

## SYMPOSIA SERIES ON SUPPORTING HEALTHY EARLY BRAIN DEVELOPMENT SUMMARY OF SECOND MEETING

**JULY 24, 2014**

**Art Rolnick**, Former Senior Vice President and Director of Research, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, and Senior Fellow and Co-Director, Human Capital Research Collaborative, University of Minnesota, presented information on the research showing that investment in high quality early childhood education far exceeds the return on most public and private economic investments and described his experience implementing research-based approaches to early childhood education in Minnesota. In particular, he described the research on the Perry Preschool Program, in Ypsilanti, Michigan, and said that cost-benefit analyses showed that for every \$1 invested in the program during the early 1960s, over \$16 in benefits was returned to the program participants and society as a whole, and that the real (adjusted for inflation) internal rate of return for the program was 18%. He noted that neuroscience has also shown that high quality early childhood interventions can provide the types of support necessary to foster healthy brain growth. He then discussed the establishment of the Minnesota Early Learning Foundation, which invested \$20 million of private funding to pilot two research-based approaches for improving early childhood education - the Parent Aware quality rating and improvement system for early childhood program providers, and the Saint Paul Early Childhood Scholarship Program for low-income families – and the elements of each initiative as well as the positive outcomes shown in evaluations of each program. He explained that the administrative cost of bringing a scholarship program for high-quality care to scale is very small, but the primary issue is how to fund it.

In response to questions from the committee, Mr. Rolnick said that from a long-term economic perspective, instead of using economic development funding to subsidize private businesses, those dollars would create a larger economic and public return on investment if they were used to fund early childhood education, and that an early childhood education scholarship program needs leadership, either from private businesses or state or local governments, in order to be successful.

**Robyn Lipkowitz**, Program Director, National Conference of State Legislatures, provided an overview of other states' legislation regarding early childhood education and development. She explained that states are interested in this area for a number of reasons, including concerns about school readiness, the impact of poverty, and economic interest in the future workforce. According to Ms. Lipkowitz, several states have legislation that incorporates or recognizes early brain research concepts. She provided examples of other states' legislation, including legislation that requires incorporating executive function skills in state early learning standards; including executive function skill development in teacher and early childhood provider training programs; creating a state consortium for high-quality infant and toddler care that partners state and private organizations; allowing low-income parents to continue receiving a child care subsidy for a short period even after they find a higher paying job; creating scholarships to improve credentials among the early

childhood workforce; providing higher child care reimbursement rates for quality programs; funding and implementing evidence-based home visiting programs; and creating two generation strategies designed to support parents while their children are receiving high-quality childcare.

In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Lipkowitz stated that she would provide additional information to the committee regarding states that provide training and professional development regarding trauma or toxic stress, and would provide copies of legislation from other states described in her presentation.

**Amelia Franck Meyer**, CEO, Anu Family Services, explained that Anu is a nonprofit child welfare organization that operates in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Ms. Franck Meyer presented information about the grief, loss, and trauma experienced by children who are removed from their homes, the current child welfare system's response to these children, and the evidence-based intensive trauma healing and permanence services Anu provides. Ms. Franck Meyer explained that the traditional child welfare system is structured and funded around ensuring a child's physical safety, relies on traditional therapy, behavior management, and pharmacological interventions, which do not acknowledge a child's losses or allow a child to grieve those losses, and re-traumatizes a child by changing their out-of-home placements when their behaviors do not respond to traditional interventions. She explained that a combination of intensive grief, loss, and trauma work in a safe, integrative therapy is essential before conducting a diligent, exhaustive search for permanence with a family member or someone who is important to the child. She stated that this focus on trauma effective care, which gets to the root causes of trauma using integrative healing interventions, ensures that children are healthy in all respects and are more ready to have successful transition to permanent homes.

In response to questions from the committee, Ms. Franck Meyer said that Medicaid does not pay for innovative healing techniques, but it may be possible to create a broader definition of therapies that may be funded by Medicaid under the state plan; Anu operates with various partners, including county governments, in 60 Wisconsin counties; that permanence for children should not be done on a prescribed timeline without involving the child and doing the trauma effective work with the child first; and that barriers to being foster parents are often the result of the system's reliance on physical safety, but that incentives to increase the numbers of foster parents would be helpful.

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