Why Early Childhood Coordinated Enrollment Matters for Parents and their At-Risk Children
Objective: review coordinated enrollment law and policy and showcase current best practices being implemented across the state.

AGENDA

• Vision for kindergarten readiness
• Challenges facing families
• Background: law and policy
• Improving access for families: step-by-step
• Best practices implemented across the state
• Next steps/contact information
Louisiana, through community networks, will unify the early childhood system – birth to pre-K – to prepare all children for kindergarten.

- Shared high standards for what children should learn and what excellent teaching looks like.
- Teachers are excellent at interacting with children and guiding learning.
- Expectations for health, safety, and learning are consistent with adequate funding levels for programs that serve children well.
- Families can easily enroll and choose the best option for their children.
Community networks have worked collaboratively, over multiple years, to remove the barriers families face in accessing high-quality early childhood programs across Louisiana.

Louisiana offers various early childhood program options to low-income families in need of quality early childhood care and education.

- School-based pre-K including public and nonpublic school programs, special education, Child Care Assistance, Head Start and Early Head Start

When communities are not coordinated, enrollment challenges for families can include:

- Families don’t have a primary contact to learn about all early childhood programs in the community.
- Families have to go to too many places to determine if they are eligible for a program and apply.
- Families may be on a waitlist for one provider while another in the community has empty seats.
- There is no way to know the full demand for early childhood and plan to meet families’ needs.
- Providers are often on their own in recruiting and connecting with families.
Law and Policy
Early Childhood Laws and Policies Since 2012

**Laws and policies passed since 2012 establish a unified early childhood system.**

**Louisiana has passed laws that:**
- Unify all public programs and require rating system indicative of child outcomes;
- Require local coordination of enrollment to increase access for families;
- Create an educational expectation as a condition of licensing;
- Establish a 30 member Advisory Council to review all early childhood policies; and
- Transition all state child care and Head Start functions under the State Board.

**The State Board of Education has passed policies that:**
- Establish local community networks;
- Establish unified rating system with incentives for improvement and consequences for unsatisfactory performance;
- Set unified expectations for enrollment;
- Establish unified health, safety and academic expectations for licensing;
- Establish new child care teaching certificate that will be required by 2019; and
- Help level the playing field by increasing child care assistance rates, bonuses and eligibility.
Coordinated Enrollment at Its Best

Because no one provider can serve all children, providers must collaborate in order to reach as many families as they can, and serve as many at-risk children as possible.

Coordinated enrollment at the local level helps to ensure that:

- Families know of all available seats;
- Families have an easy way to know what they are eligible for and apply;
- Families do not occupy more than one seat, thus ensuring max use of available slots;
- The greatest number of children are served.

Communities are building local enrollment systems that coordinate information, eligibility and applications and match families with their highest ranked preferences.

Every program that takes public dollars to serve children is required to participate as a condition of licensure or funding. They must sign assurances to receive Academic Approval.
Improving Access for Families
Tackling the Problem
Defining Coordinated Enrollment’s Four Key Areas

Louisiana’s state legislature defined coordinated enrollment with Act 717 (2014), and required all communities to fully implement each component.

Coordinated enrollment centers on parent choice. This means that families must be empowered to choose what is best for their children. That’s why the state of Louisiana enabled the formation of locally-managed enrollment systems that:

1. Coordinate Information: Families know of all available seats
   – Inform families about the availability of publicly-funded programs

2. Coordinate Eligibility: Families easily know what programs they qualify for
   – Ensure families are referred to available publicly-funded programs

3. Coordinate Applications: Families apply to all programs through one application
   – Collect family preferences regarding enrollment choices

4. Match Based on Preference: Families enroll their child in the highest ranked preference available
   – Enroll children based on family preference so no one occupies more than one seat
Coordinated Enrollment
The Full Model

Maximize System Capacity
1) Analyze historical demand for services (e.g., count seats currently occupied and children on waiting lists)
2) Project community need (e.g., how many seats are needed and where are they available?)

Coordinated Information Campaign
Work together to inform families about early childhood programs in the community
- Collaborate to ensure access to information year-round
- Conduct an on-the-ground information campaign
- Institute a “No Wrong Door” approach by sharing information in-person, online and paper as appropriate
- Use common timelines

Coordinated Eligibility Determination
Create one way for families to know what they qualify for and one year-round process to refer families to other available programs when they do not qualify or no seats are available
- Understand program & funding eligibility requirements
- Determine preliminary eligibility with a unified eligibility application
- Use common timelines
- Develop a community referral system

Coordinated Applications
Have a single application used by all programs to collect family preferences
- Guide families through options based on eligibility
- Families designate choices on one application during open enrollment period
- Coordinate application and enrollment timelines across all programs year-round
- Collaborate on waitlist management

Matching Based on Preference
Enroll at-risk children based upon where families prefer to send their children, as long as space is available
- Admit families according to their preference and the capacity of programs
- Provide enrollment options throughout the year
- Collaborate on waitlist management
Community networks work together to inform families about early childhood programs in the community.

Question: How do programs in your community actively engage families?
Providers use a unified eligibility determination form (Early Childhood Program – Family Eligibility Worksheet) shown to the right. Networks work hard to ensure that:

- Parents can turn to anyone in the network to get the initial information they need;
- Every provider knows the options available to all at-risk children in the network;
- Referral system is in place among program partners; and
- Use a referral process to reduce waitlists.

**Question:** How do you explain to families the different eligibility criteria in your community?
Community networks ensure that every family who submits an application through the coordinated enrollment system will be considered equitably. This typically happens one of two ways:

1. Via online systems that match families based on stated preferences and eligibility information; or
2. Via community meetings where providers match paper applications with family rankings to open and available seats.

A coordinated enrollment system focused on equity helps families by:

- Increasing access to quality early learning, by leveling the playing field;
- Preventing reliance on the “first-come, first-served” method; and
- Creating an ongoing process with a main enrollment timeframe (even if registration is on-going).

**Question:** What are the challenges?
Coordinated Enrollment
Best Practices being Implemented Across the State

In order to increase access to early childhood programs, community networks must understand where access is limited, and act strategically to maximize capacity.

Mini Case Study: Calcasieu Parish Schools – Maximizing Seats for 3 and 4 Year Olds

• **Problem:** Not all threes were being served, and not all seats for fours were used
• **Solution:** Maximized seats for fours by moving all fours served by Title I to LA 4 seats
• **Result:** Served more threes with Title I seats that were being used by fours

Full Model Expectations
- Analyze all sources of information
- Determine the at-risk gap (# of children not being served)
- Maximize available programs and seats to reduce the at-risk gap as much as possible
- Use enrollment and demand data to complete your Coordinated Enrollment plan
This is a Gallery Walk activity designed to get early childhood leaders out of their seats and into the full model of coordinated enrollment.

Coordinated Information Campaign

Coordinated Eligibility Determination

Coordinated Applications

Matching Based on Preference