



# Norwich Children First Initiative

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COLLABORATORS:

Norwich Human  
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Norwich Youth &  
Family Services

United Community  
and Family Services

Norwich Public  
Schools

Thames Valley  
Council for  
Community Action  
Early Care and  
Education

Uncas Health District

Pooh Corner  
Preschool

## Norwich Children First Initiative / Norwich School Readiness Council

Meeting Minutes for  
October 19, 2005

### Mission Statement

**The mission of the Norwich Children First Initiative is to engage our families, schools, and community to improve life outcomes for young children.**

**The Children First Initiative/School Readiness Council Collaborative is an effort to create an early care and education agenda that fully engages parents, schools, and the community.**

**Attendees:** Peter Schultheis, Jackie Jamrock, Duncan Profitt, Maureen Hogan, Heather Bonitz, Debbie Poirier, Teresa Messervy, Gaylen Ware, Mary Broderick, Veronica Granger, Beverly Goulet, Janis Sawicki, Shanda Easley, Rebecca Grillo, Lynn DePina, Rosemarie Rose, and Sherry Filiatreault

#### Restructuring the way we do business ~

New Co-chairs

Secretary

CFI larger board meets every other month

Workgroups meet every month

Chairs for each workgroup to report back to larger group

Mentor for each new workgroup member

We discussed restructuring the way we do business. These are a few things we will need for the next meeting:

- 1) Please e-mail me info on who you work for and the groups you are affiliated with for the next meeting.
- 2) Who do you think would make good Co-Chairs for CFI?
- 3) What workgroup would you like to be on?
- 4) Attached are some drafts of logos to get folks thinking. We need to have a tag line, so please try to come with an idea or suggestion for the next meeting.

5) We are going to have a meet-and-greet at the end of October or beginning of

November. We are looking for people to invite. Please put on your thinking caps and send me some names of those you think would like to work for the Children of Norwich.

6) Attached are the workgroups

7) Also included is the Discovery action plan. We will be discussing this in detail so

that people can choose a workgroup that best suits their needs.

We have also discussed moving the larger board meeting to every other month. Work groups would then meet once a month, (and having the chair or co-chair report back to the larger group every other month) since the actual Discovery work plan would be accomplished in the workgroups. A workgroup can meet anytime that is agreeable with the members.

**Childcare providers:** A toolbox is being developed with the collected information. New grants were submitted at the end of August.

**Membership/Recruitment Meeting:** A meet-and-greet is being planned for the end of October or early November. We'd like to gather names of people we feel should be on our board, in a workgroup, or simply be educated about CFI in order to speak for us. We are looking for two levels of involvement: 1) someone to be on our board *and* in a workgroup, or in a workgroup only, if he/she is unable to attend larger board meetings, 2) A member of the community who will be a spokesperson for CFI. Please e-mail Sherry or call with names of those people you think would like to be a part of CFI.

**Legislative Forum Committee:** This committee has met and is discussing the different issues that we'd like to work on in the next legislative session. We are gathering information on children and focusing on Statewide issues. We will also be communicating with the regional group to decide what issues we'll work on collaboratively.

**Norwich School Readiness Council Report:**

1. Norwich currently has a total of 147 school readiness slots with the following distribution:

TVCCA Early Care: 20 full-day slots

TVCCA Head Start: 14 part-day slots

Pooh Corner: 10 full-day slots

Norwich Public Schools: 44 part-day slots

Norwich Family Resource Center: 59 full-day slots

2. Joy Staples from the State Department of Education will be visiting Norwich School Readiness sites on October 4<sup>th</sup> from 9:00-3:30. She will meet me at Stanton School in the morning, and we will begin visiting sites

immediately. We will then meet in the School Readiness room at Stanton at 2:00 PM to have an informal discussion in regard to School Readiness. Anyone interested in SR is welcome to attend, though program directors are asked to be present or to send a representative.

