Dorchester Cluster
Neighborhood Cluster of Community Partnership for Children
By-laws

Revised January 2001

MISSION
The Dorchester Community Partnership for Children is designed to build a collaborative system of early childhood programs and comprehensive services for the families and children in Dorchester. We strive to be inclusive and serve to strengthen programs and families served.

Goals of the Cluster:
• Encourage families, providers and community affiliates to create and build support systems for the community.
• Encourage quality care by promoting credentialling and accreditation.
• Provide opportunities for parents and child care professionals to improve their understanding of children's needs and development through workshops courses and events.
• Promote literacy among staff, parents, children and providers.
• Assess the need for services and work to increase the resource capacity and accessibility of programs and services.
• Provide information and support for parents in the community to advocate for necessary changes in the service delivery system and legislative process.
• Access affordable college education to promote career development for child care professionals.
• Provide affordable subsidized childcare slots for working families.

MEMBERSHIP
Eligibility - All residents of Dorchester, parents and caregivers of children in the community, members of agencies that work with children to support families from infancy to eight years of age in the neighborhood.

Criteria for membership:
• Attend monthly membership meetings.
• Participate in Cluster activities.
• Reside in Dorchester or work in an agency in the community who works with children in the neighborhood.

Criteria to be a voting member:
• Voting members are required to attend monthly membership meetings (attendance at two meetings is necessary before members have voting status). Family childcare Providers may meet this requirement through their attendance of the Family childcare Committee meetings held in the evening monthly.
• Voting members must actively participate on at least one committee. Chairs are responsible for keeping attendance in order to assess membership status. If chairs are able to provide participation in other ways then committee meeting attendance they may wave this requirement.
• Voting members who represent agencies are responsible for carrying the information shared at Cluster meetings back to their agencies.
• There will be one vote per program, programs having multiple members must agree on a vote.
• Must participate in rotating chairing of membership meetings.

Criteria for receiving Community Partnership child care slots:
• Program must be in Dorchester.
• Program must be working toward credentialling or national accreditation in accordance with the 0-8 criteria. Annual reports to the Cluster Lead Agent of progress in this area are required in June. Accreditation should be achieved within a two-year period. Every effort will be made to provide the necessary support for completion. Non-compliance will be reviewed by the Steering Committee.
• Program must meet licensing requirements, and be in good standing with OCCS.
• Program must meet Community Partnership Guidelines.
• Must be a voting member of the Cluster.

LEADERSHIP
Role of Cluster Lead Agent
At the neighborhood cluster level, one or two agencies may serve as lead agents. Each Cluster Lead Agent with input from the Steering Committee and ideas from cluster members assumes the following responsibilities:
• Convenes regular meetings of the cluster - keeps records of members, notifies members of meeting dates, distributes minutes.
• Represents the cluster, or arranges for representation at all 0-8 Coalition meetings and Cluster Lead Agent meetings, brings information back to the Dorchester Cluster. Reports on cluster activities to the full Coalition.
• Coordinates planning efforts and development of cluster proposal to the citywide Community Partnership Council and Citywide Lead Agents. Coordinates cluster reports (quarterly reports of activities, spending plans, work plans, annual accomplishments, budgets)
• Develops proposal for Lead Agent management, obtains approval from the membership and submits plan as part of full cluster proposal.
• Coordinates cluster member responses to information requests from the citywide community partnership council. Provides information on the cluster to the council, lead agents, and cluster members in a timely manner when requested.
• Acts as fiscal agent for cluster activities, handles pay for Coordinator and reimbursements for expenses.
• Tracks slot allotment and recalls all slots unfilled for a month for review and possible redistribution.

Coordinator reports to the Lead Agent and Steering Committee
Coordinator Responsibilities:
• Develop agenda for monthly steering committee meeting with input from Lead Agent – distribute to steering committee members
• Record minutes of steering committee meetings and distribute to committee members on a timely basis.
• Develop agenda for monthly cluster meeting with input from the steering committee – distribute to members.
• Oversee the facilitation of monthly cluster meetings.
• Record minutes of monthly cluster meetings and distribute to members on a timely basis.
• Manage logistics for cluster meetings and steering committee meetings – to include space, supplies, ECT.
• Work with the Lead Agent to conduct an annual assessment/evaluation of contracted providers.
• Coordinate data collection and analysis about all cluster activities using INCRE forms.
• Community outreach to include development and distribution of an annual newsletter.
• Membership development.
• Facilitate collaboration with community agencies and service providers.
• Maintain and update the cluster website as needed.
• Work with the Lead Agent to insure that the cluster is represented at all 0-8 Coalition meetings.

Assistant Coordinator report to the Lead Agent and the Coordinator

Assistant Coordinators responsibilities:
• Review and edit all documentation (notes, minutes, fliers, etc.)
• Disseminates information to cluster members as required (mail, fax, e-mail)
• Records attendance at cluster meetings
• Collect attendance/agenda from chairs for all committee meetings
• Maintain records for all direct service providers to include Service Provider Spec. Sheet, OCCS License, and NAECAP Accreditation/NAFFC or CDA status information.
• Collect utilization information and provide written summary to BPS on a monthly basis
• Maintain membership database
• Prepare documentation to facilitate expense reimbursement to cluster members and contractors
• Coordinate with Office of Sponsoring Projects to submit monthly billing to BPS for reimbursement
• Prepare monthly budget status reports for the lead agent.

