



Friday, March 15, 2024

Meeting Minutes

Public Meeting 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

ZOOM Meeting Platform

A regular public meeting of the New Jersey State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) was held on Friday, March 15, 2024. The meeting was held via ZOOM meeting platform. The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:30 a.m. by Joyce Salzberg, Acting Chair.

### **Welcome**

- I. Joyce Salzberg welcomed attendees and read the Welcome Statement.

### **Attendance**

- I. Maintained by the Department of Health (DOH)

### **Introductions**

- I. SICC members and DOH representatives were introduced.
- II. Quorum requirements were met.
- III. Public members signed their attendance through the chat box in the ZOOM platform.

### **Approval of Minutes**

- I. The January 19, 2024 Minutes were *APPROVED*; 9 Yes, no opposed, 3 not present, no discussion. Motion by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, seconded by Corinne Catalano.

### **SICC Member Updates**

- I. Corinne Catalano shared on April 20<sup>th</sup>, Montclair State is having a preschool specific inclusion conference.
- II. Corinne Catalano shared she is part of a group working with the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) on child outcomes in integration for children with Individual Education Plans (IEPs).
- III. Nicole Edwards shared she and her colleague received a New Jersey Health Foundations grant. Nicole Edwards requested if anyone is interested in learning more, please email her at [edwardsn@rowan.edu](mailto:edwardsn@rowan.edu).

### **SICC Standing & Ad Hoc Committees Reports**

- I. **Administrative/Policy Committee**, vacant chair
  - A. Susan Marcario presented the FY24 budget. This was shared with Members prior to the meeting.
- II. **Service Delivery Committee**, Virginia Lynn, Chair
  - A. Ms. Lynn announced membership has been expanded to include the childcare community.
  - B. The Committee has been reviewing what other states use to promote Early Intervention services in childcare.
  - C. The Committee is attending the Monmouth County Childcare Directors meeting.

**III. Fiscal Infrastructure Committee**, Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, Chair

- A. The Committee is looking at ways to increase the revenue streams for the system. Some mentioned strategies may be private insurance, Medicaid increases, and/or grants.
- B. Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen asked Dr. Thomas Lind about the Medicaid rates. Dr. Lind responded the subject matter experts request the Committee prepare a written request containing specific codes the Committee is enquiring about. Possibly schedule a meeting.
- C. Senator Ruiz sent correspondence requesting the rate study results to the Commissioner. No response has been received. Josephine Shenouda added that her understanding is that the study is still in draft mode.

**IV. Personnel Preparation Committee**, Corinne Catalano, Chair

- A. The Committee will begin investigating some possible updates/changes to the Personnel Standards, specifically, around the Child Development Specialist role. This will include looking into the alternate route as it exists in New Jersey.

**V. Family Support & Transition Committee**, Nicole Edwards, Chair

- A. Ms. Edwards suggests that each topic (Family Support and Transition) warrant being their own separate committee.
- B. The Transition Committee has the results of the Service Coordination survey and will be diving into these results soon.
- C. The Committee made updates to the Doctor survey and should disseminate it this Spring.
- D. Ms. Edwards shared in the chat:

Division for Early Childhood Communities of Practice (CoP) - sustainability with connecting with families in EI virtually across the country - EI CoP and Family Partnership CoP - <https://www.dec-sped.org/communities-of-practice>

**Regional Early Intervention Collaborative (REIC) Update**

- I. Karen Armas-Landau, Family Support Coordinator, presented a summary of Early Intervention (EI) Week plans for this year.
- II. Requested a budget for EI Week.

*MOTION:* Council Members were asked to vote on a budget modification to move the money (\$3,355.00) from the Parent Reimbursement budget to the Early Intervention Week budget.

Motioned by Saira Hussain Akhter, seconded by Samuel Kivell.

*DISCUSSION:* Regarding surplus funds and a shift in what the funds are needed for, based mostly on in-person meetings.

The Family Support Coordinators' initial ask was to match the \$6,000.00.

Council discussed raising the EI Week budget by adding the budget for the Parent Reimbursement of \$3,355.00. This \$3,355.00

would be in addition to the \$6,000.00 already budgeted. The total of

\$9,355.00 to be shared between the 4 Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives (REICs) for EI Week purposes.

Council Members suggested a budget modification supporting this.



