



## Delaware Readiness Teams Frequently Asked Questions February, 2013

### Goals and Objectives

#### **What are Delaware Readiness Teams (DEL TEAMS)?**

*Delaware Readiness Teams are an exciting way to bring together community leaders to use Delaware's School Readiness Equation as the foundation for creating or expanding systems of support for young children, birth to age 8, and their families.*

#### **What is the Delaware School Readiness Equation?**

*Ready Families + Ready Schools + Ready Early Care and Education Programs + Ready Communities = Ready Children. This equation promotes a multi-faceted community approach to readiness that includes children's health, learning and development, early learning programs' and schools' connections, and the provision of family resources and services as a model that best prepares children for school success.*

#### **What are we trying to achieve?**

*Through the completion of a community assessment and action plan, the Delaware Readiness Teams will engage in localized, new strategies to align and coordinate programs and services.*

#### **What are the benefits?**

*DEL TEAMS will bring together partnerships of families, early childhood and K-12 educators, health care, human services, and civic leaders to make school readiness and the needs of young children a high priority. Both the K-12 schools and the early care and education programs will understand their community's strengths and needs to better design environments and instruction that support their students' readiness and success.*

#### **How is this different from other committees or groups that may already exist in my community?**

*This Team is unique because it brings together a variety of representatives from other existing community groups to jointly and cooperatively problem-solve school readiness and success strategies. It offers the Team representatives opportunities to expand or enhance already-existing ideas in a larger, more collaborative context across the elements of the Readiness Equation: Ready Families, Ready Communities, Ready Early Care and Education, Ready Schools and Ready Children. As an example, health care and social service agencies that may have been meeting independently of school district or early childhood providers have joined together with the specific purpose of developing a shared referral system for families and children.*

#### **What are some projects we might work on?**

*The Readiness Team may identify both short-term and long-term goals and projects, based on the Readiness Equation, that support children's school readiness and success. These ideas may be one-time events such as a health fair to offer pre-kindergarten health screenings. They may also be ongoing projects such as a quarterly community newsletter or the initiation of a summer reading program. Other*

*work may be more policy-directed such as the creation of a pre-kindergarten classroom within an elementary school, the formation of a family council that meets monthly, the development of a common referral system for families or engaging in outreach to assure that all providers are participating in Delaware Stars or supported to achieve higher Star levels.*

**How will we decide what to include in our action plan?**

*A Community Assessment will be completed by the Team to help identify and prioritize areas for future focus and work. These areas will relate to the Delaware Readiness Equation and include strategies to support Ready Families, Ready Communities, Ready Early Care and Education Providers, Ready Schools – and Ready Children.*

**Why aren't we doing the same statewide goals?**

*Delaware's communities are diverse and the families and children within them have different interests and needs. The Delaware Readiness Teams offer communities an opportunity to develop locally-defined strategies that are specific to the needs and culture of its community. Long-term statewide goals for school readiness may evolve from shared visions of the Delaware Readiness Teams.*

**How will we know if this is working? Will there be an evaluation?**

*Locally, Readiness Teams will determine their own evaluations for the action steps that are developed as part of their Community Assessment and Action Plan.*

**Defining your Community**

**What are the Priority Zones?**

*There are 8 identified zones across Delaware that have been identified as having the most children and families who are at-risk. This information has been determined through multiple data sources including the Delaware Department of Education, the Delaware Health and Social Services Department, the United Way, and national data.*

**What are the geographic parameters that must be used to define a Team?**

*Each Readiness Team will identify its own geographic boundaries that are influenced by the needs and characteristics of its population. The area or neighborhood should include at least one elementary school and may cross over or stretch outside of Priority Zones.*

**Can teams be formed from areas outside of the Priority Zones?**

*The Delaware Readiness Teams may come from any Delaware community that is interested in supporting those children and families within its boundaries that are at-risk for school success. Priority will be given to those applicants that are able to demonstrate team representation and geographic boundaries that will serve children and families with high needs.*

**How many teams will come from each of the Priority Zones?**

*Priority Zones are large and include multiple school districts and communities within its borders. There may be several Readiness Teams that form within one Priority Zone. The Teams will be defined by geographic areas within the Priority Zone that serve high need children and families who will benefit from additional supports for school readiness.*

**What are the risk factors we should consider?**

*The Teams’ work will focus on those strategies that better support children’s school readiness and success. The risk factors would be those elements that impact these goals. The grant application specifies: low performing school, schools with two or more years of low DCAS scores, children with special needs such as English Language Learners or children with disabilities. Individual applications may identify additional issues that are specific to its community.*

**Team Composition**

**Will every team look the same?**

*Each team will determine its own membership from the school districts, early care and education providers and other agencies and organizations within its community. There are required affiliations; the chosen representatives for those affiliations will be selected locally to support the Team’s individualized needs and interests.*

*As an example, one Team may recruit a pediatrician to fulfill the Health Care member’s slot; another Team may fill that same slot with a home health care nurse. For the elementary school’s representatives, one school may choose a principal for its administrator and another may choose an assistant superintendent.*

**Can I submit an application if one of the required membership categories is unfilled?**

*Yes. The Team members may need to continue investigating representatives for the Team after the application deadline. Submissions will be accepted without all of the required positions filled; however this will be considered during the application review process.*

*In some instances, a specific affiliation may not be available within the geographically-defined community. This should be noted on the application with a brief description of the research and outreach efforts that were performed that resulted in this conclusion.*

**What if there aren’t any child care providers in my community that are at a Star 3, 4, or 5 level?**

*The Team should make every effort to include child care providers, either family or center-based, that are participating in Delaware Stars. While the higher quality 3, 4, or 5 Star levels are preferred and should be prioritized, Star 1 or 2 providers are acceptable. The Readiness Team should strive for a well-rounded early care and education representation.*

