Rhode Island
Early Learning Council

DECEMBER 9, 2020

9:00 - 11:00 A.M.

VIRTUAL MEETING

- If you are an appointed Council Member or speaker on the agenda you should have a panelist link. Contact jcapaldo@rikidscount.org if you need help.
- We have simultaneous 2-way interpretation for this meeting in English and Spanish. Click on the globe in zoom and turn on interpretation. Select English or Spanish.

EARLY LEARNING RI

9:00	**Welcome, Opening Remarks, and Meeting Overview**	**Courtney Hawkins**, DHS **Angélica Infante-Green**, RIDE **Elizabeth Burke Bryant**, RI KIDS COUNT
9:15	**Updates & Discussion: Current Status of Early Childhood Systems During COVID-19 Pandemic** • Family Home Visiting • Early Intervention (IDEA Part C) • Preschool Special Education • Licensed Child Care Programs • Child Care Assistance Program • Early Head Start/Head Start • RI Pre-K • Public School PK – Grade 3	**Blythe Berger,** DOH **Jennifer Kaufman,** EOHHS **Ruth Gallucci,** RIDE **Nicole Chiello,** DHS **Hannah Hansen,** DHS **Mary Varr,** RI Head Start Assoc. **Lisa Nugent,** RIDE **Amy Donnelly Roche**, RI School Superintendents Association
10:00	**Early Years/Early Grades Alignment Work Group** • Review of final recommendations • Vote to endorse recommendation	**Phyllis Lynch**, RIDE **Mary Varr**, RI Head Start Association **Celeste Bowler**, East Providence Schools
10:15	**Child Care Updates** • Pathways to Partnerships Project • COVID-19 Survey and Impact Analysis	**Catherine Green,** Head Start Collab **Nicole Chiello & Hannah Hansen**, DHS
10:30	**RIght from the Start Campaign** • Legislative/Budget Priorities for 2021	**Rachel Flum,** Economic Progress Institute **Leanne Barrett,** Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
10:45	**Announcements, Public Comments, & Next Steps**	**Elizabeth Burke Bryant** **Courtney Hawkins** **Angélica Infante-Green**

Updates & Discussion: Current Status of Early Childhood Systems During COVID-19 Pandemic

Early Years/Early Grades Alignment Work Group

- Review Final Recommendations
- Vote to Endorse

Preschool-Third Grade Workgroup: Recommendations

Wednesday, December 9th

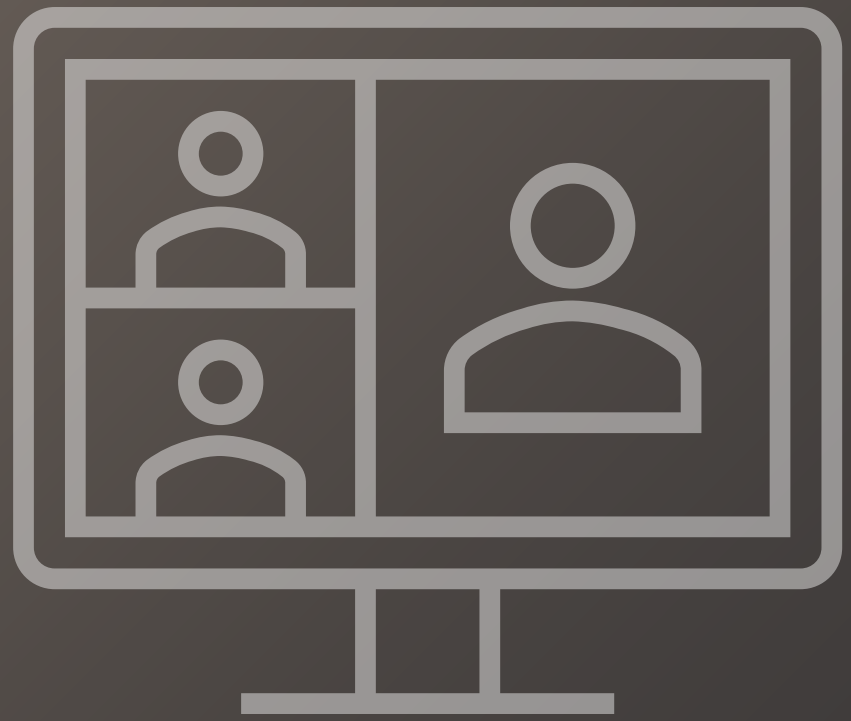
EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES

