



I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the local Great Start Parent Coalitions (GSPC) is as follows:

1. Build Public Support for Early Childhood Investment

To assist in building public will and support for early childhood investment through advocacy and education activities with parents, community members and policy-makers at the local and state level. Building public will and support include GSPC members engaging in professional development, training, or workshops. Members need to build their confidence and skills to be effective public speakers, advocates and change agents.

The GSPC gives the GSC an effective communication link to get the word out to young parents in the community about GSC related activities.

2. Serve as a Sounding Board for Parent Members of the Great Start Collaborative (GSC)

The members of the GSC who represent organizations have a “built in” sounding board in the board, staff and customers of their organizations. When these organizational members participate on the GSC, they participate as representatives of their organization. The views they express are those of their organization and are not necessarily the same as their personal views. However, it is their job to persuasively express the needs and views of their organization.

The GSPC is intended to serve this same function for the parent members of the GSC – to assure that parent members understand the priorities, concerns or needs of the parents of young children in their community and receive direct feedback about issues being considered by the GSC. Thus assuring the parent members of the GSC are representing the views of many parents in the community, and not only their personal opinions.

ECIC highly recommends that every GSC parent member become a member of their respective local GSPC. This is the most effective means by which parent members of the GSC can use the GSPC as their sounding board related to upcoming GSC agenda items.



3. Provide a “Customer” Perspective to Organizational Members of the Great Start Collaborative

In the best case scenario, the GSC and GSPC are linked in at least two ways. One, the Parent Liaison/Coordinator who convenes the GSCPS reports at every GSC meeting on the activities and perspective of the GSPC. Second, the GSC parent members are ALSO members of the GSPC and are able to bring the work of the GSC to the GSPC and visa versa. Through these kinds of linkages all the members of the GSC will remain advised and aware of the needs, concerns, hopes, dreams and contributions of parents. This is critical to assuring that the local Great Start system that is created effectively works for the parents, who will be its primary customers.

4. Lend Support to GSC Related Efforts

The GSPC helps to support the success of the GSC and to assist where appropriate and desired in GSC related activities, e.g. community meetings, parent focus groups, GSC workgroups or community events, etc. The determination of what support is appropriate and desired best occurs through conversations between the GSCP Parent Liaison (representing the perspectives of his/her membership) and GSC. It has been the experience that parent members of GSPCs are eager to become engaged in supporting GSC activities and have much to offer in terms of consultation, for example, on how best to engage parents who represent the diversity of the community, in GSC related activities and work.

II. THE LOCAL GREAT START PARENT COALITION

Each GSPC:

A. Actively Works to Achieve the GSPC Purpose

The local GSPC acts to provide public support/education/advocacy on the issues of early childhood in their community, as well as at the state or even national levels. These issues could include (These are only examples. This is not an exhaustive list.):

- Advocating for sustainable, permanent funding for Great Start Collaboratives and local Great Start Parent Coalitions.
- Advocating for increased funding to support the promotion of social and emotional health in all young children.
- Identifying and recognizing “family-friendly” workplaces in the Great Start Collaborative area.



- Educating parents about the importance of brain development, the need to act early when developmental issues arise and thus the need for a coordinated network (system) of early childhood services and supports.

Michigan's Great Start system vision is "A Great Start for all children in Michigan: safe, healthy and eager to succeed in school and in life." The GSPC advocates, educates and communicates about the changes necessary at the community, county, state and national level to achieve the Great Start vision for all young children in Michigan.

B. Develops and Implements an Annual Plan of Work for GSPC

The GSPC has an annual plan of work that outlines all its activities for a fiscal year. This plan of work is guided by the GSPC vision and the GSPC purpose. The progress on the plan of work is assessed regularly by the GSPC membership and amendments and changes are made as necessary to keep the plan of work current.

C. Is Parent-Driven

The local GSPC is a parent-driven group. This means the parent¹ members create the vision, plan of work and agendas for GSPC activities and meetings in accordance with the defined purpose of the GSPC.

A key aspect of that purpose is the support the GSPC provides for GSC related activities. The GSPC as a body determines how it can best lend its support and expertise to GSC related activities. The GSPC Parent Liaison/Coordinator can then share that information with GSC as a part of her/his ongoing reporting to the GSC at their scheduled meetings.

D. Is Composed of Parent Volunteers

The local GSPC is composed of parent volunteers---members are not paid to participate.

E. Properly Uses ECIC Funds

The local GSPC can only use ECIC funds to achieve the purpose stated previously in this guideline document.

¹ Parent is defined as birth, adoptive, foster, non-custodial or legal guardian of a young child under the age of 12 years..

The local GSPC is free to engage in other activities if it chooses and must either – seek in-kind donations from community organizations for other needs or raise or secure funds at the community level to pay for these activities.