*When there are no Stars-participating programs in a community, Teams are encouraged to prioritize outreach and engagement for community providers’ participation in Delaware Stars.*

**How do we find the Team members to fill the required membership affiliations?**

*The early childhood leadership within your community will be able to provide suggestions for each of the required membership areas. Contact key leaders from varied organizations for suggestions and recommendations and ask those leaders to make referrals.*

*Advertising within your community is another strategy for finding interested members. Using school or community newsletters, announcements during community meetings or events, etc may result in a new recruit.*

**Is the Team limited to the number of representatives that are suggested on the team composition description? Can I have more than two family members? Or, can I have more child care or school district representatives?**

*The team composition is decided by the Team itself. Membership must provide a broad representation of the early childhood community support agencies and be inclusive of those organizations that have expressed interest in participating. After that outcome has been achieved, the Team may decide how many of each affiliation-type will help the Team operate effectively.*

*After the Team has completed its action plan, other members may be recruited to make the Team well-rounded or may decide to create a policy on non-voting membership. Additionally, participants may be sought to implement specific elements and goals of the action plan as the work of the Team becomes operational.*

**What happens if original team members leave or no longer want to participate?**

*Team membership may change over time. Every effort should be made to maintain the required organizational affiliations.*

**Can one person represent multiple organizational affiliations?**

*Many Team members may wear many hats and represent different affiliations. For example, a social worker may also be a parent and serve on a different community agency board. The Team will benefit from broad representation that offers varied ideas and perspectives. Each member should be chosen to represent one organizational affiliation regardless of the other information and knowledge that he or she may add to the Team.*

### **Readiness Team Lead Person**

**Will the person who submits the application be the Team Lead?**

*The Readiness Team will need to identify one person as the designated contact during the application and review process. Once the Team has been approved and begins operating, the Team members will determine the Team Leader.*

**How will we know who is submitting applications in our community?**

*The communication that is occurring from within the community leadership should inform interested participants of areas that may benefit from team formation and groups that are forming to define a Team. The Project Manager, Sherlynn Aurelio will also help to bring interested participants within a specific geographic area together as she learns of their interested participation.*

**What happens if more than one application is submitted from our community?**

*The Delaware Readiness Team Project Manager, Sherlynn Aurelio, is working within communities to stay knowledgeable about anticipated Readiness Teams and is helping to bring communities and Teams together as needed to avoid duplication. There are areas, however, within Priority Zones and within communities or even school districts that are large enough to house more than one Delaware Readiness Team.*

**What if I want to participate but I don't want to be the Lead Person?**

*Varied levels of participation will be valued to help form and accomplish the work of the Readiness Team. Notify the forming group of your interest and your affiliation so you can be included as a participant. If*

assistance is needed in identifying the Team contact or lead, contact the Readiness Team Project Manager, Sherlynn Aurelio.

### **Resources and Technical Assistance**

#### **Will there be a menu of resources for TEAMS to use as they begin to operate within their communities?**

*All of the Delaware Readiness Teams will have opportunities to participate in professional development events and technical assistance that will enhance their goal development and implementation. Resources and materials will be disseminated as requests are made or needs and interests are identified. Additionally, the Delaware Readiness Team Facilitators will assist local Teams in finding resources that are specific to their individualized goals.*

#### **Are there other states that have developed initiatives that are similar to the Delaware Readiness Teams?**

*Many states have similar community-based teams that focus on supporting young children's readiness for school. Washington and Pennsylvania have experienced a great deal of success in the implementation of community teams. Communities from seven states and the District of Columbia participated in W.K. Kellogg Foundation's SPARK (Supporting Partnerships to Assure Ready Kids) initiative that funded the creation of community coalitions for the identification of infrastructures to support school readiness. Those states were Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, and Ohio.*

#### **How does the original K-12 Race to the Top's family engagement component fit into the Delaware Readiness Teams?**

*School districts that have integrated family engagement components, either through Race to the Top or through other strategic planning, can explore ways to coordinate their practices and goals with the other agencies that will be represented on the Delaware Readiness Team.*

### **Funding**

#### **Will the Team get funding to complete projects?**

*There is funding available to help Readiness Teams implement their goal plans. The amount of funding will be individualized and is dependent on each Team's action plan and related request to support its goals. Teams may request up to \$1000 during the initiation phase for start-up.*

#### **Will there be a funded person to lead this Team?**

*Funding should be used to support individual projects or goals. After these projects have been identified, the funding needed to achieve or accomplish them should be considered as part of the funding request.*

*The Lead person's role will primarily function as a convener of the group and will have access to the Delaware Readiness Team Facilitator and Project Manager to further support the Team.*

#### **Can the TEAMS use funding to support staffing positions? Can the TEAMS use funding to support administrative costs?**

*Sustainability after 2015 when the grant funding ends needs to be considered. Staffing positions that are funded through the Readiness Team awards are not recommended. Projects or initiatives will be considered on an individual basis.*

**Is there a community contribution?**

*Each Delaware Readiness Team will be asked to make a small contribution, dependent on the size of its annual funding request, to support the Team's operation. The contribution can come from sources such as school district Title I funds or the community. This contribution will represent the initial Team efforts for sustainability after the life of the grant, in 2015.*

**What happens after the grant cycle ends in 2015?**

*It is anticipated that the Team's efforts during the life of the grant will have created a place-based infrastructure and a framework for school readiness strategies within the community that will continue after the grant ends in 2015. Consideration for sustainability should be an ongoing discussion during project design and implementation.*