Overview

- Background on working group
  - Rationale, focus and membership
  - Schedule and logistics
  - Support from ECS
- Process for developing recommendations
  - Idea generation
  - Polling
  - Review
- The recommendations and report
- Q&A
- Vote (thumbs up, sideways or down)

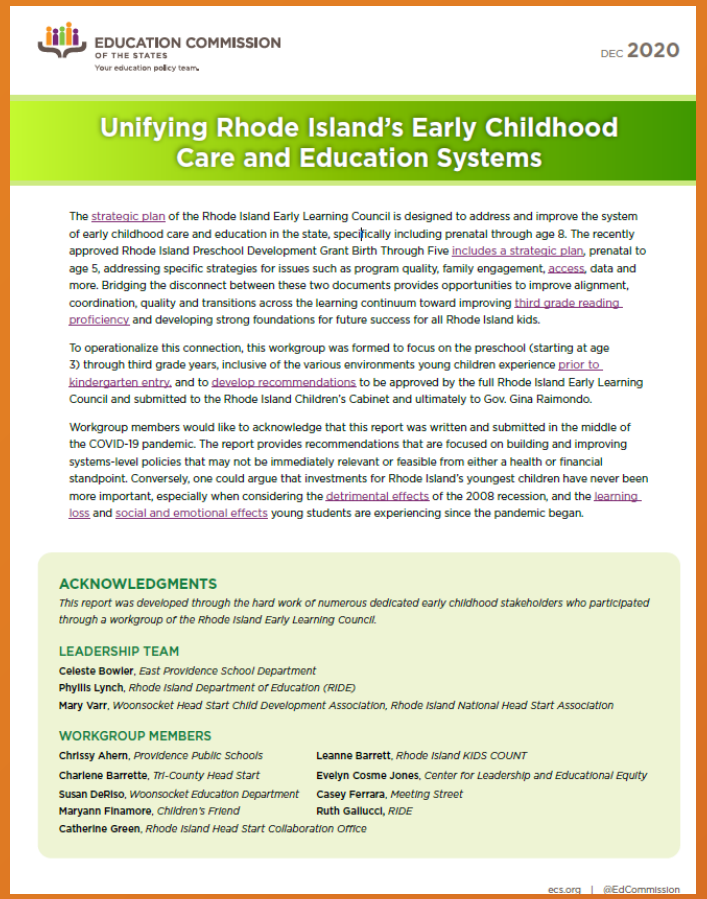
Background on Working Group

- Rationale, focus and membership
- Schedule and logistics
- Support from ECS



Process for Developing Recommendations

1. Idea Generation (July-September)
2. Polling (September)
3. Review (November)



EDUCATION COMMISSION OF THE STATES
Your education policy team.

DEC 2020

Unifying Rhode Island's Early Childhood Care and Education Systems

The strategic plan of the Rhode Island Early Learning Council is designed to address and improve the system of early childhood care and education in the state, specifically including prenatal through age 8. The recently approved Rhode Island Preschool Development Grant Birth Through Five includes a strategic plan, prenatal to age 5, addressing specific strategies for issues such as program quality, family engagement, access, data and more. Bridging the disconnect between these two documents provides opportunities to improve alignment, coordination, quality and transitions across the learning continuum toward improving third grade reading proficiency and developing strong foundations for future success for all Rhode Island kids.

To operationalize this connection, this workgroup was formed to focus on the preschool (starting at age 3) through third grade years, inclusive of the various environments young children experience prior to kindergarten entry, and to develop recommendations to be approved by the full Rhode Island Early Learning Council and submitted to the Rhode Island Children's Cabinet and ultimately to Gov. Gina Raimondo.

