Starting an Infancy Leadership Circle in Your Community: A How-To Guide

Prepared by Jackie Jones and Carole Oshinsky, Founding Co-directors, NYS Infancy Leadership Circles

P.O. Box 60, 3 Mahopac Avenue, Amawalk, NY 10501
Phone/Fax: 718.638.7788 E-mail: infancycirclenys@nyzt.org
Visit New York Zero-to-Three Network at www.nyztt.org

Prepared April 2013. Revised Edition: January 2015
# Table of Contents

I. Overview.................................................................3
   A. Goals and Vision for Infancy Leadership Circles
   B. Issues for Infancy Leadership in the Community
   C. Contacts

II. Starting an Infancy Leadership Circle in Your Community............5
   A. Identify Leaders
   B. Identifying the Scope of Your Community
   C. Building a Participants List
   D. Planning the First Meeting

III. Running the Meetings.................................................7
   A. Facilitators
   B. Content of Meeting
   C. Discussing an Issue
   D. Consensus Building

IV. Action Planning.........................................................8
   A. Creating an Action Plan
   B. Implementing the Action Plan

V. Reflection and Evaluation of Leadership Circles...........................9

VI. Conclusion...................................................................9
   A. Benefit of Interconnected Leadership Circles
   B. Further Information and Resources

VII. Appendices................................................................11
   A. Infancy Leadership Circle Flow Chart
   B. Existing Circles and Contact Information
   C. Group Co-Leader Job Description
   D. Letter of Invitation
   E. Participants-by Profession/Discipline
   F. Participants – by Service System
   G. Sample Agenda
   H. Supplies
   I. Sample Minutes/Action Register
   J. Sample Meeting Report Form
   K. Issue exploration – Mental Health
   L. Group Projects
   M. Guidance for Setting Priorities
   N. Action Plan
   O. Infant-Toddler Leadership Forum Contacts

---

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The NYS Infancy Leadership Circles Co-directors would like to thank New York Zero-to-Three Steering Committee for the invaluable guidance it has provided over the last few years in developing and managing this project, as well as the NYS Council on Children and Families for its ongoing support. We especially thank Dr. Elizabeth Isakson for her editorial guidance and suggestions on this document.
I. Overview

A. Goals and Vision for Infancy Leadership Circles

New York State Infancy Leadership Circles (ILC) is a project of the New York Zero-to-Three Network created to address two unmet needs. The first unmet need is the need for greater investment in efforts to promote healthy nurturing experiences and to prevent adverse early childhood experiences. Mounting evidence supports greater investments in the experiences in the infant and toddler years to secure healthy development, educational success and strong citizenry. The second unmet need is that the services and supports for young children and their families that do exist do so in silos. Often the services are uncoordinated, isolated, and difficult for families to access. Much is being done at the national and state level to address the silos and lack of coordination; however, the local level is often disconnected from this process.

Begun in 2007, our mission is to raise awareness of the importance of the early years across and beyond disciplines that interact with young children at the community level, promoting local investment and coordination of services. Additionally, we serve as a communication pipeline for the Infancy Movement in New York State by moving local issues to the state level and taking state issues and initiatives directly to communities to advance comprehensive services for babies and their families. (See Appendix A for a Flow Chart describing the relationship between the local and state levels.)

Each Circle is a free standing entity. We encourage Circles to take on a local purpose and identity but network together with Circles across the state to gain power from the collective vision and the amplified voice for babies.

The Circles meet these unmet needs by nurturing communities of professionals who serve babies and their families; by helping them to develop local cross-system initiatives; and by facilitating collaboration of infant and toddler services with a focus on quality. We accomplish this by:

• Facilitating the exploration of local issues, goals, strengths and priorities
• Developing local leadership to continue the Infancy Leadership Circles without the need for ongoing outside facilitation
• Encouraging the participation of local groups in statewide educational activities
• Developing a plan of action for each Circle to achieve its goals

B. Issues for Infancy Leadership in the Community

This is a time of difficult and challenging budget decisions for our villages, towns, cities, state, and the nation. We believe many things can be done without new infusions of money. One of the vehicles used could be an Infancy Leadership Circle. Here are some questions that Infancy Leadership Circles could uniquely address because they partner with leaders from the different service sectors that serve babies.

Are our young children’s needs being meet—by their caregivers, by programs, by policies?

• Which of the many needs are already on the existing local and state policy agenda?
• Which issues pertain to programs and services?
• Which issues need policy changes?
• Who are the appropriate decision makers that need to be targeted?
• Are there some issues that require a change in statutes (legal enactments)?
• Which ones are dependent on executive decisions?
• Which ones need new legislation?
• Which issues need further categorizing or prioritizing?
• Which issues need more funding?

