REPORT:
NYSPEP SUMMIT ON WORKFORCE QUALITY for PARENTING EDUCATION in NEW YORK STATE
Monday, February 22nd, 2021
The NYSPEP SUMMIT ON WORKFORCE QUALITY for PARENTING EDUCATION in NEW YORK STATE was presented by the New York State Parenting Education Partnership. Thanks to the following subcommittee members who planned and implemented the Summit and wrote this report:

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The NYSPEP Summit on Workforce Quality for Parenting Education, a virtual half-day event on February 22nd, 2021, was met with enthusiasm with nearly 250 people attending, representing a wide range of involvement in the field. A poll taken at the event revealed that nearly everyone at the Summit was either a frontline parenting educator or someone whose work supports parenting educators. Attendees shared in the chat box that they represented home visiting programs, Head Starts, the Adoptive and Foster Family Coalition, NYC Administration for Children Services, child abuse prevention programs, YWCAs, perinatal networks, community health worker programs, the NYS Office of Mental Health, Cornell Cooperative Extension programs, and many more. The engagement from those in such a wide range of positions in widely varied organizations reflects the embeddedness of parenting education in so many different services.

The 2.5 hour convening featured keynote speaker Reginald L. Cox, Founder of the Fatherhood Connection, who spoke about the need for different perspectives in parenting education as well as the importance of continuing to pursue excellence, with a statewide credential for the profession being a part of that effort. His inspiring words were followed by five panel presentations featuring leaders in the field, which are summarized below.
In starting off, we wanted to establish common ground in understanding what parenting education is, who is providing it (and, may not even call it that or know it) and why it matters. According to the New York State Council on Children and Families, “A parent educator helps parents obtain the education and skills needed to raise physically, psychologically, and emotionally healthy children. Parents in any socio-economic situation can often use help with parenting skills. The parent educator may be an employee of a public agency, a private organization, or a self-employed professional.” (https://www.earlychildhood.org/cdrg/exp_positions_p12.cfm). But, those who support parents in various ways have numerous job titles and roles and the qualifications for providing parenting education are not well-defined by New York State: “The qualifications for parent educator vary according to the sponsoring organizations or agency and purpose of programs.”

Fortunately, two excellent resources about competencies for parenting educators have been developed; one is the competency list for the NYSPEP Parenting Educators Credential and the other is a Resource Document from the National Parenting Education Network (NPEN).

These can be found at:
NYSPEP:
https://nyspep.org/application/files/6615/5784/6033/CPE_Competency_List_4.2019.pdf\NPEN:
https://npen.org/Professional-Parenting-Educator-Competencies
Some key points from this panel were:

- Parenting educators have many titles and many roles, but ultimately, they are the professionals who help improve the lives of families and parents. They intentionally help parents improve their knowledge and skills around parenting and ability to be the best parents they can be.

- Parenting educators strengthen Protective Factors for families -- we want to increase family skills and reduce family stress.

- Parenting education is for *everybody* -- anyone in a caregiving role for children and not just at-risk families, or families who have been mandated. Everyone benefits from family education.

- We can’t truly offer help to others without judging others until you can truly ask for help yourself without self-judgement. When you can ask for help yourself you can authentically offer help to others without judgement.

- Using strength-based communications and focusing on positive interactions with parents helps reduce the need to talk about things like “punishment” and “discipline.” Lead with the positive!

- We have strong evidence that parenting education works. For some research, see: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nqgC0DrgtPt3uzqxVr1YU1jXk0WotcXYjo6FTohtvhY/edit?usp=sharing
There’s a little bit of parenting education in everything we do...

...and, this list is not exhaustive
Parenting education in New York State takes many forms. To illustrate this concept, we shared images of parenting educators from around the state to include a family support worker supervisor from Healthy Families in Albany County, a parenting and family life educator from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Orange County, a family resource center coordinator from ProAction of Steuben and Yates, a family engagement specialist from the CUNY Professional Development Institute and a child nutrition program specialist from Hunger Solutions New York. In addition we had a panel of parenting educators from different fields who shared how parenting education is delivered in their agency. The Workforce Quality Summit planning team thought it important that panelists include representatives from community-based organizations, statewide organizations and state government organizations. These panelists included:

- Julika Von Stackelberg, Parenting and Family Life Educator at Cornell Cooperative Extension.
- Dawn Bruce, Community Health Worker Supervisor (MICHC Program)
- Susan Burger, Families Together in New York State
- Karen Kissinger, Assistant Director, Children’s Trust Funds, OCFS
- Tim Hathaway, Executive Director, Prevent Child Abuse NY and NYSPEP Co-chair

Each of the panelists shared the relevant curricula they use, ages served, core training needs as well as funding mechanisms giving a rich overview of the various ways parents are being served in our state.
Dona Anderson gave an overview of the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential. The following slides provide a summary.