Workgroup members would like to acknowledge that this report was written and submitted in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. The report provides recommendations that are focused on building and improving systems-level policies that may not be immediately relevant or feasible from either a health or financial standpoint. Conversely, one could argue that investments for Rhode Island's youngest children have never been more important, especially when considering the detrimental effects of the 2008 recession, and the learning loss and social and emotional effects young students are experiencing since the pandemic began.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This report was developed through the hard work of numerous dedicated early childhood stakeholders who participated through a workgroup or the Rhode Island Early Learning Council.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Celeste Bowler, *East Providence School Department*
Phyllis Lynch, *Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE)*
Mary Varr, *Woonsocket Head Start Child Development Association, Rhode Island National Head Start Association*

WORKGROUP MEMBERS

Chrissy Ahern, *Providence Public Schools*
Charlene Barrette, *Tri-County Head Start*
Susan DeRiso, *Woonsocket Education Department*
Maryann Finamore, *Children's Friend*
Catherine Green, *Rhode Island Head Start Collaboration Office*
Leanne Barrett, *Rhode Island KIDS COUNT*
Evelyn Cosme Jones, *Center for Leadership and Educational Equity*
Casey Ferrara, *Meeting Street*
Ruth Gallucci, *RIDE*

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Unifying Rhode Island's Early Childhood Care and Education System

Recommendation Report

Recommendation #1

Support and Diversify the Workforce

Recommendation #2

Promote Consistent Assessment and Data Sharing

Recommendation #3

Provide Opportunities for Enhanced Professional Learning and Development

Voting/ Polling

- Thumbs ***up*** (I support these recommendations)
- Thumbs ***sideways*** (not perfect, but I can live with these recommendations)
- Thumbs ***down*** (I do not support these recommendations)

DHS Office of Child Care Update

RHODE ISLAND BIRTH-PRESCHOOL DEVELOPMENT GRANT ACTIVITY 5.2: EXPANDING HIGH-QUALITY I/T SLOTS

EARLY LEARNING COUNCIL

DECEMBER 9, 2020

This project was made possible by Grant Number 90TP0027 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

RI PDG-R ACTIVITY 5.2

GOAL: Rhode Island will expand High-Quality Infant/Toddler Slots by scaling the Early Head Start Child Care Partnership Model.

PRIORITIZE

Prioritize vulnerable populations:

- Low-income children/families
- English Language Learners
- History of Abuse or Neglect
- Involvement with child welfare services

INCREASE

Add 100 high-quality seats in communities with identified Shortages as identified in the facilities Needs Assessment.

INFUSE

Infuse federal investments into community-based organizations who serve predominantly vulnerable children.

PARTNER

Partner with CCAP programs committed to quality improvement and best practices.

PDG PATHWAYS TO I/T PARTNERSHIP PROJECT PARTNER: CHILDREN'S FRIEND & SERVICE

Children's Friend & Service is Rhode Island's 1st child-serving nonprofit agency- founded in 1834. Serving children and families in Providence, Pawtucket, and Central Falls. They offer an array of child and family related services & supports and are the State's sole Early Head Start Child Care Partnership grantee. Serving 100 children and families annually since it's inception in 2015.

While this work has been slowed due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, CFSRI has committed to reaching the State's goal of increasing high-quality infant/toddler slots by 100.

<u>Goal Breakdown</u>

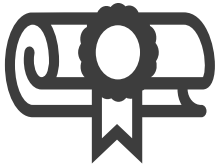
Year 1: 30

Year 2: 35

Year 3: 35

PDG PATHWAYS TO I/T PARTNERSHIP: WHAT IS IT?

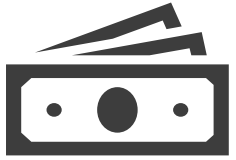
Modeled after EHS CCP



Professional Development & program specific support

Improves program quality

Access to mentoring & coaching



Fixed Funding

Goal of transitioning to full partnership at end of grant cycle

PDG PATHWAYS TO PARTNERSHIP OUTREACH

PARTERSHIP ENGAGEMENT	OUTCOME	STATUS
100 % of present Early Head Start Child Care Partners invited	1 potential partner	1 Pending* 7 Declinations
100 % of BrightStars rated child care centers & family child care (FCC) homes invited to October Info Session (259 centers & 427 FCC)	22 participants 10 potential partners	4 f/u mtgs scheduled 3 Declinations 3 Pending*
100 % BrightStars rated family child care centers invited to November Info session held in the evening with Spanish translation available (427 FCC)	14 participants 9 potential partners	6 f/u mtgs scheduled Declination/pending status not yet available

As of 12/4/20 there are:
5 potential partners pending at 6 sites, including 3 centers & 2 FCCs, 1 additional partner has "paused".
23 potential slots, 18 center & 5 FCC located in: Pawtucket, Providence & Johnston
**Partners are anticipated to sign on in late December or early January 2021*