What do we want to see happen as a result of joining an Infancy Leadership Circle? Here are some ideas. You probably could add many more:

• Form linkages across all the professions serving babies
• Use information locally and statewide to improve the status of children and children’s services
• Set priorities realistically achievable in your local area
• Choose one area and collect data to boost your argument for policy change.
• Support state and federal pending legislation as recommended by existing state and national groups
C. Contacts

The Infancy Leadership Circle project is directed jointly by two leaders who were selected as New York Birth-to-Three Advocacy Leaders by early childhood leaders from New York State and national ZERO TO THREE. They received training and support through the national ZERO-TO-THREE Creating Connections for Babies project. A Steering Committee, described below, supervises their activities. The work is funded by a grant from the NYS Council on Children and Families, in-kind support from New York Zero-to-Three Network, other state-level organizations, as well as local community organizations. (See Appendix B for a list of existing Circles and Contact Information.)

1. New York State Founding Co-Directors

**JACKIE JONES**, MS.Ed., Buffalo: Early Childhood Consultant and Member, NYS Early Childhood Advisory Council, Former Director, CAO Early Head Start for Teen Moms, College Instructor, and SpecialQuest Ambassador


If you are interested in joining or starting an Infancy Leadership Circle in your community or county, or have questions regarding this report, please contact the current New York State Co-directors at: infancycirclenys@nyzttn.org

2. Steering Committee

The ILC Steering Committee provides guidance and support for the work of all the Circles in New York State and monitors their overall development and ongoing progress through monthly phone meetings. Members are drawn from the following organizations and staff positions:

- Early Care and Learning Council:
  - NYS Infant-Toddler Coordinator
  - Publicity and Marketing Director
- New York Zero-to-Three Network
  - Co-President, New York Zero-to-Three Network
  - Designated Board Member(s)
- Winning Beginning New York
  - Designated Representative
- NYS Council on Children and Families
  - Senior Policy Analyst
  - Early Childhood Comprehensive Services (ECCS) Project Coordinator
- Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC)
  - Designated ECAC members
- Docs for Tots
  - Designated member

Clockwise from top left: Carole Oshinsky and Jackie Jones, founding co-directors, NYS Infancy Leadership Circles; Evelyn Blanck, NYZTT Network Co-president, and Evelyn Efinger, founding NYS Infant-Toddler Coordinator, now at ZERO-TO-THREE.
II. Starting an Infancy Leadership Circle in Your Community

A. Identify Leaders

An Infancy Leadership Circle Co-director or local leader may initiate a new Circle for a community. A local leader can come from any community organization, agency or program. Examples include but are not limited to: Child Care Resource Network, United Way, a health organization, a home visiting agency, a religious charity group, a mental health group, a government agency, a children’s organization, to just name a few possibilities. The key characteristic is a commitment and dedication supporting children ages zero to three and their families. Ideally, individuals would have some collaborative ties to others in the community interested in promoting a strong voice for babies. (See Appendix C for a Group Co-Leader Job Description.)

Once individuals commit to building an Infancy Leadership Circle, the process of inviting community partners to the table can begin. Often the first step is setting a date, place and time and sending an invitation. (See Appendix D for sample letter of invitation.)

B. Identifying the Scope of Your Community

Infancy Leadership Circles are organic. The “Circle” can be a county, region, or neighborhood. It helps to start out with a definition of what the community is that you are proposing to start a Circle in. Be conscience of the possibility that the definition of the “Circle” could expand or contract depending on how services are offered and delivered in the real world.

Generally, Circle “boundaries” can be defined by common experiences shared by the practitioners. For example, one group – the East Harlem 0-5 group in New York City – is identified by the specific population they serve in a small geographic area. Another group, just north of the Catskill Mountains, joins four counties and incorporates a huge geographic area but practitioners face similar issues in serving isolated rural families across the miles.

Circles don’t have to conform to a certain structure or be supported by a particular group in order for members to participate. The main requirement is being committed to be a voice for babies. Participation may ebb and flow as professional responsibilities dictate.

C. Building a Participants List

Organizers should begin a participants’ list as people are invited and update it on an ongoing basis. See Appendix E and Appendix F for a list of potential agencies and organizations to consider inviting. The participant list should include individual contact information and place of employment including the service system the institution represents. Identifying the service system will assist when reflecting on participation and insure diverse representation across all disciplines that touch babies and their families. The document “People and Organizations – Treasure Hunt,” available on the NYZTT web site, is also useful in identifying potential Circle participants.

