

From PEC BELL NEWSLETTER, Friday, May 14, 2021
Offering leadership and training for housing and early learning systems.



BELL NEWSLETTER



Offering Leadership

by Roslyn Edwards
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For over three years now, People's Emergency Center (PEC), through Building Early Links for Learning (BELL) and our Policy Department, promotes conversations and solutions that focus on gaining equity for young children experiencing homelessness. By advocating for inclusion of all children, no matter where they live, eat or sleep, we can achieve increased access to high quality early learning for children experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia and across the state. Here are a few of our latest efforts.

Omari Baye, our new BELL Manager, spoke at the Family Voice Forums: Building a Stronger Child Care System through the American Rescue Plan, hosted by the **Start Strong PA coalition**, on April 30, 2021. He made the following recommendations.

- **The Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC)** system should appoint someone as the contact person for issues relating to homelessness and foster care in each ELRC.
- Improving data system integration within the Commonwealth between housing providers and early learning centers. This would help both systems to better assess the number of homeless children and appropriately plan.
- Offering more home visiting options for families.
- Providing transportation options for families experiencing homelessness to their early learning programs.

Also, **Sylania Burnett**, PEC's Parents as Teachers Manager, led a PEC team presentation at the "**Now is the Time**" conference hosted by the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), Center for Schools and Communities, the Children's Trust Fund, and Pennsylvania's Parents as Teachers. Parent Educator **Arianna Hall**, PEC's data consultant **Dr. Maureen Hayes**, and PEC's VP for Policy Joe Willard shared the story of challenges of expanding home visiting services to families experiencing homelessness and their recent successes.

Finally, my colleagues **Julie Gillen**, Joe Willard, and I participated with the PA Homeless Stakeholders group, a statewide network chaired by **Tracy Duarte**, from the PA Head Start Collaboration Office, to discuss improving coordination of outreach and enrollment of homeless young children across various Early Childhood Education programs and working together on a data project.

This summer, we will support families experiencing homelessness to access the coming expansion of childcare, Head Start, and home visiting opportunities. We will also support the advocacy to increase the compensation of early learning staff. This is one of the most practical methods to increasing high quality – *retaining qualified staff!*

TEXT PECBELL TO to 844-961-3547 for BELL news!

PEC Submits Comments to PA Child Care Development Fund State Plan

PEC joined hundreds of parents, advocates, and system leaders in offering comments on the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) Pennsylvania's FFY 2022-24 **ChildCare Development Fund (CCDF) Draft State Plan**.

We offered ten recommendations. Our most urgent recommendation is that the state should require each of the Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRC) to designate a main contact who would be responsible for increasing enrollment of and participation by homeless children and troubleshooting any problems. We expressed hope that this position would be pro-active in reaching out into the community - communicating with homeless families wherever they are, and on a consistent basis.

The state plan does include policies supportive of young children experiencing homelessness, and we affirmed that these policies should be continued into the next three years. For those interested in the state plan, see their website [here](#).



Presenting Sit Calm Videos, a new Tool for you!

BELL Early Childhood Education (ECE) Specialists have created 'Sit Calm' videos, recordings of our staff reading children's book. Families in shelter can view the videos with their children and promote literacy. Each of the staff chose a book. **Dawn Nock** choose her book because it helps children and adults understand and put words to what it feels like when we get angry. **Iyisha Weaver** choose her book because it helps children and adults understand that success starts with YOU. **Sarah Vrabic** says that her book helps adults to understand that young children experience a wide variety of emotions every day. Check out the short videos by clicking here: [Building Early Links for Learning - PEOPLE'S EMERGENCY CENTER \(pec-cares.org\)](https://www.pec-cares.org)

BELL Helped This Family Find a Bilingual Teacher

PEC's BELL Early Childhood Education Specialists partner with 24 programs housing families who need extra assistance in locating and enrolling into high quality early childhood education programs that best fit their unique needs.

Recently, an education liaison from a family shelter in North Philadelphia reached out to their BELL ECE Specialist requesting assistance with an Arabic speaking family. Mom was not a strong English speaker and she wanted to be able to have clear communication with her child's teacher. She specifically wanted a classroom with a teacher fluent in both English and Arabic.

