

## Rhode Island Early Learning Council

**Overview:** The Rhode Island Early Learning Council (ELC) was established in 2010 to act as an advisory body to the Governor's office and to the state agencies responsible for promoting the development and learning of young children from birth through third grade. The Early Learning Council has continued as a critical advisory body through Governor Lincoln Chafee's and Governor Gina Raimondo's administrations. The Council meets the federal requirement that states have a [governor's appointed advisory council for early childhood care and education](#).

**Role:** The ELC works to develop a high-quality, comprehensive system of early childhood development, education, and care for children from birth through age eight. The ELC promotes coordination and collaboration among the wide range of early childhood programs and services in the state, including child care, Early Head Start, Head Start, Early Intervention, preschool special education, family home visiting, and RI Pre-K. The ELC also works to improve transition and coordination between early childhood systems and Kindergarten through Grade 3 education and care systems, including the advancement of high-quality Kindergarten through Grade 3 teaching practices.

Required Activities of the State Advisory Councils include:

- Conducting periodic statewide needs assessments on the quality and availability of early childhood education and development programs and services from birth to school entry
- Identifying opportunities for, and barriers to, collaboration and coordination
- Assessing the capacity and effectiveness of institutes of higher education supporting the development of early childhood educators
- Developing recommendations on:
  - Increasing participation in child care and early education programs, including outreach to underrepresented and special populations
  - The development of a unified data collection systems for public early childhood and development programs and services
  - Statewide professional development and career advancement plans for early childhood educators
  - Improvements in State early learning standards
- Developing and/or endorsing other recommendations to improve early care and education systems in Rhode Island

**Responsibilities:** The ELC develops, reviews, and/or endorses recommendations for policies and strategies to help the state achieve strategic goals for young children. It reviews and provides support to the state and other stakeholders regarding new opportunities (e.g. federal funding opportunities, partnerships with philanthropy, etc.). The ELC played a central role in supporting the development and implementation of a first-round \$50 million Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge grant. The ELC has also advised on the development and implementation of other major federal grants, including competitive funding for Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting and the Early Head Start – Child Care Partnership grants. The Council frequently reviews and provides feedback on state plans as they are developed and finalized.

The [Council's Comprehensive Advisory Plan for 2016-2020](#) establishes a shared vision and a coordinating framework for the early care and education system in Rhode Island and promotes the use of data, outcomes, and indicators of progress to inform decision-making at the state agency, program, and provider levels.

**Key Action Areas from the 2016-2020 ELC Comprehensive Advisory Plan:**

- Expand access to high-quality early learning and development programs
- Improve the quality of early learning and development programs
- Develop and sustain an effective early care and education workforce
- Measure and evaluate progress toward improved early learning and development outcomes

**Emerging Action Areas from the 2016-2020 ELC Comprehensive Advisory Plan:**

- Provide coordinated and strong leadership and governance for early care and education (birth through age 8) across state agencies.
- Improve the health and well-being of families with young children as the foundation for improved learning and development outcomes

**Members:** Members are appointed by the Governor and include individuals required by the federal law to sit on state advisory councils for early care and education. Members act as representatives across sectors of the early learning and development field, including representatives of membership associations. Members are expected to attend each quarterly meeting and report back to their representative organizations. In the event an ELC member cannot attend a meeting, they should select another representative from their organization to attend in their place. When a member is no longer able to represent the organization, the organization must select another representative and submit the name to the Governor's Office for approval and official appointment.

**Process:** When finalizing or endorsing recommendations for the Governor and the Children's Cabinet, the Council works to develop consensus among members to support and/or accept the recommendations. Consensus agreement is defined as endorsement or acceptance of recommendations by members. Each appointed member should review recommendations with their organization to determine whether the organization supports, accepts, or opposes the recommendation(s) for the Council. The Council will compile the positions of members in writing. Efforts are made to amend recommendations to achieve universal consensus of members. When universal consensus is not possible, decisions are made through a simple majority.

When needed, the Council convenes work groups or sub-committees to provide more in-depth review and analysis of progress, strategies, and opportunities on specific topics (e.g. kindergarten entry assessment, workforce registry, etc.) and to develop draft recommendations for the Council to review and finalize. The recommendations are then submitted to the Governor and the RI Children's Cabinet for consideration.

**Meetings:** ELC meetings occur at least quarterly and are open to the public. Members of the public are welcomed and encouraged to attend meetings. Agendas, presentations and meeting summaries are posted on the ELC website at [www.earlylearningri.org](http://www.earlylearningri.org)