Circle leaders should be sensitive to the work demands of participants. This requires flexibility and understanding of the impact on attendance and completion of assignments. Professionals today wear many hats and may not always be able to attend meetings consistently. Regardless, talents and contributions should be welcomed when offered and allowance made for adjustments to timelines. The process of working together and collaborating across agencies and disciplines is as important as any specific task completion.

D. Planning the First Meeting

We offer a few tips to getting started with hosting your first ILC Meeting:

**Time of Day:**

- Lunch time meetings acknowledge that this type of meeting may be outside of people’s job descriptions and they may want to come on their own time
- Early morning meetings (8 am) may be considered if trying to get health professionals involved as they rarely
can attend lunch time meetings

Meeting Space:

- Meeting space is typically donated by a member agency, such as a child care resource and referral agency or health organization, where conference rooms are available on a regular basis
- Some groups rotate meeting places to highlight the different agencies and share the responsibility of meeting preparation
- For groups meeting across a wide geographic area, rotating locations enables increased participation

Length of Meeting:

- Setting a length of time for a meeting is a difficult balance – one hour is often too short when people are meeting each other for the first time and sharing their experiences and also is not enough time to do actual work
- Meeting 1.5 to 2 hours is typical for most groups
- Some groups coming from wider geographic areas find 3 hours including lunch a good option
- Your time together may change based on the work the group is doing

Agenda:

- Preparing a specific agenda helps give structure to the meeting
- See Appendix G for sample agenda

Supplies:

- Minimal supplies are required for a meeting
- Most hosting agencies may donate the supplies such as a flip chart and markers, or provide photocopies of handouts such as the agenda, workplans, etc.
- Initially the meeting initiator may donate supplies
- See Appendix H for a list of suggested supplies

Food:

- Some Circles enjoy food provided by the host agency or another organization such as a community foundation
- In other Circles, participants bring their own snack, breakfast or lunch, to eat during the meeting

Note Taking:

- Minutes help keep track of action steps, assignments, and decisions of the group and is an important resource for the group as they work together or for new participants joining the group later
- Having a volunteer note taker helps make sure this gets done
- Some groups use an action register and rotate volunteers to fill it out. Others use a meeting report form. (See Appendix I for sample action register and minutes. See Appendix J for a sample meeting report form.)
- Distribution to the whole group helps those that couldn’t attend but still want to stay involved

Schedule the Next Meeting

- Setting meeting dates into the future at the first meeting is important to keep the group going
- Groups, if possible, should try to meet on the same day of the week and week of the month that most people are available
- Some groups rotate the day of the week to ensure diverse participation
- Consider what other groups are meeting regularly in the community and select a day that does not conflict
- Try to put the meeting on a community calendar
- NYZTT also hosts a calendar for all early childhood meetings in New York State on their web site: www.nyztt.org. Send an email to infancycirclenys@nyztt.org with detailed information about the meeting
III. Running the Meeting

A. Facilitators

Facilitators should be identified in advance of the meeting. In the beginning this may be the NYS Infancy Leadership Circle co-director or the initiator of the group. Natural leaders will emerge from the group over time. Facilitation can be handled in a variety of ways as participants get comfortable with each other and the goals of the group. Examples include: rotating facilitators each month or over a given period of time, such as six months, choosing facilitators based on their expertise of the topic being covered, or rotating by hosting agency.

B. Content of Meetings

Circles usually start by focusing on the strengths and issues in the community related to healthy children, strong families and early learning, including children with disabilities. After thoughtful consideration of the issues and strengths, a few issue priorities are identified in each topic area. Discussion may continue over a number of meetings to explore strengths and issues and reach agreement on the priorities.

Goals begin to emerge during these discussions through consensus. (See more on Consensus Building below.) No more than three goals/priorities should be worked on at one time. The Circle uses these goals to develop a written action plan that launches a starting point to clarify purpose and tasks. Consider what can be accomplished together through the action plan that will promote knowledge and attention to the early years. (See below for more details on developing an action plan.)

C. Discussing an Issue

There are many ways to discuss an issue. The discussion should always be non-judgmental and open to new ideas. Here are some suggestions:

Choosing an issue to focus on:
- Choose one to three issues from each of the topic areas under Healthy Children, Strong Families, Early Learning to focus on over a period of time
- Determine how or if there is a connection among the chosen topics
- By choosing one or more issues from each topic area, all interest areas can be advanced

Exploring an issue:
- This may take several meetings
- Learn about the topic by:
  --Inviting speaker(s) with knowledge or expertise
  --Sharing among participants of research, articles, and fact sheets about the topic
  --Taking time to define the topic so it is clearly understood by all participants
  --Determining what the core message is that you want to advance
  --Developing a list of talking points
  --Dividing up into smaller work groups to do more specific exploration

See Appendix K for example of an issue exploration. See Appendix L for group projects of existing Circles.