3. Three Rivers Community College and TVCCA (with a grant from DSS) are offering a one-year accelerated CDA program. The CDA is a national credential for childcare staff that generally takes approximately two years to complete. Staff in School Readiness are attending this program in order to qualify under School Readiness guidelines.

**Greater Norwich Community Leadership Team:** Parent graduates are hard at work with the Anti-Bullying Coalition. Parent Graduates have put together two **Meet the Candidates** forums, one with City Council members September 26<sup>th</sup>, one with Board of Education September 29<sup>th</sup>.

**Mentoring Program** this year is based out of Norwich Youth & Family Services. We are looking for mentors! Please contact Sherry Filiatreault or Debbie Kievits at 823-3782.

**Anti-Bullying Coalition** hosted an internet safety presentation in August. A teen anti-bullying group has been formed at Teachers' Memorial, and at Kelly Middle School. A training on the Second Step Program is planned for September 30<sup>th</sup>. Call Debbie Kievits (823-3782, ext. 26) if you have any questions. All programs are now recruiting for participants! Please call Sherry if you know of anyone interested. Do you know of a group that could benefit from PEP?

**Strategic Community Plan:** This committee is working hard to get posters printed up showing the three communities involved, and who to contact in each one.

The following decisions were made:

Three subcommittees will be formed (or already have been formed) - **Advocacy**, chaired by Sherry; **Communication**, chaired by Dana; **Speakers Bureau**, chaired by Peter.

The three communities will pursue the use of the Born Learning poster with an attached 'bookmark' piece as a way to locally brand the material.

A regional logo will be developed emphasizing children and families.

**Newsletter/Website articles:** The newsletter will be available within the next few weeks. Please call Sherry at 823-3782, or e-mail her at [sherryf@cityofnorwich.org](mailto:sherryf@cityofnorwich.org) if you have information to contribute.

**Website** is up and running! The web address is [www.norwichcfi.org](http://www.norwichcfi.org).

**Family Day 2005** was held on September 18<sup>th</sup> 2005 and was successful.

Despite the Hurricane, we had a beautiful day with over 2000 people in attendance.

**GMF** will hold their Stone Soup Conference on Thursday, October 20, 2005 at The Farmington Marriott Hotel. Five people from Norwich are eligible to go. Please contact me if you would like to go (you must be positive that you will attend).

**Financial:** On hold

**Work groups:** Next meeting we will be going over the Discovery action plan, and at that time you can choose a work group and set a date for that work group to start meeting.

**Safe Communities** will be holding a car seat clinic at the Norwich Fire Department on the first Friday of each month from 10:00 am to 1:00 p.m. You can call 442-0733 for more information.

**Speaker: Heather Bonitz** from United Community & Family Services works for the Early Childhood Consultation Partnership (ECCP). It is a statewide initiative for early intervention and prevention of social and emotional (mental health/ behavioral) problems in children birth-5, and to reduce/eliminate preschool suspension and expulsion rates. She works with early childhood centers, preschool special education, and DCF foster and adoptive homes to provide observation and assessment of classrooms and/or specific children. In classroom consultation she works with the class, teachers, and directors to assess the environment and create a classroom action plan to enhance the social and emotional development of the children. She can help implement new strategies in the classroom. She also provides staff and parent training to the center. In a child specific service, she assesses the individual child within his/her classroom environment, meets with the teacher, director, and parents to create a child specific action plan. There is also an SDE component of the program working with preschool children with IEPs. She works to coordinate services across the center and preschool special education services, and builds the relationship between the early childhood teachers and special education teachers/administrators. Referrals for the ECCP program can come from center directors, special education, or DCF. An interested parent can also call, but will need the permission of the center director prior to beginning a service. When the referral is from DCF (for a child where DCF is the current legal guardian) Heather will observe and assess the child in the foster or adoptive home and in the early learning center, and then develop an action plan across all settings. She can be reached at (860) 442-4319 or at [hbonitz@ucfs.org](mailto:hbonitz@ucfs.org).

***Next meeting is at the Dime Bank at 9:00 AM on Wednesday, October 19th***  
**Hope to see you there!**