

Building Early Links to Learning (BELL): Summary Overview of Key Learnings from Parent and Provider Focus Groups

The Cloudburst Group

BELL Community Forum

March 16, 2017

Objectives and Recruitment

Objectives

- Design and conduct a series of focus groups with parents/guardians of young children who are experiencing homelessness and residing in Philadelphia-area ES/TH programs, as well as local ECE/CC and ES/TH providers
- Help BELL Team identify and apply lessons learned from focus group analysis in enhancing cross-systems policies, practices, and training

Participant Recruitment

- Parents/Guardians – Collaborated with local homeless service providers. Utilized flyers and sign up sheets
- Housing Providers – Utilized email invites
- Provision of gift certificates to participating parents as incentive, at time of focus group



Summary of Participant Data

- ▶ **33 Parents/Guardians participating in 4 focus groups**
 - ▶ 88% female
 - ▶ 82% African American
 - ▶ 67% 20-29 years old
 - ▶ 97% single/never married

- ▶ **19 staff members from Homeless Services or Early Childhood Education Programs participating in 3 focus groups**



Key Findings Emerging from PARENTAL Reflections and Dialogue

Parental Perspectives
on Quality Care

Special Challenges
Facing Homeless
Parents

Challenges in
Dealing with Early
Childhood Education
System

Issues in Identifying
and Accessing
Appropriate Early
Childhood Education

Dealing with CCIS

Parental Perspectives
on Role of Housing
Crisis Service
Providers and ECE



Key Findings Emerging from PROVIDER Reflections and Dialogue

Provider
Perspectives on
Access to Care

Special Challenges
Facing Homeless
Parents

Challenges in
Dealing with Early
Childhood
Education System

Role of Housing
Providers and Early
Childhood
Education Providers



Practice Recommendations – Housing Crisis Services Providers

- ▶ Address needs of families for useful, comprehensive, and up-to-date information about quality ECE options
- ▶ Address needs of families for access to quality ECE options “close to home” (both temporary and permanent)
- ▶ Provide active/ongoing training for housing crisis staff/case managers on ECE issues, resources, and systems protocols
- ▶ Develop and consistently implement ECE assessment and referral protocols that promote parental access to affordable, accessible, quality ECE settings
- ▶ Facilitate/nurture parental skills in working with children on both cognitive and social development while in housing crisis settings



Practice Recommendations – Early Childhood Education Providers

- ▶ Recognize and respond to the centrality of trauma in homeless families' and children's lives
- ▶ Ensure classroom structures that support appropriate disciplinary strategies and learning environments that promote effective focus on both cognitive/social development
- ▶ Ensure presence of sufficient numbers of qualified, certified, & well-trained staff
- ▶ Ensure active and ongoing communication with homeless families participating in ECE programs
- ▶ Provide community outreach and shelter in-reach activities to inform homeless parents of ECE resources – particularly those that address challenges in dealing with enrollment/participation



Practice Recommendations – CoC and Community Homeless Response Systems

- ▶ Increase ease of access to transportation assistance to support stable participation in ECE
- ▶ Increase access to financial supports/subsidies supporting consumer enrollment in quality ECE programs
- ▶ Increase numbers of and/or access to safe, secure, affordable slots for children 0-3 -- especially infant care
- ▶ Recognize and respond to widely shared parental concerns about quality of care/trauma-informed practice
- ▶ Enhance cross-systems documentation of both parental needs and systems challenges associated with increasing access to affordable/sustainable/quality ECE



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