D. Consensus Building

It is important that the Circle participants all agree on the goals and priorities by carefully considering all topics before making final decisions. Allowing adequate time for discussion and reflection is an important part of this process. This could include making sure that everyone has a chance to comment and be included in the conversation. Perhaps it could mean taking informal votes such as using a show of hands or posting issues on the wall and using stickies to show approval. It could be done by making a list of pluses and minuses. Sometimes the Circle may feel that an outside resource should be contacted for input or evidence-based research to assist with the decision making. (See Appendix M for Guidance on Setting Priorities.)

Doing this work will lead to new and stronger relationships among professionals from different service systems and hopefully lead to improved quality and coordination of services for infants and toddlers. See Appendix N for sample action plan.
IV. Action Planning

A. Creating an Action Plan

The action plan is the strategy for achieving goals that the Circle has determined. Goals chosen should be realistic and doable. The plan needs to be flexible depending on the resources and changing needs of the community over time. The energy and time participants can invest in the plan are also important factors. The plan is the out-growth of the choices that the Circle makes for the issues and priorities. It highlights the goals that the group chooses to work on and the steps it will take to reach the goal.

The components of the action plan will include a statement of the goals, activities to be executed, who is responsible, when the activities will occur, any resources that will need to be gathered and prepared, and how the project will be evaluated.

B. Implementing the Action Plan

Core messages, resources and events and how they will be disseminated and organized is an integral part of implementing the action plan. Consider the audience including the literacy level, cultural background, existing knowledge and information in the public domain.

Steps could include:
- **Brainstorming to decide the core message and what strategies would advance the message.**
  
  Think about:
  - What can your agencies do to advance the core message?
  - What are the social marketing opportunities?
  - Are there existing efforts that you can join or support?
  - What is the best timing, audience and format for community education around the core message?

- **Preparing or gathering resources. Think about:**
  - What materials already exist that would serve your goal?
  - Do the materials need permission to be disseminated to the public?
  - Who will prepare new materials if needed?

- **Planning for events. Think about:**
  - What tasks need to be done?
  - How many people do you need to complete the task?
  - How to choose the place, time and date that would bring out the greatest participation?
  - Do you need subcommittees to get the work done?

- **For all parts of the action plan, agree upon follow-up assignments. These may include:**
  - Gathering more information and resources
  - Writing and designing materials
  - Getting outside reviews
  - Making phone calls
  - Getting approvals
  - Reaching out to other groups
V. Reflection and Evaluation of Infancy Leadership Circles

Each group should set aside time at least once a year to assess their progress, review accomplishments in the context of their action plan, and reflect on how issues may have changed in their communities. Because of the volunteer nature of the Circles, goals may take longer to complete when Circle members are up against so many other deadlines for their official responsibilities. Putting time on the agenda at the final meeting of the season for looking at what was accomplished, what went well, and what could be changed or adjusted will help determine how to move forward and keep the Circle cohesive.

Some Circles may find a written report helpful. This could be passed on to their own agencies for continued support of their participation in the Circles. This would also disseminate greater knowledge of the Action Plan in their community.

Another place to reflect and share their experiences of the Circle would be the annual Infant – Toddler Leadership Forum held each spring at the New York State AEYC Conference. This four-hour session allows time for sharing across regions as well as discussing how to implement hot topics within their communities. The state Infant-Toddler Coordinator at the Early Care and Learning Council currently organizes this Forum in cooperation with the New York Zero-to-Three Network and the New York State Council on Children and Families. See Appendix O for contact information.