QUESTIONS & CONTACT INFO

DHS Project Lead

Catherine Green

Head Start Collaboration Director

RI Department of Human Services

Catherine.Green@dhs.ri.gov

Children's Friend Project Lead

Kristen Caine

Child Development Manager

Children's Friend & Service

kcaine@cfsri.org

COVID-19 updates – Office of Child Care Licensing Team

Unannounced Monitoring Visits Conducted by CCLU through 12/3/2020

*Child Care Licensing Unit has conducted 453 **unannounced monitoring visits** during this time frame, visiting 192 **centers** and 259 **family child care providers.***

Unannounced COVID Review Visits Conducted by BrightStars Staff through 12/3/2020

*BrightStars conducted 280 **unannounced monitoring visits** during this time frame, visiting 147 **centers** and 133 **family child care providers.***

Number of New Sites that have opened since June 1, 2020: ***11** Family Child Care Providers (with **8** pending applications) and **17** new child care center sites (with 2 pending applications).*

Number of prospective FCC's who have attended orientation since reopening on 6/1 and are actively in the process of becoming licensed: ***30 potential English speaking FCC providers and 71 potential Spanish speaking FCC providers.***

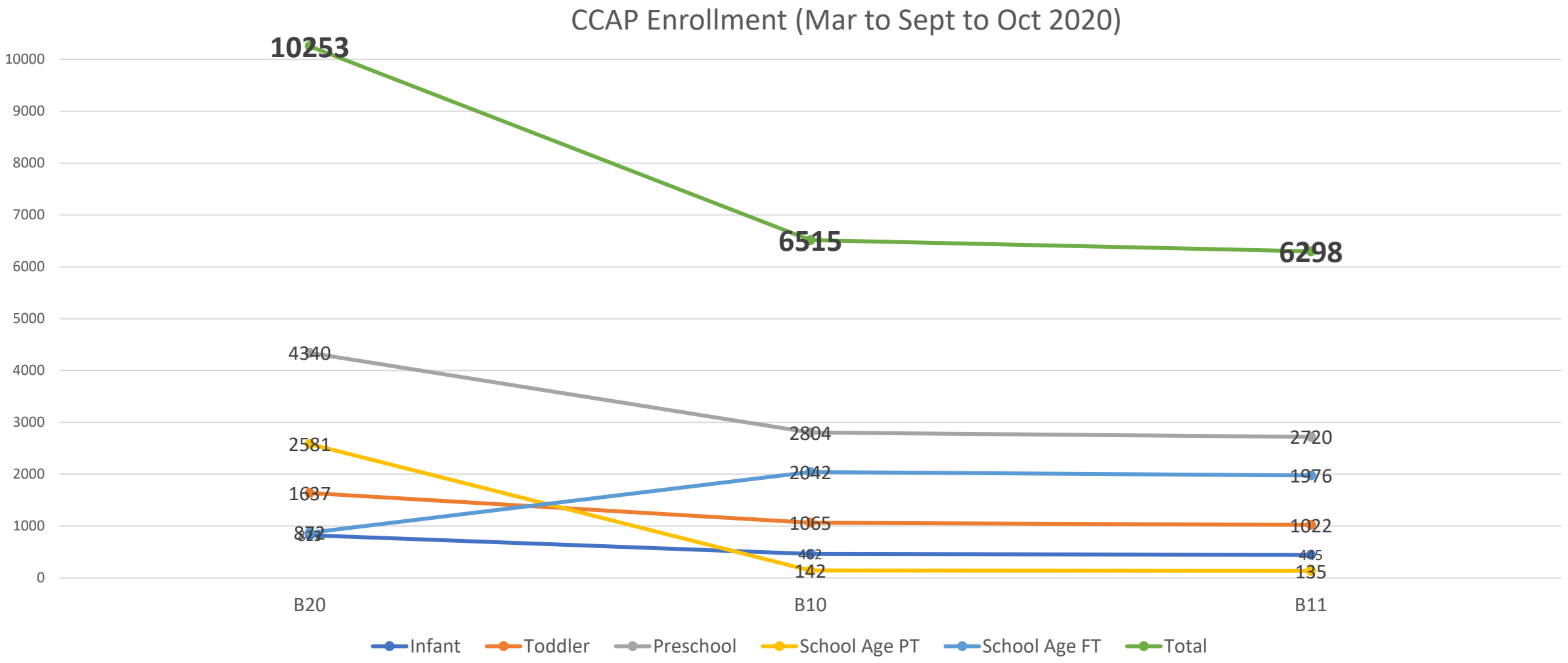
CCAP Payments During the COVID-19 Pandemic Timeline: 6/1/20 – present

