**Expanding Opportunities Interagency Inclusion Initiative**

**Networking Call with TA Providers**

**March 13, 2012**

NECTAC facilitated a call of twelve TA providers who have been working with Expanding Opportunities states from the last two cohorts. There were 5 NECTAC staff, 3 NECTAC/RRC staff, and 4 RRCP staff on the call. Head Start and Child Care TA providers were not available for the call. With the change in the funding and configuration of Head Start and Child Care TA systems, their participation in Expanding Opportunities has decreased.

Participants on the call gave a summary of the status of states in regard to plan development and implementation, and updates about successful or effective state activities. They also discussed the collaboration/coordination of Expanding Opportunities with other early childhood initiatives as well as processes used by TA teams for working effectively with states.

Resources and products developed by states are posted on the Expanding Opportunities web page at <http://www.nectac.org/expopps/default.asp>. An evaluation of the Expanding Opportunities initiative is also available on the website.

A brief summary of several states follows.

**Arkansas**

* The Arkansas Expanding Opportunities team had a robust start with a first onsite meeting last August where they pulled together a stakeholder group with state and local representatives.  The team conducted the SpecialQuest State Perceptions of Inclusive Practices (SPIP) and identified potential focus areas for their work; policy, communication, screening and professional development.
* Their EC QRIS has a substantial role in increasing the opportunities to serve children with disabilities in child care by requiring child care providers to serve children with IFSPs/IEPs in the minimum licensure requirements.
* They had a second stakeholder meeting in December 2011 when they selected their activities based on the four focus areas identified in August, lenses through which to promote the minimum child care licensure requirements.  They also drafted action steps with timelines. After a few calls, they finalized the proposed activities with responsibilities and timelines, and are getting ready for implementation.
* There has been a change in the child care leadership for the AR Expanding Opportunities steering committee. The TA team will work with the new leaders to share progress to date, answer any questions and support their engagement in the process.  Fortunately, the EO activities were designed to fit within existing system which will help make the transition of leadership smooth.

**Hawaii**

* The Hawaii Expanding Opportunities team continues with plan implementation.  The Head Start Collaboration Project Director is involved with some of the key state level councils which has been helpful for garnering support at the state level.  They have four major goals and are working on activities related to three of them.  A primary focus has been on developing materials to stimulate public awareness about young children and inclusion.
* Their work aligns with the RTT-ELC application and the ECAC due to the participation and membership of some Expanding Opportunities team members.  They didn’t receive RTT funding but Expanding Opportunities representatives were visible during the process of developing the application and goals.  Some of the Expanding Opportunity goals were embedded into RTT application which has given broader support to Expanding Opportunities.
* There is strong involvement by the state Department of Education since many preschool programs are on school campuses.  They were able to take advantage of this connection through a Kellogg P-Three grant and got in on the ground floor for three inclusive classrooms being created.
* Sequenced Transition to Education in the Public Schools (STEPS) State and community teams are an extension of the State team due to shared membership which is helping with inclusion promotion activities.

**Mississippi**

* The team has developed an agreed upon vision, mission, intended outcomes and goals. Activities have been proposed but implementation of those activities has not yet begun as this refinement to their planning process was a recent activity.
* The Expanding Opportunities team made an agreement to stop working on their plan development while preparation of the RTT application took place. The state decided to include some of the Expanding Opportunities ideas into the RTT application process since Expanding Opportunities supports that work.
* Expanding Opportunities representatives have been going to different councils and agencies to give the message of inclusion.  There are some innovative programs that are inclusive and they are looking at ways to expand them.

**Nevada**

* The NV Expanding Opportunities State Leadership Team has been making good progress. Since their initial meeting last spring, they have developed a vision, mission, multi-level desired outcomes, and a brochure that describes the initiative. They are intentionally aligning the work of Expanding Opportunities with TACSEI.
* Expanding Opportunities has been officially named a subcommittee of Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) which has brought an additional level of commitment and excitement. ECAC provides support for attendance in EO meetings when other resources are not available.
* The Core Planning Team has standing monthly calls to which all Leadership Team members are invited to join to plan for the monthly State Leadership Team meetings (in person quarterly, by teleconference the other months).
* More recently, the team has been engaged in mapping activities to get the full picture of early childhood service delivery and infrastructure functions in the state, and analyzing strengths, challenges and gaps. This mapping process and resulting information will be useful for the ECAC’s work in systems building.

**New York**

* The NY Expanding Opportunities Leadership Team was established in 2010 at the Inclusion Institute. The team carefully selected stakeholders and planned a large cross-sector stakeholder meeting. At the meeting, the group went through a facilitated process using the State Perceptions of Inclusive Practices (SPIP) tool developed by Special Quest which provided a good framework for looking at inclusion and identifying areas where they might want to focus their effort. The major areas that emerged included vision/values/awareness; agency coordination, and professional development.
* The lead of the Expanding Opportunities Leadership Team is also co-chair of the state ECAC which developed the RTT-ELC application. This has helped ensure that issues related to children with disabilities are included in all systems building work.
* At this point, they have just completed the final draft of a white paper that consolidates information from the stakeholder meeting and proposes strategies for the initiative. The paper is now available for review by the Leadership and TA team members; after revisions are made based on feedback received, the paper will be shared more broadly for public buy-in.

**Utah**

* They have done some work in public awareness and completed a 40-hour professional development module leading to certification in child care for working with children with disabilities. They are now building a professional development network to be used across agencies; it has gone live on the Web.
* This spring Utah Expanding Opportunities will become a subcommittee of the Early Childhood Advisory Council.
* The Utah Expanding Opportunities team continues to take consistent steps forward. They started with a small core group who hadn’t all met each other until coming to the Inclusion Institute.  During the stakeholder meeting in October 2010 they finalized and endorsed a vision, mission, and guiding principles.  A second stakeholder meeting was held last fall to update the stakeholder group on the progress of the work.
* They created a flier which can be individualized at the local level.  They see their work on Expanding Opportunities as a community effort. It is not intended just for schools but throughout community, including parks and recreation.
* They decided to have a rotating chairmanship for one year. The Utah Office of Child Care took a leadership role for the first year, with the intention of serving one year, then rotating leads.
* The group has done some work in public awareness, shared conference presentations, and the Office of Child Care completed a 40-hour professional development module for providers working with children with disabilities leading to an award and certificate for child care providers who complete the course.  The group is now building a professional development network to be used across agencies which will soon be live on the Web.
* This spring Utah Expanding Opportunities plans to become a subcommittee of the Bureau of Child Development Early Care and Education Committee.