F. Has a Flexible Approach to GSPC “Membership”

In an ideal situation, the membership of the GSPC will occur along a continuum of involvement and engagement. The Jackson County GSPC has thoughtfully laid out what that continuum looks like for their community. To be inclusive of the maximum number of parents, membership needs to evolve long what Jackson has so thoughtfully laid out. Finally, and perhaps most importantly the membership and leadership of the local GSPC should represent the wide diversity² of the parents of young children in their community.

G. Has a Membership that Reflects the Diversity of the Community

The GSPC membership representing the richness of the diversity of the community, including but not limited to cultural, socio-economic, geographic, and gender.

H. Has a Current Membership Roster

The GSPC maintains a roster of active membership including the name, ages of children, city of residence, ethnicity, gender, and parent group/association represented (if applicable).

I. Receives Support and Advice from the GSC Director/Coordinator

GSC Coordinators/Directors are expected to be supporters and advisors for the local GSPC. They are not responsible for the management or coordination of the local GSPC. This is the responsibility of the local GSPC Liaison/Coordinator.

J. Is a Member of the ECIC Learning Community

The GSPC Parent Liaison/Coordinator is a member of the ECIC learning community for Parent Liaisons. ECIC Parent Liaison learning community members share their successes, challenges and lessons learned with each other at technical assistance meetings scheduled throughout the year. A learning community is composed of peers and it seeks to honor the individual unique gifts/talents/culture of each community and yet

² Diversity is broadly defined and includes: geographic, socio-economic, educational, racial, ethnic, linguistic, etc.

recognizes that there are similarities that make learning together helpful to the success of all.

There is an annual calendar of technical assistance meetings/conference calls for the GSPC Liaison/Coordinator. The local GSC budget supports the attendance of the GSPC Liaison/Coordinator at these TA events.

III. ECIC Approved and Appropriate Use of GSPC Funds

Each local GSC is provided with a minimum set-aside amount in the GSC budget that must only be spent on the GSPC, as follows:

A. Staff for the GSPC

Funds must be used first to hire or contract with a parent/s to work as staff (Parent Liaison/Coordinator) for the local GSPC. Parent Liaisons will have travel related expenses – mileage reimbursement, lodging, meals, etc. and reimbursement needs to be budgeted accordingly.

B. Removal of Barriers to Participation

Funds can be used to remove barriers to participation of parents who are or want to become members of the GSPC. Example:

- Reimbursement for travel expenses related to attending an GSPC sponsored meeting or event e.g. Transportation costs for local parents to attend the annual Star Power Rally in Lansing.

C. Hospitality for Meetings

Parent's who come to GSCP related meetings, appreciate refreshments at meetings. This is particularly important when meetings are held near or during regular family meal times, i.e. the dinner hour. Providing drinks and food is not a budget requirement for the GSPC and some GSPCs have found local sources of support for the provision of refreshments at GSPC meetings.

D. Child Care for GSPC Sponsored Meetings or Events

It is a given that parent members of the GSPC have young children. For many parents, their ability to participate in GSPC activities is dependent on child care. If the GSPC chooses to support child care for parent members, it is crucial that an efficient and cost effective method of child care provision is created to deliver this support. Ideally, the local GSPC would partner with a community organization that is a member of the local GSC and is licensed to provide child care to groups of children. One

way this might occur is if one of the community representatives for the local GSC is a pre-school provider and chooses to provide the space where the childcare is delivered and the local GSPC pays the provider/s of care for their time.

E. Professional Development for GSPC Parent Liaison

Individual professional development for the local GSPC Parent Liaison must be based on an annual assessment of professional development needs.

For ECIC provided technical assistance (several regional and one-two state-wide meetings per year), ECIC provides the venue and speaker/trainer/facilitator at Parent Liaison meetings and the local GSC budget covers transportation, lodging and staff time expenses.

F. Training for GSPC Members

Support for the convening of the local GSPC members to receive trainings or participate in technical assistance activities for the purpose of achieving the mission of the GSPC.

ECIC sponsors training that on topics every GSPC will need to be skilled in to be successful. It is highly recommended that every GSPC assess its strengths/needs/skills related to the topics listed below and to include participation in needed trainings as a part of its annual plan of work.

Core Skill Topics for GSPC Members

- GSPC Vision Development
- GSPC Communications (Community Outreach, Local Elected Official Outreach, State Elected Official Outreach)
- GSPC Messaging (Framing and delivering key messages on early childhood investment, Talking Points)
- GSPC Grass Roots Advocacy (Steps to Success)
- GSPC Press Strategy and Outreach (Working successfully with the media and using media to reach legislators)

For these trainings, ECIC provides the trainer/facilitator and works with the GSPC to cover other costs. Some of these trainings will be provided to all Parent Liaisons at scheduled ECIC technical assistance meetings. Others, i.e. GSPC vision and work plan would be provided on-site to allow for the participation of the whole GSPC.

The GSPC may also determine a need for additional training outside of the ECIC required training to achieve the GSPC purpose. This training would be paid for with funds set aside in the GSC budget for the GSPC.