COMMITTEES

Steering Committee- Comprised of the lead agents and chairs of standing committees as well as cluster coordinator shall have the following duties:
• Formulate the policy and programmatic direction for the cluster in accordance with the by-laws, to direct and assure a program necessary to carry out the guidelines of the cluster.
• Participate in the hiring and review of the Coordinator.
• Review and approve the major reports prepared for the funder.
• Review all budget reports submitted by the Lead Agent or Coordinator.
• Develop the agenda for the monthly membership meeting.

Standing Committees-Comprised of members of the Cluster who will meet monthly to work toward the goals of the Cluster. Chairs of committees will be voted on in June.
• Professional Development/Literacy Committee
• Support Service Committee
Committee Chairs – Each committee must identify a chair or co-chairs as required. The responsibilities of these chairs are:

- Convene monthly meetings
- Develop meeting agenda, record minutes and distribute to committee members.
- Keep track of member attendance at meetings and participation on committee activities outside of monthly meetings. Provide a monthly report to Cluster Coordinator.
- Develop short-term goals and long range plans based upon goals identified at Cluster yearly retreat.
- Develop action plan and budget for the fiscal year.
- Submit plans and budget to the Steering Committee for approval.
- Report on committee activities to Steering Committee and Cluster at monthly meetings.
- Submit a written report describing the work completed, number of people served and committee expenditure for the year (June). Interim reports will be required at the end of January and April to help identify lag fund expenditures.

Chairs will receive an annual honorarium of $1000 for the year (June). Co-chairs will share an annual honorarium of $1,500 for the year (June). Chairs will also receive training and technical support as determined by the Steering Committee.

MEETINGS
Scheduled meetings:
Monthly Membership meetings will take place on the first Wednesday of the month at 10:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m. however quarterly will meet from 6:00 pm – 8:00 pm. Steering Committee meetings will occur the week before also on a Wednesday, times may vary, faxed notice will be sent out a week before. Standing Committees will meet monthly. Special meeting targeted for parents or health care professionals may be called by voting members and support requested of the steering committee, Lead Agent or Coordinator.

NOTIFICATION
Members will be notified in writing of all scheduled meetings at least seven days prior to the meeting. Special meetings will be notified by phone or fax. Committee chairs are responsible for notifying members of their meetings.

DECISION MAKING
In making all decisions, at every level, the Cluster will strive for consensus. When it is not possible to arrive at consensus, decisions will be made by a majority vote of members who are present. The exception to this will be the election of the Cluster Lead Agent, which will be conducted by a written ballot vote.
The are several decision-making forums within the Cluster. In some cases, an adhoc committee may be formed to facilitate the decision-making process.

Membership – Cluster Governance
- Develop and approve Cluster by-laws
- Determine long term priorities for Cluster work
- Delegate work to committees
- Establish eligibility criteria for programs receiving Community Partnership slots to include standards for program quality and utilization
- Determine allocation of Community Partnership direct care slots by a representative selection committee
- Select the Cluster Lead Agent
- Provide final resolution of issues involving the Lead Agent

Steering Committee – Cluster Management
- Reallocate Community Partnership direct care slots as needed
- Develop and oversee Cluster budget
- Evaluate the work of committees
- Determine priorities for use of lag funds
- Resolve issues regarding the Lead Agent, Committee Chairs, Cluster Coordinator and/or Assistant Coordinator
- Develop agenda for the monthly Cluster meetings

Committees – Cluster Work
- Develop and implement a committee work plan with direction from Cluster membership
- Determine use of funds to accomplish these objectives
- Select a committee chair

GRIEVANCES
Concerns must be first directed to the Cluster Lead Agent. In the event that resolution is not possible, the Cluster Lead must document the complaint in writing and communicate the complaint to the voting membership. If the problem can not be resolved at the neighborhood cluster level, it will then be brought for the consideration of the 0-8 Coalition. Concerns regarding the Lead Agent should be directed to the Steering Committee.

AMENDMENTS
Amendments shall be presented in written form at a regular membership meeting and voted on at the next meeting. Adoption of an amendment will require a quorum vote.

Amendment to By-laws - January 1999

Subject - Reallocation of Slots:
In the event of a slot being vacant and turned back over to the Cluster for reallocation, all providers with contracts for community partnership slots will be notified by fax or if not available, by mail of the availability of additional slots. Interested providers will notify the Coordinator of their ability to fill slots immediately.
Those providers will then be presented to the Steering Committee at an emergency meeting one week later to select the provider/providers to receive the slot/slots. The criteria for selection will be based on the providers participation in the Cluster, their history of filling slots in a timely fashion, and their accreditation status. The reallocation will be announced at the following monthly Cluster Meeting.

**Amendment to By-laws - May 2000**

**Subject** - Procedure for Selection of Lead Agent:
On a tri-annual bases the job description and application for Dorchester Cluster Lead Agent will be made available to all Cluster Members in good standing. A review committee will be made up of at large Cluster members and the steering committee members to convene for the purpose of reviewing the proposals for minimum standards of eligibility and identify strengths and weaknesses of the applicants. Applicants are excluded from participation on the review committee. The review committee will then distribute information to the membership and convene a special membership meeting to meet with the applicants and ask questions of them. Numbered ballots will be mailed out to members in good standing. Cluster members will vote by secret ballot or by phone and fax designating their ballot number. All programs will have one vote. Family childcare homes are considered a program. The Cluster coordinator and a steering committee member with no conflict will tally the ballots. There are no term limits for the Lead Agent position.

* Applicants have the right to request a 0-8 Coalition appeal in the event of discrepancy regarding the process or outcome.