The BELL and shelter staff teamed up and reached out to contacts at the School District of Philadelphia, hoping to locate the best fit for this family. School District staff responded promptly with not one, but two options for classrooms with Arabic/English bilingual teachers. Mom was able to research them on her own and make the best decision possible for her child's education.

This success is a wonderful example of the system collaboration that BELL encourages and strives for every day. Seemingly insurmountable problems can be solved when systems collaborate to share knowledge and resources for the good of the children we all serve. And, it empowers the parent!

Did this story resonate with you? If you are working with English Language Learners seeking assistance enrolling into Pre-K, please consider the School District of Philadelphia's Pre-K enrollment webinars offered in **Spanish**, **Arabic**, and **Mandarin**, on Tuesday, May 18th (click on the language you need to be taken to more information).



Supporting Social Emotional Resilience through Training

BELL celebrated the **Week of the Young Child** (April 2021) by highlighting how adults can support resiliency in children at each stage of their development by hosting a webinar entitled *ACEs Revisited: Supporting Social and Emotional Resilience*. We offered this concept due to concern of how the current pandemic might be affecting families who experienced trauma.

We explored why using a **trauma lens** is needed when working with children ages birth through five years and discussed how developmental milestones relate to resilience and managing emotions and conflicts, as outlined in the Pennsylvania Early Learning Standards for Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers.

By asking our 45 participants self-reflective questions such as, "*Do children experience stress, trauma, adversity?*," we deeply explored these childhood stressors and its impact.

Participants deepened their understanding of their own responses and triggers to what was going on around them. We discussed conflict management as a part of our development, keeping us mindful of how important it is that we cultivate, not punish, this area of a child's development.

[Click here to watch the presentation!](#)

PEC is Hiring for Parent Educators

PEC is hiring Parent Educators for its **Parents as Teachers (PAT)** home visiting program. The Parent Educator implements the PAT model after training and certification, emphasizing parent-child interaction, development-centered parenting and family well-being in their work with families. Utilizing the PAT Foundational Curriculum in culturally sensitive ways, the Parent Educator partners, facilitates and reflects with families. Interested candidates can view the job description [here](#).

How Should the School District Spend New Funds Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness?

The School District of Philadelphia will receive a portion of the state's \$32 million for the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program recently awarded by the U.S. Congress. **How should they spend those funds?**

The national education advocates SchoolHouse Connection is offering new ideas for consideration. Read them at [How to Use American Rescue Plan Act K-12 Education Funds to Identify and Support Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness | SchoolHouse Connection.](#)

Do you have ideas on how the School District of Philadelphia should support students who are homeless? Submit your ideas to policy@pec-cares.org for being included in a message to school leadership. Your responses will be kept anonymous.

Sign up Today for our Next Children's Work Group Early Childhood Conference

The Children's Work Group Early Childhood Conference is the only meeting space to discuss aspects of **young children experiencing homelessness**. Professionals from public health, hospitals, city and state government, homeless housing, early childhood education, academia, home visiting, child welfare, early intervention, and other systems come together. We host **trainings, workshops**, and panels of **guest leadership**. And we network; by getting to know one another, we **improve how our systems collaborate**.

We meet every third Friday of the month, starting at 9:30 AM. **Join** our mailing list by emailing jwillard@pec-cares.org.

This month's presenter is **Dr. Carmela DeCandia**, the principal developer of **NEST**- a new neurodevelopmental screening tool for use by staff working with homeless and housing insecure families. She has specialized in working with children and families impacted by trauma and adversity for over 30 years. A Clinical Fellow of the Harvard Medical School, she trained at Boston Children's Hospital and then worked for the past 20 years in community practice primarily serving homeless and highly vulnerable children and families.

In addition, we will talk about new investments in nurturing play programs, the American Rescue Plan funds for early learning, and advocacy directed at the State level with **Mai Miksic** the Early Childhood Policy Director for the Public Citizens for Children and Youth (**PCCY**).

When: Friday, May 21

Time: 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

How: **Register today for your Zoom link!**

Click here for previously recorded trainings!