VI. Conclusion

A. Benefit of Interconnected Leadership Circles

The Infancy Leadership Circles act as a catalyst to create partnerships across the areas of Strong Families, Healthy Children and Positive Early Learning Experiences. The outcome desired by all Circles is to assist New York State babies to reach their fullest potential. We believe that comprehensive support for families with young children provides the path to a positive future, not only for the children and families but also for our state and nation. By providing a strong, quality infrastructure, our babies will thrive and we will contribute to a productive society. Each Infancy Leadership Circle brings an individualized approach to problem-solving issues in its local community. At the same time, recurring concerns have emerged across the state. Discussions within each Circle reveal that professionals who work with infants and toddlers have overlapping issues:

- Lack of public awareness of the importance of the early years and specific issues such as infant mental health
- Need for parenting education and knowledge of resources
- Limited focus on strengthening the parent-child relationship
- Significant gaps in the continuum of services to families with infants and toddlers (within and across counties)
- Weaknesses in recruitment, retention, and promotion within the professions
- Missed opportunities for inclusion of professionals from related fields and parents
- Administrative challenges for programs and services such as travel distances between clients, decline in reimbursement rates for service, cuts in funding, and difficulty in merging resources

Alignment of our efforts across systems is critical to continued progress being made for our infants, toddlers, and their families on these issues. This is the Infancy Movement that has been building in New York State over the last two decades, creating advocates of professionals to change the way services are being conceived and supplied. These conversations and the ideas that are brought forth will frame our work for the future and strengthen the “voices for babies.”
B. Further Information and Resources

Web site

Enewsletter
The New York Zero-to-Three Network in conjunction with the Infancy Leadership Circles produces a monthly enewsletter with links to hot topics, resources, and research as well as relevant events around the state. To sign up, please register your email at: http://visitor.r20.constantcontact.com/manage/optin/ea?v=001Kh8qjTWKI-cKg-PVA61_wA%3D%3D

Linked-in Discussion Group
NYZTT manages a discussion group on Linked-In. To join, first become a member of Linked-In and then search for New York Zero-to-Three under groups. This group is used to discuss current issues, best practices, and general guidance. To learn more, go to: http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=4456099&goback=.anp_4456099_1343176579629_1

Facebook Page
NYZTT uses its Facebook page to post current events, upcoming conferences, links to its statewide calendar, announcements and the monthly NYZTT enews. To like us on Facebook, go to: https://www.facebook.com/nyztt

Twitter
Follow NYZTT on Twitter at @NYZTT to get short messages about the zero to three field.

Pinterest
NYZTT is using its Pinterest page as a visual bulletin board to link to resources for professionals, parents and caregivers in the zero to three arena. Sign up for Pinterest at: http://www.pinterest.com/ and then follow NYZTT’s bulletin board at: http://www.pinterest.com/nyztt/pins/

Calendar
The New York Zero-to-Three Network calendar is accessible by clicking on the New York Zero-to-Three Network Events Calendar link on the home web page www.nyztt.org or to to: http://events.r20.constantcontact.com/calendar/monthview?eso=001QkxtgqGp2unVQjT3LwuooQ%3D%3D&llr=49hquldab

Publications/Resources:
• Infancy Leadership Brochure
• People and Organizations - Treasure Hunt
• 2011-2012: A Year of Accomplishments
• Six-Month Performance Report on Our Infancy Leadership Circles, July 2011
• Infant-Toddler Issues for New York State, a compilation of ideas shared at the Infancy Leadership Circle meetings across the state in fall, 2008
• Summary of the first meeting of the Infancy Policy Leadership Circle, June 26, 2008
Appendix A: Infancy Leadership Circle Flow Chart

Flow Chart

Infancy Leadership Circle (ILC)

Co-Facilitators

- Impact Community
- Zero to Three issues, activities and advocacy

Local Infancy Leadership Circle Partners

Communication

- Between local ILC Partners and ILC Steering Committee

- NYS Council on Children and Families
  - NY Zero to Three Network
  - Winning Beginning New York
  - Early Care and Learning Council
  - Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy
Appendix B: Existing Circles and Contact Information

To contact any of these Circles or to inquire about assistance to start a new circle, please email: infancycirclenys@nyzttn.org.

- Brooklyn (Kings County) (in formation)
- Cattaraugus County (in formation)
- Chautauqua County
- DOCS Infant and Toddler Leadership Circle (Delaware, Otsego, Chenango, and Schoharie counties)
- East Harlem 0-5 Network, New York City
- Erie County
- New York City
- Niagara County
- Suffolk County
- Nassau County
- Rockland County (in formation)
- Westchester County

Appendix C: Co-Leader Job Description Sample

Note: These responsibilities may be shared by multiple people in the leadership circle or rotated over the course of the year. They are just suggestions. Each local group may add or subtract or create their own list.

- Co-facilitate and coordinate Infancy Leadership Circle meetings
- Determine time and place for meeting
- Notify participants of meetings
- Prepare agenda and sign-in sheet
- Complete short meeting report and e-mail to NYZTT Steering Committee (state partners)
- Optional: Participate in monthly conference call with NYZTT Steering Committee
Appendix D: Sample Letter of Invitation

Date:
Dear _________________________________County Leadership Professionals:

I invite you to join a growing movement to give voice to better services for infants and toddlers in your counties and across New York State. The New York Zero-to-Three Network (NYZTT) is helping communities to develop a voice for babies, explore local issues, communicate these issues, and advance better policies and comprehensive services for babies and their families locally and statewide.