It was requested that the Family Support Coordinators present how the funds were spent at the June 2024 SICC Meeting.

*APPROVED:* 9 approved, no opposed, 3 not present during the vote.

**Lead Agency Report**, Susan Evans, Part C Coordinator

I. Federal Updates

A. Application for Part C Funds

- i. The federal application for Part C funds has been prepared and will be ready for public comment by Monday, March 18<sup>th</sup>.
- ii. SICC and other stakeholders will be sent the application and instructions for providing public comment.
- iii. The application is based on the allocation New Jersey (NJ) received last year as appropriations have not yet been released from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP.)
- iv. Unlike the past few years, NJ is not expecting an increase in the allocation since Congress continues to debate budget cuts across all Departments.

II. State Updates

- A. DOH will hold a Statewide Provider meeting on April 18, 2024 from 1:00-3:30. The meeting will be in-person with a virtual option.
- B. Making the New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) more Modern and Efficient
  - a. Statewide Broadcast Rollout began in February and will continue through April.
  - b. The process for practitioners to provide the Service Coordinator (SC) with updated Progress Summary information in the Early Intervention Management System (EIMS) ahead of the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is in early training stages ahead of formal implementation.
- C. Letters of Agreement with Early Intervention Providers (EIPs)
  - a. DOH issued a letter to the EIPs on March 11<sup>th</sup>, outlining the process and criteria for EIP's request for change from Vendor to Comprehensive status.
  - b. Public Consulting Group (PCG) will be sending EIPs a survey March 15 which will ask for updates and confirmation of the EIP's business information in the EIMS billing portal.
- D. Public Comment Procedure and Policy Changes (in progress)
  - a. DOH is updating new formal procedures for the issuance and receiving of public comment.
  - b. These procedures will become part of the NJEIS regulations once finalized.
  - c. The procedures will move the DOH into standard format of comment and feedback when updating policy and/or procedures.
  - d. For example: changes to NJEIS-14, NJEIS-11, FCP changes etc. will be required to have formal public comment managed through the Office of Legal and Regulatory Compliance.
  - e. The timeline of new procedures is to be determined but anticipated by the end of 2024.
- E. Budget Preparation
  - a. EIS is expecting level funding for SFY25 in the State budget.
  - b. The Senate Budget hearing for Health is April 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  - c. The Assembly Budget hearing for Health is April 17<sup>th</sup>.

F. Access to Timely Services

- a. The highest number of children waiting for access to timely services was in June 2023.
- b. Current data (preliminary) indicates a 68% reduction in the number of children without timely services.
- c. Strategies contributing to this improvement include reorganization of Compensatory Process, consistent “Round robin” meetings at county level
- d. Recruitment and retention of practitioners & evaluators
- e. Uptake by family of alternative service options such as Telehealth and access of temporary private services.

G. Cancellation Data: Statewide Analysis from January – October 2023

Susan Evans shared a power point. Some power point highlights were:

- There were 247,766 canceled services out of 2,235,835 scheduled services 62% were family cancellations.
- There was no specific service type that stands out as cancelled more than the others
- Several counties show more cancellations than others
- This data will be shared with the agencies.

Saira Hussain Akhter asked if the state provides a Parent Listening Session.

Josephine Shenouda responded she and Ms. Hussain Akhter can discuss further.

III. Procedural Safeguards Office (PSO), Beth Lohne, PSO Coordinator

- A. Susan Evans reported that the PSO addresses issues as they come in and will provide a full report at the next meeting.

**New Business**

I. Future Meeting Dates:

June 14, 2024

September 20, 2024

November 22, 2024

**Old Business**

- I. Council to schedule a Closed Session sometime in April.

**Public Comments**

**The following comments were made by members of the public:**

David (Kenneth) Holmes, ABCD EIPA – Mr. Holmes was very happy to see the data provided.

Mr. Holmes asked if the Department requested an increase for EI to the Governor’s office.

**DOH Response:** The Department has not been asked for comment yet.

Mr. Holmes mentioned that many providers seem confused with Form 13.

Virginia Lynn mentioned that an increase should be considered for the REICs.

Maria Emerson, Virtua Health – Ms. Emerson was delighted to hear Susan Evans discuss adding

Public comment to procedures and policy changes and instituting an inclusion of stakeholders.

