



Friday, June 14, 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, June 14, 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 March 15, 2024 Minutes were *APPROVED*; 10 Yes, no opposed, 2 not present, no discussion. Motion by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, seconded by Catherine Colucci.

### **SICC Member Updates**

- I. Congratulations, Sunny Days, for 30 years in Early Intervention.
- II. Welcome, Senator Ruiz to the SICC Council. Represented today by Ms. Erika Nava, SMO.
- III. Nicole Edwards requests anyone interested in participating and who works with immigrant families to email her if interested in participating in a research project, “Bolstering Community Stakeholders’ Awareness, Self-Efficacy, and Outreach to Strengthen Partnerships with and supports for Immigrant Families of Young Children (Birth-5).” [edwardsn@rowan.edu](mailto:edwardsn@rowan.edu)
- IV. Corinne Catalano shared that the Center for Autism and Early Childhood Mental Health had their twelfth annual conference and celebrated the tenth anniversary of the curriculum they provide, Keeping Babies and Children in Mind (KBCM).

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

- I. **Administrative/Policy Committee**, vacant chair
  - A. Chair is vacant. Susan Evans explained that this committee focuses on maintaining the SICC budget and orienting the Council to the Policies and Procedures. Ms. Salzberg encourages someone to volunteer as Chair.

**II. Service Delivery Committee, Virginia Lynn, Chair**

- A. Virginia Lynn announced the Committee has added a parent and a representative from Early Head Start.
- B. Ms. Lynn stated the Committee's long term goal is to develop a strategic plan for childcare, including what does quality childcare look like within childcare routines. Hoping to have a document for Council review and vote by next meeting

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

- A. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen shared that Josephine Shenouda asked the Committee to look into the rates for Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs). The Committee reviewed the regulations and states, "it appears as though utilizing the COTAs is not a feasible option for services being delivered in the natural setting." The Committee's concerns are due to the requirement of in person supervision from an Occupational Therapist (OT) for a portion of the supervisory plan, the OT must determine the service plan the COTA is implementing, suggesting an in-person visit prior to COTA starting the sessions, and only the OT can attend the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) Meeting. The Committee was unsure how the OT would be funded in this situation and this will take away time from the OT to see children. The Council agreed with the Committee could send an email to the agencies asking if they utilize COTAs and would they share how their supervisory requirements are being managed and paid for. Discussion clarified that there is in person supervision required, but there could be intermittent video or phone to phone.

More discussion to follow.

- B. The Committee continues to investigate alternative funding options for Early Intervention (EI) services.
- C. Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen stated the Committee is meeting with the Public Consulting Group (PCG) Medicaid Representative about how the Medicaid rates are working, coding, etc.
- D. Committee Members met with the Asst. Commissioner and Deputy Asst. Commissioner in regards to the rate study. In summation, Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen states they were told the results of the rate study were used in a consultative manner as a guide for the recent increases and never intended to be released and the current rates that we have now are in line with other states and that there will be no further increases.  
Ms. Erika Nava responded she would like to discuss further and gave her email in the chat box.
- E. Ms. Nava added that the Majority Leader submitted a resolution to increase Early Intervention funding in the Department of Health by 3%, which is \$4.4 Million for fiscal year 2025.  
Resolution Number 4349.
- F. Josephine Shenouda requests the Committee send a survey to the field asking if the agencies are doing a cost of living adjustment for their practitioners.
- G. Ms. Shenouda announced that there will be more information to come regarding the Missed Session Policy.

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

A. Corinne Catalano shared a powerpoint.

Ms. Catalano shared the Committee has been asked by DOH to make recommendations to update and revise the existing New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) Personnel Standards. The Committee sees the opportunity to possibly streamline the Child Development Specialist (CDS), Behavioral Specialist, and Special Educator positions into one position for several reasons.

The pay rate is the same, they provide similar services, and require a similar skill set.

The Committee's next steps will be to set up workgroups, seeking assistance from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance organization, and to connect with other states.

Ms. Catalano thanked Kristen Kugelman for her help and guidance.

More information and discussion to follow.

B. Conversation was brought up regarding the new BCBA legislative standard recently released.

More conversation to follow.

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

A. Ms. Edwards states the Committees are looking to become two separate Committees.

Ms. Edwards will continue as Chair for the Family Support Committee and is asking further guidance from the State for a Chair for the Transition Committee.

B. The Family Support Committee is reflecting and looking to next steps to strengthen family support during the family's time in Early Intervention.

DOH RESPONSE: Possibly use SPAN to connect with more parents and questioned how to look at enrollment regarding birth to one age range. Perhaps narrowing to a more specific age range.

Thank you, Ms. Deepa Srinivasavaradan, SPAN, for your additional information.

Ms. Saira Akhter added it may be good to survey families who did enter EI early and see what influenced them to do so.

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

I. Karen Armas-Landau shared a powerpoint from Early Intervention Week 2024

A. Thank you for the additional funds from the SICCC.

B. Statewide, there were 7 virtual events with over 167 attendees.

C. Statewide, 24 total in-person events with over 250 families in attendance.

Several Council Members expressed their gratitude, offered some ideas to enhance EI Week in the future, and suggested presenting a detailed budget to the Department.

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

I. Federal Updates

A. Part C Application for federal funds was submitted on May 22, 2024. This was a timely submission.

i. The final allocation application has an increase of \$171,526.

ii. There was one public comment on the application.

B. Part C Determinations will be issued on June 18, 2024; based on the Annual Performance Plan (APR) submitted on February 1, 2024.