**What is the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential?**

- A professional recognition framework
- A system for providing evidence of one’s abilities and expertise
- An objective symbol of confidence in a professional’s abilities for employers, colleagues and the public to see

**What the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential NOT?**

- A training
- A license
- A test
Who Should Have It?

Anyone who touches the lives of those who touch the lives of children, including:

- Facilitators of parent groups and parenting classes
- Parent coaches
- Family life workers
- Home visitors
- Parent advocates
- Support group facilitators

- Parenting educators who come from many different fields, not just parenting education, family life education, parent coaching and family life coaching — i.e. parenting educators who are in the fields of social work, family science, psychology, marriage and family therapy, the medical profession and teaching (particularly in early childhood education where teachers often interact with parents).

Why should someone get the NYSPEP Credential?

- Parenting education is not usually a single field of study — it’s embedded in many different fields. The credential provides a framework for the competencies that are needed specifically for this work.

- To show competency easily and clearly to others

- To assess competency for oneself

- Self-reflection
Core Competencies:

- The Purpose of Parenting Education
- Human Growth and Development
- Social and Emotional Development
- Health and Safety
- Strengths-based Communication
- Parent Development and Family Systems
- Nurturing Discipline
- Community Systems and Resources
- Technology and Media
- Adult Learning and Learning Styles
- Working with Diversity
- Facilitation Skills
- Professional Identity and Boundaries
- Professional Ethics

Credentialing Levels

- Tier I
  Credentialed Parenting Resource Associate (NYSPEP-CPRA)
  Basic knowledge of content areas expected. For those who would typically be referring parents to programs & resources - NOT teaching

- Tier II
  Credentialed Parenting Educator (NYSPEP-CPE)
  Deeper knowledge of content areas and practice. Combination of formal training and experience expected. For those who provide direct education to parents and caregivers about their caregiving role.

- Tier III
  Senior Credentialed Parenting Educator (NYSPEP-CSPE)
  In-depth knowledge of content areas, practice, and program oversight. Higher level of formal training and experience expected. For those in program development, leadership and/or supervisory roles.
Following the overview of the NYSPEP Credential, Dona explained how having a credential for parenting educators helps protect the public investment (tax dollars) in parenting education programs by providing accountability -- it sets an expectation that programs are staffed by qualified professionals and establishes a system-wide mechanism to recognize and certify those professionals.

Dona then interviewed Avril Mills about her experience around the development of a credentialing system for another group of professionals -- those who provide training for early childhood educators in NY State -- so that Summit participants could see the parallels and lessons learned for a similar recognition system, with the same goal of helping professionals be the best that they can be, in a different but related realm. Avril explained that the Training and Technical Assistance Professional (TTAP) Credential was developed in 2009 because there was no real standard or bar for trainers in early childhood and there was a lack of quality control. (As with the parenting education profession, no national certification exists for early childcare professional development trainers.) There was a need to insure that the dollars spent on early childhood care provider training was going to those who had the knowledge, experience and expertise to provide excellent instruction. A committee was established and, once the competencies and process for credentialing trainers was developed, there was a slow and steady effort to create a culture shift so that the TTAP Credential became the standard in the field across the state and ultimately became required. Funding initially came from the Child Development Block grant to help 125 trainers obtain the credential through scholarships and, over a few years, a coordination developed between funders and agencies so that quality dollars would only go to providers that used TTAP trainers for professional development.

The information that Avril shared was helpful in clarifying the route towards unified support for and coordination of a statewide recognition system. The essential elements for professionalizing a field over time are 1) affordability for those wanting to earn the credential, 2) a streamlined process for earning the credential, and 3) buy-in from all stakeholders.
Glen Palm, Professor Emeritus of St. Cloud State University, Minnesota, shared about the development of Teachers of Parent and Family Education teaching license for educators teaching parent and family education in Minnesota public schools’ Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE). In 1985 the license was developed as a credit-based graduate program with a student teaching component. Upon completion of required courses, the higher education institution recommends the candidate to the Board of Teaching for licensure. Candidates must pass the Minnesota Teacher Licensure Exam. Beginning in the mid 1990’s, a competency-based prerequisite was added and fewer higher education credits were required. Dr. Palm worked to develop a portfolio evaluation process to serve the needs of parenting educators who had less access to higher education. There is also a requirement for supervised student teaching where parenting educators facilitate three groups of parents over a 10-16 week time period.

Dr. Palm emphasized that any credential or license is “just a base.” Over time parenting educators learn from parents and expand their knowledge and skills. Continued professional development and reflective supervision are needed by all parenting educators.