Your regional Infant-Toddler coordinator, _____________ and Infant-Toddler specialist, ________________, have encouraged us to bring this concept of a leadership circle to your area. We hope you will join us and urge your colleagues to participate as well. Our first meeting is scheduled for Day, date, year, at agency name, address, NY, from 12:30 until 3:30 p.m. Lunch will be provided.

We will examine strengths and issues effecting services for infants, toddlers and their families in your counties and begin to development issue-related priorities for closer review in the areas of Early Learning, Healthy Children, and Strong Families. Ultimately, we would want to formulate an action plan to seek solutions through cross system partnerships.

NYZTT has more than two decades of experience in New York as the only interdisciplinary organization focused exclusively on infants and toddlers. NYZTT members are a diverse lot, including practitioners, business executives, lawyers, academics, and people in the arts. In the last several years, we have held a number of statewide meetings and helped mentor Infancy Leadership Circles in diverse areas of New York State, including: Erie and Niagara Counties in western New York, Delaware, Otsego, Chenango and Schoharie Counties in the midsection of the state, and Westchester County and New York City in the southern section of the state drawing on a diversity of disciplines. NYZTT has also helped organize and participate in the annual Infancy Forums at the NYS AEYC conference where we have been privileged to meet infancy professionals from all over the state who are hungry for cross-system dialog and strategic communication. For more information on what we have been doing, visit our Infancy Leadership Circle page www.nyztt.org

Your participation is critical as we strive to strengthen the voice for babies as part of the Infancy Movement in New York State. Please confirm your attendance so we can order enough lunch. I will also be happy to answer any questions you may have before the meeting.

Most sincerely,

Name of organizer
Title
Affiliation
Phone number___________________________________Email________________________________________
Appendix E: Participants—by Profession/Discipline

- Business Leaders
- Child Care personnel
- Community colleges teachers/instructors
- Early childhood program directors
- Family Support Workers
- Head start and Early Head Start Personnel
- Home visitors
- Lawyers
- Legal professionals
- Marketing professionals
- Medical and Allied Health Personnel—Pediatricians, Obstetricians, Nurses
- Parents
- Philanthropists
- Psychiatrists
- Psychologists
- Reach Out and Read staff
- Rehabilitation staff
- Researchers
- Social workers
- Teachers
- Therapists—speech, physical, occupational, art, music, dance
- United Ways
- University professors

Appendix F: Participants—by Service System

- Business Community
- Child Care Resource and Referral
- Child Welfare/Foster Care
- Disabilities
- Education:  
  -- Early Care and Education
  --Public School
  --Higher Education
- Early Intervention
- Health
- Home Visiting
- Justice System
- Mental Health
- Nutrition
- Philanthropy
- Rehabilitation
- Rules and Regulations
- Social Services

Appendix G: Sample Agenda—Initial ILC Meeting

- Welcome and Introductions
- Thank you to hosts and hosting agency
- History of Infancy Leadership Circles in NYS; Logic Model
- Small Group Discussions: Strengths and issues related to early learning, healthy children and strong families; shared results; priorities in each county
- Next steps: Action Plan development; consideration of possible existing groups for collaboration; consideration for emerging co-leaders
- Resources: NYS Council on Children and Families with grant funds for community training; New York Zero to Three Network, Zero to Three and the Baby Monitor; Winning Beginning New York; QUALITYstarsNY; Using Data to Build Comprehensive Systems for Infants and Families (CCF); NYS AEYC
- Other
- Set Next Meeting

Appendix H: Supplies

Supplies for the meeting may include:

- Name tags
- Flip chart
- Medium size yellow stickies
- Magic markers
- Sign-in sheet
- Copies of agenda
- Refreshments
ACTION REGISTER

Team: Infancy Leadership Circle____ Attendees:
Roles: _____ (Leader) _____ (Act Reg) (Time Keeper)
Date: _06___/___3_/___13_

DECISION LOG
• The ILC chose the following three projects to address in 2012, in this order: Family Engagement, Training, Mental Health. The other topics will be addressed when these three are completed.
• Family Engagement initiative should include Family Engagement Training.
• A subcommittee will plan the January Meeting to begin focusing on Family Engagement. Committee includes...
• 2012 meetings will be scheduled for 2 hours each to enable us to make them meaningful working meetings.