## II. State Updates

- A. St. John of God (SJOG) transitioned out of Early Intervention as of May 31, 2024.  
Thank you to all the Southern agencies and the Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives (REICs) for a smooth transition.
- B. The Statewide Broadcast System (SBS) is operational in all 21 counties. Throughout the Summer, the agencies, including Service Coordination Units, will use the system allowing for thoughtful assessment. A special thank you to Jessica Stengel and Shelly Fairman for their hard work in the transition of SJOG.
- C. Professional Development
  - i. NJEIS Conference planned for May 16, 2025
  - ii. Learning Management System (LMS) - The Introduction to IFSP and Welcome to EI modules are nearing completion for the LMS. The User uptake of the LMS continues to grow as does the catalogue of information. Practitioner support is being provided by the regional Training and Technical Assistants (TTAs) via Reflective Supervision and Consultation, new practitioner meet and greets, and ongoing regional support. DOH continues to offer multiple training programs in conjunction with Montclair State University (MSU.)

### **Procedural Safeguards Office (PSO), Beth Lohne, PSO Coordinator**

- A. For the fiscal year, 24 formal complaints; 4 mediations-3 formal mediations were resolved prior to mediation and 1 successful mediation; 1 due process hearing pending; 18 formal administrative complaints. Also received 17 allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse, 10 allegations were substantiated.
- B. 13 attended mediator training recently. There are now 16 trained mediators.
- C. Compensatory Process – Revised process rolled out last October. From February to June, 782 families were notified of eligibility. 211 were awarded 4,798 compensatory services. There has been a decline in the number of families requesting compensatory services, had a delay in services, or a disruption in services.
- D. Office Hours – 73 people have attended. There have been 2 open forum calls to get an idea of what people are looking for or may need clarification of from the PSO.

### **New Business**

- I. Future Meeting Dates:
  - September 20, 2024
  - November 22, 2024
- II. Josephine Shenouda - Organizational Chart coming soon.  
Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen expressed concern for needing a Provider Agency Liaison.
- III. Ms. Salzberg requests an EI Directory.
- IV. SICC new logo is in use.

### **Old Business**

- I. Ms. Salzberg was curious about the bid for a new Early Intervention Management System (EIMS).  
Ms. Shenouda responded there should be information regarding this at the next SICC meeting.
- II. End of Summer/Early Fall SICC retreat – possibly Sharon Walsh as a facilitator. DOH looking at dates.

## Public Comments

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

Cynthia Newman, Mid-Jersey CARES Director – Ms. Newman shared that her region has a Physician’s Outreach project and when a child is referred, they explain to the family during the referral that the child’s evaluation can be shared with the pediatrician if they would like for continuity of care and the majority of families agree. The family signs permission before the report is sent to the physician. The family and the physician can have a conversation next time they are in the office about the information. Her region has a master list of about 1,800 physicians that they mail ongoing postcards to. Ms. Newman shared the information on the postcard sent to Physicians. Ms. Newman states the response has been very good and they are able to track. Ms. Newman stated the initial evaluation “sells our program” to the doctors because it is so comprehensive.

Jacquelyn Schriver, Burlington SC Unit Manager – Ms. Schriver stated that Service Coordination is the only Federally mandated EI service under Part C of IDEA. Ms. Schriver expressed that New Jersey must prioritize professional development for new and experienced professionals in this role. Two years ago, Service Coordinators volunteered in a Routines Based Training (RBI.) Ms. Schriver stated there is a lack of movement forward from the DOH regarding this process. Ms. Schriver described the process in detail. Ms. Schriver has submitted written comment as well.

Kenneth (David) Holmes, ABCD EIPA – Mr. Holmes stated he was delighted to hear of the appointment of Senator Ruiz. Mr. Holmes encouraged providers to contact their local legislators and ask them to sign onto Budget Resolution 4349, the increase in EI funding. Mr. Holmes requests a new Directory and Organizational Chart. Mr. Holmes expressed concern for an agency name change affecting the agency’s Letter of Agreement (LOA.)

Maria Emerson, Director Virtua Health – Ms. Emerson spoke about a Bill up for vote that would decrease the state definition of elevated blood level. Ms. Emerson explained the bill in detail.

Jill Glassman, Arc of Somerset County – Ms. Glassman expressed concern that she cannot see the agency rotation on the new broadcast system. Ms. Glassman would like to know why agencies cannot see the rotation.

Stefanie Paglione – Ms. Paglione questioned if the cost of living adjustment requested by Ms. Shenouda is only for agencies or the Service Coordination Units as well?

Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen responded she would confirm with Ms. Shenouda.

Shelly Fairman, Atlantic and Cape May Counties SC Units – Ms. Fairman questioned if there is any update on the Service Coordination Council positions. Ms. Fairman stated she had sent an application in several times.

Joyce Salzberg responded that Josephine Shenouda mentioned several positions being filled, but not sure if any are Service Coordination.

Mary Krupp – Ms. Krupp was having computer issues and unable to be heard.

Lori Schaffer, Inspira – Ms. Schaffer stated that Cumberland County is an underserved county and has No Provider Available (NPA) issues with the exception of during COVID and telehealth since 2017. Ms. Schaffer had computer issues and was unable to be heard.

\*Council suggested submitting written comment to the users having computer issues.

### Submitted Chat Messages as Public Comments:

Jennifer Blanchette McConnell (2:59:37) - When the REIC started the Physician Feedback project, there was a physician survey that we gathered info. This info was presented in a poster during the OSEP Conference-this is what is attached. Goes with what Cynthia described. Poster saved in meeting file.



**Submitted Written Comments:**

Jacquelyn Schriver (3:09:22 in chat) – Ms. Schriver submitted written comment to support her verbal comment summarized 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 September 20, 2024, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

*MOTION* to adjourn the meeting by Michele Christopoulos and seconded by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen at approximately 12:35 p.m.