G. GSPC Outreach and Education Activities

Activities/events identified, designed and hosted by the local GSPC with the express purpose of recruiting other parents to join the GSPC with clearly identified recruitment target numbers. (See below for more detail.)

IV. GSPC OUTREACH AND EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

GSPC Outreach and Education strategies/activities **must** be designed to accomplish one or more of the following:

- A. Create public awareness about the local GSPC and it's purpose
- B. Recruit and welcome new parents to join the local GSPC
- C. Offer a variety of ways for local parents to be involved in the local GSPC
- D. Offer a venue for parents of young children to share their priorities, concerns and needs and bring that information forward into the work of both the local GSPC and local GSC
- E. Inform the community (especially parents of young children) about the successes/activities/events of the local GSPC
- F. Educate the community (especially parents), policy-makers, and elected officials about the issues and current challenges it faces in terms of improving outcomes for young children.
- G. Educate the community, policy-makers and elected officials on the essential role parents and families provide for young children and their future success.

Each ECIC funded GSPC Outreach and Education Activity **must set** recruitment targets to track, evaluate and report the results of these activities. GSPC Parent Liaisons/Coordinators will share and discuss these reports at their ECIC sponsored TA meetings, with the goal of generating a list of the most effective recruitment activities for building an active and sustained GSPC.

A process that could be followed by the GSPC to determine appropriate outreach or education activities is as follows:

- Brainstorm a list of strategies/activities to achieve your targeted goal;

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- Prioritize your strategies/activities;
- Set a realistic target to measure your success (Example: The number of parents who will join your local GSPC as a result of offering a certain event);
- Evaluate how close you came to your projected target number;
- Set a realistic target for the next activity/event you intend to offer and incorporate what you learned into the re-design for that activity/event.

Inappropriate use of ECIC Funds for GSPCs

The following is a list of examples of how ECIC funds CANNOT be utilized for activities/events of the local GSPC (This list gives some examples only---it is NOT intended to be exhaustive).

- A. To fund a parent support group, playgroup, summer camp or any on-going (daily, weekly, monthly) early childhood program or activity.
- B. To fund the printing or development of parenting education or other early childhood programmatic materials. These would be materials used any early childhood program to build skills or facilitate behavioral change in the program participants – parents. Example, Great Parent, Great Start funds parenting education programs. These programs teach parenting skills – they print and use materials from various curricula designed to improve parenting skills. ECIC will not approve funding for this expense.

GSPC *may* develop written materials to educate parents in the community about the importance of the early childhood years and the important role that parents can play in assuring that every child can reach his or her full potential. These materials are not are not designed to teach a skill, their purpose is to provide important information to parents about why their participation in the GSPC and its activities can make a difference.

- C. Activities that meet the definition of lobbying.
- D. Any support for direct early childhood programs or services provided under the auspices of any of the component of the Great Start system.

If the GSPC or GSC is unsure that an activity can be funded with ECIC provided funds – a call ought to be placed to the ECIC to seek approval, prior to expenditure. ECIC will require that the ISD “pay back” funds expended on any GSPC activity which does not meet ECIC guidelines.

V. THE PARENT COALITION LIAISON/COORDINATOR POSITION

Parent Liaison/Coordinator position for the local GSPC will need the following qualities to be a successful candidate:

- A. Be selected in a competitive hiring process---use a hiring/interviewing process that includes members of the GSC or GSPC as members of the selection committee
- B. Be a parent of a child under the age of 12, who can represent the local parent community
- C. Know their own community and have relationships with members of the community across multiple sectors
- D. Know how to create and act upon an annual plan of work
- E. Have experience (volunteer or paid) as an advocate with the legislature or other public organizations or bodies
- F. Like people and have strong interpersonal skills
- G. Be an effective communicator in both verbal and written formats
- H. Be self-motivated and self-directed
- I. Be a good listener
- J. Know how to encourage, lead and facilitate a group toward a shared goal
- K. Be a good problem-solver
- L. *Possess or be committed to developing* strong personal leadership skills such as:
 - 1. Knowing the difference between their personal experience and perspective versus the perspective of the greater parent community and when and how to effectively represent each.
 - 2. Effectively communicating even when frustrated.
 - 3. Understanding what diversity truly is and why it is important to this work and how to welcome differing points of view into the GSPC conversations.
 - 4. Utilizing personal stories and experiences from the point of view of a parent as an effective communication strategy.
 - 5. Understanding the inevitability of conflict in any change process and how to resolve it effectively.
 - 6. Providing mentoring to support the development of new parent leaders.

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Guidelines for the Local Great Start Parent Coalition
Final for FY-2009



Examples of Tasks/Responsibilities for the GSPC Liaison

- Maintain the local GSPC Roster
- Create the annual plan of work, in conjunction with GSPC members
- Report six times/year to the Great Start Collaborative on GSPC activities
- Coordinate GSPC involvement in Star Power rally in Lansing and local GSPC activities for those who cannot come to Lansing
- Communicate with all GSPC members on a regular and ongoing basis