NOTES
• In the November meeting, a presentation was made by Tracy on the Early Childhood Direction Center.
• The group discussed and voted on which projects should be adopted first from the priority areas. Once the three were chosen (one from each strategic area), we voted on the order in which they should be worked on. Consensus was reached on the following:
  --1st topic to work on: Engaging Families (from Strong Families)
  --2nd topic to work on: Training (from Early Learning)
  --3rd topic to work on: Mental Health (from Healthy Children)
Appendix J: Sample Meeting Report Form

Community Reporting Form for Steering Committee

Community name(s):
Leader:
Report compiled by (e-mail address and phone):
Meeting date(s):
Please attach agenda
Location(s):

Attendance (number of participants):
Please attach sign-in sheet

Summary of Discussion:

Follow-up Actions:

Appendix K: Issue Exploration Example—Mental Health

Mental Health issue: Child care providers need to be more proactive instead of reactive to children’s challenging behaviors and know what is available in the community regarding resources, access to additional services and educational supports.

- Not much information available; would highlight need
- People don’t know about infant mental health needs
- No one to do this/lack of experts
- Impacts total child including the child’s general health
- Difficult sell/reluctant to talk about mental health
- Afraid of it/stigma/myths
- Lack of knowledge/resources/training
- Hard to reach child care providers

Appendix L: Sample Group Projects

- Letter to Governor supporting the Early Learning Challenge Grant
- Letters to the Editor about Early Childhood Issues
- Enhanced Resource Directory of Early Childhood Services for 211 phone directory, Niagara County
  --Disseminated through NYZTT and local websites.
  --Disseminated through American Academy of Pediatrics chapter
- I Taught My Child Today—Core Messages for Parents to Promote Being Their Child’s First Teacher, Erie County
  --12 messages
  --Disseminated through websites of group members and related community organizations
- Infant and Toddler Conference on Touchpoints at SUNY Cobleskill, DOCS Counties
- Recipes for Play booklet for Parents and Child Care providers, DOCS Counties
- Participating in Community Events as a Partner, Westchester County
  --Legislative breakfast with business leaders
  --Community town meeting with elected officials and youths asking the questions
  --Voter registration
  --Committee to improve transition between Early Intervention and preschool services
- Submit articles to newsletters, Erie County
- Create monthly newsletter for early childhood professionals and maintain mailing list, New York City
- Survey of mental health providers serving children under age 5 and their families, East Harlem 0-5 Network
- Diversity Training of Social Work Interns, East Harlem 0-5 Network
Appendix M: Guidance for Setting Priorities - Sample

Background:
• The ILC group chooses three priority issues under each of the three strategic areas.
• ILC would like to focus on one priority issue from each of the three strategic areas throughout the year. A process for moving those forward is developed and agreed to.
• In order to choose which of the priority issues to select for your first focus, those in attendance at the 2nd meeting share reasons why each issue would be good to address first, and then concerns with doing so. The responses are listed under each area where a “+” equals a good reason for selecting this priority first and a “-” equals a concern with selecting this issue first. (NOTE: “First” is a key word in this description, as all 9 of the issues are intended to be worked on over time.)
• Following this discussion, each person in attendance votes for one of the three priority issues in each strategic area. The votes are listed in parenthesis next to the priority issues.

Next Steps:
• The group may determine that there are too many missing people to make a final selection, and also that further discussion is needed, especially under Healthy Children.
• Review the notes below and come prepared to vote (even if you did already – and you MAY change your vote).
• The highest vote does NOT automatically mean that is the selection – but will show where the energy is in the room and allow us to use that for discussion and decision making.
• At the next meeting, finalize the three focus areas for 2012, decide which to tackle first, and then plan the next meeting to move the process forward.

POSITIVE EARLY LEARNING INCLUDING CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES:
ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Financial Resources (0 votes)
   + Gives us legitimacy, respected more
   + Can’t accomplish anything without money
   + Lets legislatures know it’s important
   - There is no money!
   - Resources are limited
   - We’re not funders
   - Need to be very creative

2. Training that is infant specific and toddler specific (6 votes)
   + Related to a grant – a focus/hot topic
   + Good timing to take this on
   + An infrastructure is in place
   + The impact on children
   - Needs money to implement
   - Putting it in place – it will take time
   - Reaching the people that really need the training

