

## **New York State to Kick-Off Early Childhood Advisory Council**

Several months ago *Winning Beginning NY* called on the state to create an Early Learning Commission to galvanize support for expanded and coherent investment in high quality early childhood services, to ensure we make the most of every dollar invested.

New York has made a good start, but funding and oversight are not coordinated, making it hard for families to access services, for policymakers to effectively allocate resources and to assess children's progress.

We are pleased to report that later this spring New York will hold the first meeting of the Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC). Head Start Reauthorization language requires the establishment of an Early Childhood Advisory Council in each state. Building on its strengths, New York chose to use its existing Children's Cabinet Advisory Board as the foundation for the ECAC. It will be charged to:

- Conduct statewide needs assessments
- Identify opportunities for collaboration among various programs
- Develop recommendations for increasing participation
- Develop recommendations for a unified data collection system
- Develop recommendations regarding statewide professional development
- Assess the capacity and effectiveness of institutions of higher learning

The structure of the ECAC will allow members to reach across the boundaries in state government that often dissuade or prevent collaboration. The intent of the body is to encourage and assist with cross-systems communication and planning.

Karen Schimke, President of SCAA, and Robert Frawley, Deputy Director of the Council on Children and Families and Director of the NYS Head Start Collaboration Project, will co-chair the ECAC. Members will include state staff, members of the Children's Cabinet Advisory Board, and a wide range of stakeholders including representatives from higher education, K-12 education, Head Start, Indian Head Start, special education, health, and mental health. It is expected that all members will be vetted soon so the ECAC can begin its work at a first meeting in late April.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) includes resources to staff the ECAC; however, a 70% state match is required.