In response to COVID-19, the RI Department of Human Services has adopted the following CCAP payment practices* to ensure continued support to CCAP providers and families during the pandemic:

1. Reimburse CCAP subsidies based on enrollment, not attendance
2. Waive the allowable absence policy for CCAP families (5 days/month)
3. Waive family copays (during the mandated closure period March-May)
4. Upon reopening, reimburse CCAP subsidies using a temporary, enhanced rate (5-Star reimbursement rate or 90th PCTL for already 5-Star providers)

*RI submitted three CCDF Plan Amendments and one waiver to adopt these CCAP payment practices during COVID-19

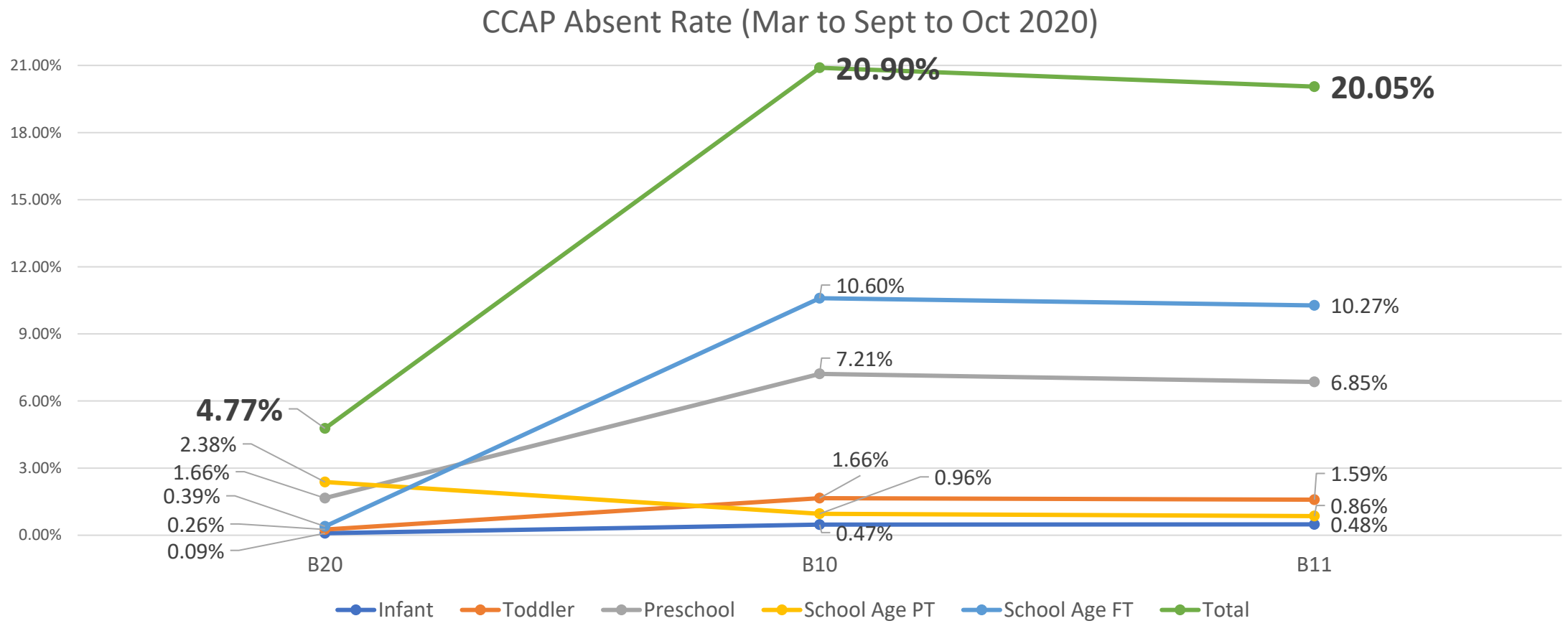
COVID-19 Impact on CCAP Enrollment



Conclusion: In September 2020, Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) enrollments decreased 37% compared to the total number of children enrolled pre-COVID (March 2020). This trend continued in October 2020.

Next Steps: Based on this data, the Office of Child Care will elevate these figures and the economic impact of such a decline in CCAP enrollment to state leadership for consideration.