Ms. Emerson commented that it is the obligation of leaders to account for their own actions and the actions of their people. Ms. Emerson mentioned the importance of transparency. Kristy Balent, JFK – Ms. Balent requests the DOH collaborate with the field more and mentioned training for Form 13, suggesting the use of a focus group may have been helpful.

Shelly Fairman, SNJPC – Ms. Fairman asked what the status of the Service Coordinator is vacant positions on the SICCC Council?

DOH Response: Nothing received yet. Once someone is received, Josephine Shenouda will review and send to the Governor's office.

Ms. Fairman responded she will have the interested parties resubmit their interest.

Carola D'Emery, Sunny Days – Ms. D'Emery stated EI is not a job, it's a field of practice. It requires continued education. Ms. D'Emery says the difficulty recruiting people is because the EI system is complicated. Ms. D'Emery commented that the salaries the practitioners get does not compete with compensation in other fields.

Amber Hummer, P.G. Chambers – Ms. Hummer expressed concern for the Comprehensive versus Vendor status rubric that was sent out to agencies. Ms. Hummer was concerned about Factor 1-Timely Access, the need for additional agencies is just 10% of the decision. Ms. Hummer stated it would be more problematic than beneficial to add comprehensives in a county with little need; it will harm the quality of services provided. Agencies need a steady stream of work to be sustainable.

Patty Carlesimo, LADACIN – Ms. Carlesimo repeated the concern for competitive rates in EI as in other fields. Ms. Carlesimo is excited about the push towards stakeholder input and the further look into recruitment and retention.

Karen Olanrewaju, Sunny Days – Ms. Olanrewaju stated she is concerned regarding the supervision and tracking of Form 13. Ms. Olanrewaju expressed a concern for the system in the rise of measles and mumps cases. Ms. Olanrewaju says she cannot find in any policy or procedure where it states agencies are required to gather data from Practitioners regarding tuberculosis screenings and suggests the Department look into it.

Joyce Salzberg read a chat comment that someone mentioned their agency screens for MMR.

Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen – Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen questioned what we can do as the SICCC to better partner with the State with regards to these recurring themes?

**DOH Response:** The Department has been discussing how to handle Change Management Principles. This may be more suited for the listening sessions. The Department is aware of the pace at this time regarding change.

Joyce Salzberg read Kristy Balent's chat comment regarding having focus groups especially regarding clinical suggestions.

#### **Submitted Chat Messages as Public Comments:**

Shannon Omark (02:15:39) – Perhaps in the EIMS a tab can be created when families no show for scheduled meetings? We do create a note in the wizard but there isn't any way to track it. We do remind families that the program is voluntary and ask how we can make their plan more obtainable for them if they continue to cancel services or are a no show? (Service Coordination only, decrease a service, discontinue a service, schedule a review meeting to discuss everything and revise the plan, etc.)



Maria Emerson (02:15:47) – Comparing cancellations to 2020 and 2021 including pandemic years. We likely need to look at this data as baseline.

Cynthia Newman (02:20:45) – In many years past, the REIC's used to hold face to face family listening sessions, usually related to an in-person presentation on EI, transition, specific topics of interest to families.

Terra Madden (02:29:06) – I have so many programs interested in internship opportunities. However, my staff is not compensated for providing that level of supervision.

Edna Lee (02:31:30) – compensation for students shadowing or internship

Amber Hummer (02:52:45) – same-we screen for TB and require MMR

KWalsh (02:52:59) – we do too

Kbalent (02:55:09) – Use focus groups to get better clinical information. We did this during COVID regarding PPE and trainings and it worked well.

Nancy Phalanukorn (03:02:01) – It is not about just the pace. Proactive inclusion of the providers and practitioners for any new changes would address the issues that we are aware of before things get rolled out and then having to be revised later, taking time, retraining, and delays. Including us a part of the partnership in change can ease the difficulties we experience in practice.

**Submitted Written Comments:**

Maria Emerson, Virtua Health, has submitted written comment via email, as well as her verbal public comment above.

There were no additional public comments.

The Public can submit comments to the Department or in the Chat Box which are recorded for the Department.

The next SICC public meeting is June 14, 2024, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

*MOTION* to adjourn the meeting by Virginia Lynn and seconded by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen at approximately 12:25 p.m.