This afternoon, I have the pleasure of hosting the first early childcare work group meeting of the NC Rural Health Leadership Alliance (NCRHLA). The NCRHLA, which is housed within the Foundation for Health Leadership & Innovation (formerly the NC Foundation for Advanced Health Programs), is affiliated with the National Rural Health Association and serves as North Carolina’s state rural health association. It began its formation during 2014, born out of a rural health leadership group that had been convening since the 1990’s.

The work group, which includes representatives from public, private, and non-profit organizations from across the state, will focus its work on advancing the childcare and early education recommendations from the 2014 NC Rural Health Action Plan: A Report of the NCIOM Task Force on Rural Health. The Rural Health Task Force, a partnership of the North Carolina Institute of Medicine, the Office of Rural Health within the North Carolina

**Featured:**

**NCRHLA Work Groups**

The six NCRHLA work groups supporting the NCIOM Rural Health Action Plan include:

1. Small Business and Rural Economics
2. Childcare and Early Education
3. Health Eating and Active Living
4. Integration of Primary and
Department of Health and Human Services, and the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust, was charged with identifying actionable strategies to improve rural health outcomes over the next three to five years.

**Behavioral Health Care**

5. **Health Insurance and Safety Net Resources**

6. **Workforce Recruitment and Retention**

House Bill 1030 charges early childhood programs within state agencies to collaborate and develop recommendations for early childhood education. It also calls for the successful transition of children from Pre-K to kindergarten, for those who receive assistance from NC Pre-K program and the Child Care Subsidy Assistance Program.

*IEI’s Summer in the Commons Youth Engagement Program*

Looking for an engaging activity for your K-12 students this summer? 

Schedule your Summer in the Commons tour today!

For more information, contact Simone Collman.

*Help Youth Get FutureWork-Ready This Summer!*
IEI has been offered a generous $10,000 donation in support of its summer youth programs aimed at educating K-12 and college students on becoming “Future Work-ready” leaders for North Carolina.

The catch? IEI must secure another 216 supporters, with gifts of at least $20.16! Please help us meet this 216 supporters = $10,000 in youth program challenge!

4. The NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, in partnership with community stakeholders including child care resource and referral agencies, community colleges, Smart Start partnerships, and child care providers should continue to work toward adequate wages and/or wage support, benefits (especially health insurance), education and training, and career advancement opportunities to continue to grow a high quality and well-trained early care and education workforce.

5. Local Smart Start partnerships, in conjunction with the NC Partnership for Children, the NC Division of Child Development and Early Education, child care resource and referral agencies, the NC Department of Public Instruction, local education agencies and local businesses should choose from and implement a range of evidence-based and best practice strategies for improving school readiness and long-term educational success. These agencies should involve parent coalition in the selection and implementation of strategies in local communities.

Work Ahead

Our first task as a work group will be to conduct an environmental scan of childcare and early education programs and policies in rural areas, and identify critical gaps. We will use this information to create a prioritized list of deliverables, including tasks and timelines for the next 12-18 months. I plan to regularly share the work group’s updates and progress on my new blog, which will launch this September. In the meantime, I encourage you to share your stories, perspectives, and ideas as they relate to improving childcare and early education in our rural communities. It will take all of us working together to make a meaningful impact.

Sarah Langer Hall
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