COVID-19 Impact on CCAP Absences



Conclusion: In September and October 2020, child care providers marked 1/5 or 20% of their CCAP children as absent for one or more days during the two week batch payment. This is more than a 15% increase in absenteeism as compared to pre-pandemic batch payment breakdowns.

Next Steps: Based on this data, it is the intention of DHS to preserve the COVID-19 temporary CCAP payment practice to reimburse for services based on enrollment, not attendance until absenteeism rates have stabilized across all age categories within child care.

Background: In September, the RI Department of Human Services contracted with the Public Consulting Group (PCG) to administer a series of three, statistically valid surveys to DHS-licensed child care providers to assess the overall health and utilization of the RI child care system. The survey also aimed to better understand costs associated with reopening under the new COVID-19 DHS Child Care Licensing Regulations.

The following are the high-level takeaways from the September survey analysis:

- 401 (52%) of DHS-licensed providers submitted completed survey responses.
- 560 providers were individually contacted by either a DHS Child Care Licensor or RIAEYC BrightStars' Staff Member to support provider engagement and completion of the survey.
- 24% of centers and 34% of family child care providers report full utilization/capacity (enrollment at 90-100% utilization) upon reopening.
- The average cost to a program in the event the program (or classroom) must be closed for two weeks was as follows:
  - Average Center Classroom two week closure: $5,184.17
  - Average Program Cost two week closure: $35,048.89
  - Average FCC two week closure cost: $1,727.06
- 25% of providers reported increasing staff wages, in part by leveraging the CCAP COVID-19 Temporary Rate Enhancements.
- On average, child care providers report that costs related to cleaning supplies to adhere to DHS COVID-19 Child Care Licensing Regulations and CDC Guidelines have increased by 76%.

Based on September data, it was estimated there were ***17,269 children actively enrolled in DHS-licensed child care*** facilities statewide. This represents ***74.9%*** of the licensed slots available to families during the pandemic.

The following are the high-level takeaways from the October survey analysis:

- 366 survey responses were submitted. 63% of respondents completed both the September and October surveys.
- For programs with decreased enrollment due to COVID-19 the most frequent reason cited for the decline is parent nervousness to put children back in care (59% of respondents). The second most cited response was due to parent unemployment.
- 75% of programs that responded report no current waitlists.
- When asked what ways programs were using the additional funding from the CCAP rate 75% of respondents are using the funds for PPE and 100% of the respondents from child care centers are using the funds to hire additional staff.
- 882 children were denied care due to symptoms by provider type in October, more than the 822 who were denied care in September.
    - For children excluded from care, runny nose, cough & fever/child were the most commonly cited symptoms.
- Between September & October, 424 staff were reported not permitted to work due to having one or more symptoms on the screening tool. (Note: This number was 222 in September and went down to 202 in October.)
    - Centers that had a capacity between 50-99 children were impacted most by staff not being permitted to work.

In October, it's estimated the number of children enrolled in the child care system ***decreased by about 10% to 15,659*** children being served across Rhode Island.

RIght from the Start Campaign

www.RIghtfromtheStartRI.org

Legislative & Budget Campaign to to advance state policies for young children and their families in Rhode Island

Goals: Increase state and federal funding and improve policies so that ALL Rhode Island kids and families, regardless of zip code, race, ethnicity, or family income, get off to the right start in life.

Steering Committee: Beautiful Beginnings, Economic Progress Institute, Latino Policy Institute, RI Association for the Education of Young Children, RI Association for Infant Mental Health, RI Kids Count, Woonsocket Head Start

RIght from the Start

2021 Priorities

- **Identify sustainable state revenue to fund essential services for families with young children.**
- **Make the temporary rate increases permanent for the Child Care Assistance Program.**
- **Set statewide compensation goals for early educators and begin to increase wages.**
- **Improve our paid family leave program so parents have greater wage replacement and more time at home to care for new babies, foster, and adopted children.**
- **Cover community-based doula services through Medicaid and private health insurance.**
- **Provide funding to sustain family home visiting programs.**
- **Sustain access to RI Pre-K and Head Start programs.**
- **Pass the affordable housing/early learning facilities bond.**

RIght from the Start

Public Comment

Future Early Learning Council Meetings:

- Wednesday, March 24, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, June 30, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, September 29, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.
- Wednesday, December 8, 2021, 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

See www.earlylearningri.org for meeting schedules, handouts, notes, and state reports