Dr. Jerri Wolfe is a faculty member at Linn-Benton Community College in Albany, Ore., where she serves as the co-coordinator of parent education in the Family Resource and Education Department. She shared about the Recognition System for parenting educators developed by Oregon Parenting Education Collaborative to support the ongoing professional development of parenting educators. The OPEC Recognition System is a tool for Parenting Educators to 1) build and maintain a professional portfolio that documents education, training, and work experience and 2) apply for recognition as a Parenting Educator. This Recognition System was developed with support from four foundations and Oregon State University to support universal access to high quality parenting education by Oregon families. The OPEC Recognition System requires the parenting educator to document their education, training and experience in three areas of core knowledge and skills. In addition, applicants must complete online training in Essentials of Parenting Education Professional Practice.
Dr. Wolfe noted that while many parenting educators across the state have begun the work to receive the recognition it is difficult for them to complete the process. In her role on faculty, she found that working with a group of students and supporting them through the steps of the process was more effective in ensuring their completion and recognition. This recognition system is a workforce development initiative, with employers valuing and supporting access to recognition. Establishing this system has allowed the community colleges in Oregon to access funding for the development of a quality parenting education workforce.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

Panelists:
Bernadette Johnson – NYS Office of Children and Family Services
Dr. Kimberly Kopko – Cornell University
Timothy Hathaway – Prevent Child Abuse New York

Bernadette Johnson talked about the importance of parenting education for all, including other members of the family in addition to parents. OCFS is a partner agency and a funder in parenting education throughout the state, committed to supporting evidence-based programs. OCFS wants to protect the public’s investment in parenting education with promising standards and believes that effective programs are delivered by effective staff. The NYSPEP Credential can help document that one has the experience and skills necessary to provide excellent services to parents, and OCFS encourages and applauds those who are seeking recognition in the field through the credential.

Dr. Kimberly Kopko, the Director of Cornell University’s Cooperative Extension’s Parenting Project, expressed that parenting educators have been reporting seeing, even pre-pandemic, more need for mental health services and that the opioid crisis has had a large impact. With the pandemic and home schooling and job insecurity, there has been an even greater need.

She sees parenting education incorporating more of the following practices going forward:

*Embedded parenting:* Support and education lives in the physical spaces where parents are (apartment complexes, schools, pediatrics offices, etc.)

*Portable parenting:* Programs move around to different places to meet parents (e.g. home visiting, a parenting education program being brought to a convenient location for parents, etc.)
Kimberly also spoke of the benefits of evidence-based programs (e.g. Strengthening Families) as well as some of the challenges, and the difficulties of connecting in person during the pandemic.

Timothy Hathaway talked about the need for a landscape analysis of parenting education programs, curriculum, and service providers throughout the state to determine direction of the NYSPEP Credential and to fortify the system that supports the work and the ideas/concepts. OCFS funding will be supporting this analysis over the coming year. He mentioned a direct and concentrated effort to promote on a policy level information about Adverse Childhood Effects (ACE’s) and the antidote of ‘resilience.’ He is encouraged by some policy developments, such as 1) a real focus on what’s happening for families right now with regard to poverty, 2) the Families First initiative, and 3) the rethinking of many programs for kids e.g. the child welfare system, Medicare/Medicaid.

Timothy sees NYSPEP continuing to build on its work to promote the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential around the state and fortify the systems and connections for doing this work.
OUTCOMES OF THE SUMMIT AND NEXT STEPS

Participants came away with an understanding of the wonderful and diversified array of parenting education programs being offered across New York. They also learned that, because parenting education is a fairly new profession, there is no national recognition specifically for parenting educators and that the requirements for working in the field vary from position to position and from program to program. However, the National Parenting Education Network (NPEN) has developed a list and description of the comprehensive set of competencies necessary for parenting educators, and NYSPEP has aligned with those competencies in its creation of the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential. There is, therefore, the potential for greater uniformity for a standard of foundational knowledge and skills and recognition of those who have education, training and experience to provide high quality services across NY State. And, as highlighted during the Summit, there is now more than ever, the need for flexibility and portability in how we provide parenting education, and the NYSPEP credential is valuable across programs, curricula, and modes of service—it “travels” with the parenting educator no matter the format, the clients, or the setting.

The NYS Office of Children and Family Services has invested in the development of NYSPEP’s Credential system and will help with next step efforts identified during the Summit.

These steps are:

1) removing financial barriers for obtaining the NYSPEP Credential (through OCFS funding, scholarships are being offered)

2) simplifying the process for those wanting to earn the NYSPEP Credential

3) completing a thorough analysis of all organizations serving parents, as well as partnering institutions, so that there is a growing cohesiveness, collaboration and coordination in the field

4) employers and funders encouraging and/or requiring the NYSPEP Credential

5) policy makers working towards reimbursement from insurance/medicaid for services provided by credentialed parenting educators.
If you are interested in applying for the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential or helping members of your staff apply, the next deadline for applications is July 31st, 2021. A limited number of partial scholarships are available on a first come, first served basis.

For questions about the Summit or this report, contact Meg Akabas at makbas@earthlink.net

Find out more about NYSPEP and become a member (it’s free!) at www.nyspep.org

Inquire about earning the NYSPEP Parenting Educator Credential at credential@nyspep.org

You can watch a recording of the Summit here: