC meetings. Visitors shall not occupy seats at the ECAC table, but are invited to join staff in designated seating areas.
- During ECAC small group discussions, visitors may be asked to participate in groups with ECAC members or as separate input groups.

**Relationship with Other Initiatives:**

The ECAC will work with other early childhood initiatives to avoid duplication of efforts. The ECAC may draw from these initiatives' work to inform their deliberations prior to making recommendations.

**Rules of Order:**

Formal action of the ECAC will be conducted by *Robert's Rules of Order* (most recent edition). Additionally, the ECAC will comply with the following rules:

- The ECAC will limit discussion to items on the proposed agenda. Additional agenda items may be submitted to the ECAC staff at least one (1) month in advance of any scheduled meeting. The Steering Committee and the ECAC co-chairs will determine and approve the final ECAC meeting agenda.
- Persons or organizations wishing to address the ECAC may be placed on the agenda by making a request to the ECAC staff at least one (1) month before any scheduled meeting.

**Structure:***Steering Committee*

The ECAC Co-Chairs will appoint agency staff and ECAC members to serve on the Steering Committee as needed. ECAC Co-Chairs may review and make changes to the membership and responsibilities of the Steering Committee based on the priorities of the ECAC.

The Steering Committee is charged with the following responsibilities:

- Providing ongoing input to current and future funding opportunities
- Coordinating and advancing the work of the ECAC
- Guiding and coordinating the work of ECAC Workgroups to ensure systemic approaches to ECAC priorities
- Reviewing and assessing all formal recommendations for consideration by the ECAC
- Finalizing ECAC meeting agendas
- Preparing the annual report to the Governor, including draft recommendations for ECAC approval
- Coordinating meetings with Workgroup chair(s) to ensure needed collaboration and consistency across various domains

The Steering Committee works closely with the assigned staff and Workgroups to accomplish ECAC goals and objectives. This reflects a structure that replaces the prior Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners – WECCP Action Team – while retaining the other structures of WECCP, including the list serve, website, videoconferences and coaches.

In addition, the Committee attempts to connect other early childhood stakeholders with the appropriate Workgroups to ensure a comprehensive, quality system of early care and education for Wisconsin’s youngest citizens.

### *Workgroups*

Workgroups shall be designated as needed by the ECAC to serve functions specified by the ECAC. Such Workgroups shall exist for periods of time deemed necessary by the charge to the Workgroups by the ECAC. A list of the current ECAC Workgroups will be maintained on the official ECAC website.

- A member of the ECAC Steering Committee/Staff Team will be assigned to be a liaison between the ECAC Steering Committee and the Workgroup.
- The Steering Committee and Workgroup chair(s) will meet at least quarterly to assure coordination and collaboration among efforts to support the flow of information.
- The chair(s) will finalize membership, define key considerations, define reporting processes, and set timelines.
- Workgroups will utilize the designated template to provide reports on their progress at the meetings with the ECAC Steering Committee.
- Workgroup progress, updates and recommendations are described as needed in the annual report.
- Workgroups may have additional reports and/or recommendations that are submitted to the ECAC Steering Committee. The Steering Committee makes recommendations to the ECAC

Co-Chairs with regard to which reports and recommendations should be submitted to the ECAC. If reports are submitted, the ECAC will decide whether to approve the Workgroups recommendation and/or adopt the recommendation as that of the ECAC.

- Workgroup membership should be designed to create a balance of ECAC members/designees and non-members. Each Workgroup will consist of membership from:
  - ECAC members/designees;
  - related program areas with state departments;
  - relevant agencies and associations;
  - established input groups; and
  - other stakeholders.

### **Cross Department Staff Resources**

The ECAC Co-Chairs will each designate lead department staff to serve as resources to support the work of the ECAC, Steering Committee, as well as to the related Workgroups. Other state department member agencies may also designate lead staff to the Steering Committee and staff related to Workgroups. Each department will designate staff to Workgroups in relationship to the team charge and the agencies' related role. Staff is not eligible to vote on any matters of official ECAC business.

These Cross Department Staff Resources will:

- Reduce fragmented activities and promote interagency coordination and collaboration
- Support the ECAC Steering committee and various committees
- Align work of ECAC and departments
- Maximize state resources, reduce duplication, and identify gaps

### ***Co-Chairing Departments Lead Staff Role***

Expectations for staff include the following:

- Attend all ECAC meetings.
- Ensure that minutes are taken and distributed.
- Make necessary meeting arrangements.
- Support the Steering Committee and Project Teams and other duties as needed by the ECAC.
- Support and assist the Steering Committee, including communication between the committee, state agencies, and ECAC Co-Chairs.