3. Lack of public policy for 0 – 3 years (2 votes)
   + Effects programs
   + Develops continuity – birth → career
   + Would lay groundwork for other priorities
   + Doable in the group setting
   - Policy scares people
   - Lots of government levels
   - Seems abstract rather than direct
HEALTHY CHILDREN: ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Childhood obesity; nutrition concerns including obesity and undernourished (2 votes)
   + Hot topic
   + Develops life-long habits
   + Better health for lifetime
   + Catching them early
   + Buy-in from lots of areas
   + Crosses lots of silos
   - Already being done
   - Difficult issue
   - Not a high rate of success
   - Eating healthy is expensive

2. Mental Health: being more proactive instead of reactive to situations; providers knowing what is available and when to link (knowledge, access, education) to all available resources (4 votes)
   + Not much information and so would highlight need
   + People don’t know this
   + No one to do this
   + Impacts everything else and general health
   - Difficult sell
   - Afraid of it/stigma
   - Lack of knowledge/resources
   - Hard to reach

3. Access to Resources: financial means for visits to doctors and not overuse of hospital emergency rooms; funding for care (loss or lack of); bilingual support for refugee families (2 votes)
   + Very specific goals
   + Easily measurable
   + Huge cost savings
   + Positive health impact
   - Costly
   - Being done by hospitals
   - May need more people involved
   - Doesn’t directly impact children
   - Difficult for ELL – what resources are
STRONG FAMILIES: ISSUES IN THE COMMUNITY

1. Gap between declaration and demonstration concerning the importance of engaging families in educational settings (5 votes)
   + Impacts the most children
   + Broad-based populations – big talk about it
   + Parents make a huge difference
   + Can bring in more positive experiences
   - Need families wanting to be
   - Impact with educational setting
   - A hard one to do

2. Access is sometimes difficult to needed social and family services (language barriers, perceived hidden agenda, cumbersome process loses children through the gaps) (2 votes)
   + Strengthens whole family
   + Families get needed services
   + Lots of agencies would learn what services are
   + Could combine it with Healthy Children #3
   - Can be overwhelming
   - Would take a lot of work to streamline it
   - May not have right people

3. Lack of access to primary care physicians and insurance (whole family issue) (1 vote)
   + Huge policy level – very important
   + Can funnel information to Help Me Grow WNY
   + Economy leads to needs
   + Health care reform – good timing
   - The size of it
   - Lots of different factors
   - Global issue
   - Not enough doctors
Appendix N: Action Plan—Sample

New York Zero-to-Three Network
Infancy Leadership Circle
Adopted Plan for 2011 – 2012

Key Question: What can we accomplish together that will make a difference and accomplish and enhance the Erie Action Plan (Information sharing across systems with the community about the importance of the 0 – 3 years)?

Adopted Plan:
I. Choose one topic from each of the three areas (Early Learning, Healthy Children, Strong Families) to focus on in the next year.
   a. Purpose: Focus so that we might have greater impact.
   b. Determine how (or if) there is a connection among the three chosen topics.
   c. By choosing one from each area, all interest areas can be advanced.

II. One topic at a time, focus on it for at least three meetings to accomplish the following:
   a. Learn about it
      --Invite speaker(s) with knowledge or expertise
      --Members (and others) share research, articles, and fact sheets about topic
      --Ensure that we are all working from the same definition
      --Determine what the core message is that we want to advance
   b. Brainstorm how we can advance it, and make choices
      --What can our agencies do to advance it?
      --What social marketing opportunities are there?
      --Are there existing efforts that can be joined or supported?
      --Determine timing, who, and exact content for advocacy opportunities including letters to the editor
      --Assign “homework” to validate that choices made are appropriate and possible
   c. Develop Action Plans/assignments based on choices made.
      --Based on choices above, and validation (from homework), develop an action plan to advance effort.
      --Distribute work in a way that is fair, and utilizes talents and resources
      --Determine measurement. How will we know that we were successful?

Appendix O: Infant-Toddler Leadership Forum Contacts

The Infant-Toddler Leadership Forum is an annual event held at the New York State Association for the Education of young Children conference each year. The Forum is co-sponsored by the NYS Infant-Toddler Specialist, New York Zero-to-Three Network, and the NYS Council on Children and Families and others. It is usually held on the Thursday before the conference opens, from 1-4 pm and features experts discussing a topic of current interest to the early childhood field and opportunities for regional networking.

For further information about this activity, contact:
Karen Harkness, NYS Infant-Toddler Coordinator, Early Care and Learning Council, Albany, NY
kharkness@earlycareandlearning.org
Sue Perkins, Senior Policy Analyst, New York State Council on Children and Families, Albany, NY
susan.perkins@ccf.state.ny.us
Infancy Leadership Circle Co-directors: infancycirclenys@nyztt.org