**Member Departments Lead Staff Role**

Expectations for staff include the following:

- Attend all ECAC meetings
- Support and assist the Steering Committee, including communication between the committee and state agencies

**Workgroup Role**

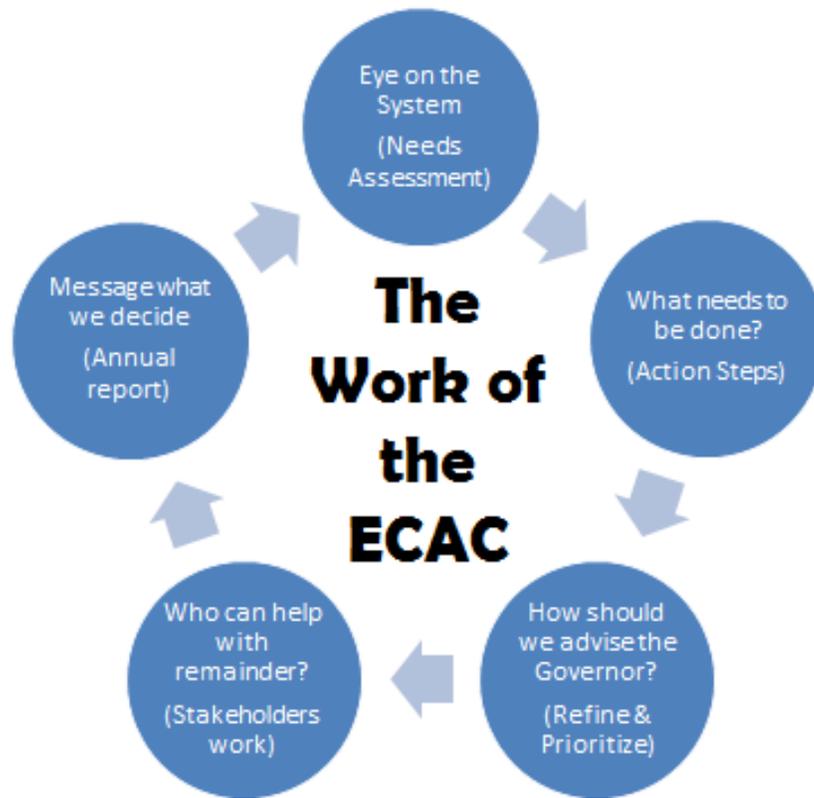
Expectations for staff assigned to a workgroup include the following:

- Attend assigned workgroup meetings, acting as liaison between the department and workgroup (as further described in the workgroup section)

**Amendments:**

These Operating Principles may be amended when necessary by two-thirds majority of the ECAC membership. Proposed amendments must be submitted for review by the full ECAC at least one (1) month prior to the meeting where a vote will take place.

**Defined Responsibilities Process Format for ECAC**



Eye on the system:

- Review recommendations from the previous year
- Review any action that was taken
- Determine what new information is needed
- Determine how information will be gathered from the field
- Gather feedback from stakeholders
- Analyze the data gathered
- Review the analysis of the needs assessment

What needs to be done:

- Determine what gaps remain in Wisconsin's EC system
- Communicate the gaps and gather input from stakeholders
- Generate a list of proposed priority areas to fill the gaps that align with the Governor's Executive Order and the priority areas of the Council.
- This list should be based upon stakeholder and expert feedback and research.
- Narrow the list to a reasonable number—potentially using a survey, have everyone select their top 8 priorities that would have the greatest impact.
- Form/utilize work groups—one for each priority area (approx. 5-10 based upon survey results).
- Work groups look at research, cost/benefit, feasibility, speak to experts, consult with organizations, current WI project teams/groups, etc. of their priority area to identify key action steps and/or recommendations.
- Work groups develop a recommendation paper to present to the ECAC using a standard template.
- Each of the work groups presents their recommendation area to the ECAC

How to advise the Governor:

- The ECAC determines what recommendations will be presented to the Governor.
- The ECAC finalizes approximately 3-5 recommendations.
- An annual report is created, that focuses on recommendations of the ECAC.
- Report should be short, clear, and in simple terms.

- Recommendations to the Governor should be front and center, in clear language for what actions we recommend the Governor take

Stakeholder work:

- Recommendations for other stakeholders could be included (if department recommendations they should already be approved by the Secretary and Superintendent)

How to message:

- Consider a one-page flyer to share with the Governor, Legislators, and other stakeholders.