



Friday, March 20, 2026  
Meeting Minutes

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

A regular public meeting of the New Jersey State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) was held on Friday, March 20, 2026. The meeting was held via the Microsoft Teams 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. Attendance 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 on the Teams platform.

### Approval of Minutes

The January 16, 2026, Minutes were APPROVED; no discussion, 1 abstain. Motion by Steven Weiss, seconded by Corinne Catalano.

### SICC Standing & Ad Hoc Committees Reports

#### Administrative/Policy Committee, Samuel Kivell, Chair and Saira Hussain Akhter, Co-Chair

- Samuel Kivell stated that the committee has just circulated a standardized template to the various committees. It will provide a one page overview that they hope to include in the introductory board packet.
- Samuel Kivell also added that the committee is hoping to roll it out later this year. He stated that this is their main update for now and expressed hope that more developments will be shared at the next few meetings.

### Service Delivery Committee, Virginia Lynn, Chair

- As Ginny Lynn was unable to attend today's meeting, Cynthia Newman presented the report on her behalf.
- Cynthia Newman began by mentioning that the committee last met on February 24th. She stated that the committee focused on reviewing and refining a PowerPoint presentation that will be shared at the upcoming virtual conference on early intervention. She added that the presentation focuses on children in childcare settings.
- Cynthia Newman added that the committee is focusing on building relationships with the childcare community, effective partnering practices, and practical guidance. She stated that the committee wanted to incorporate a few case studies using existing resources and add a Padlet for sharing informational materials.
  - Cynthia Newman also noted that the overall theme centered on understanding Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements and the importance of being present in the community where children and families are served.
  - Cynthia Newman emphasized the importance of childcare in New Jersey, noting that many families rely on childcare due to both parents working. She stated that the committee is exploring ways to provide additional information on implementing triadic model strategies and supporting the carryover of practices between childcare settings and the home.
- Cynthia Newman also mentioned that the committee is considering interactive elements, such as polls, to better engage the audience during the online presentation. The committee plans to reconvene in March to finalize the presentation.
- Joyce Salzberg raised concerns about inconsistencies in service delivery practices across regions, stating that some areas are skipping over children on waiting lists while others are not. She emphasized that this inconsistency is creating a health inequity between regions of the state and called for a review of the policy to ensure it is applied consistently and equitably.
- Joyce Salzberg also noted inefficiencies in the current system, highlighting situations where practitioners have available capacity while children remain on waiting lists due to scheduling gaps. Salzberg recommended that the department examine the issue closely, as it impacts both equitable access to services and effective utilization of providers.
  - Steven Weiss asked for clarification on the issue, stating that he was not familiar with how the process works and requesting a brief explanation.
  - Joyce Salzberg explained that when there is a waitlist referred to by a different term, the child at the top of the list is typically the first to receive services. She noted that in some parts of the state, providers do not skip over that child, which can result in 20 to 70 other children waiting until services become available for the first child on the list.

- Salzberg further stated that in some cases, based on available data, there have been instances where a child remained at the top of the list for up to three months, during which time other children were unable to receive services. She expressed concern that this practice is problematic and contributes to delays in service delivery.
- Steven Weiss asked why the first child on the list is waiting. Joyce Salzberg responded that there is no agency that can provide all of the required services for a child at once, and that services are typically assigned based on the availability of a provider who can meet the full set of needs. She explained that if no provider is able to deliver all required services, the child remains on the list until a suitable match is found.
- Susan Evans clarified that it is not how the process actually works. She explained that the policy states that children whose Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSPs) are received first are to be assigned and served first. She noted that if a child's IFSP was received on March 1st, that child's services should be addressed and assigned before a child whose IFSP was received yesterday.
- Susan Evans explained that, in an ideal situation, one agency would provide all services outlined in a child's IFSP to create a single coordinated "home" for services. However, she noted that in practice, services are often assigned individually based on provider availability. In such cases, a child may begin receiving available services while waiting for others. Evans further explained that when additional practitioners become available, they are expected to serve children who have been waiting for the longest.
- Susan Evans further explained that the policy has been reviewed and adjusted in various ways over time. She noted that when exceptions are made to always serve the child at the top of the list, those children can sometimes experience extended delays, in some cases waiting more than 100 to 200 days, and occasionally up to six months before they are assigned. Evans expressed concern about potential discrepancies in how the policy is implemented across counties or regions. She emphasized that the policy should be applied consistently statewide and indicated that further review is needed to address variations in regional implementation.
- Susan Evans continued by stating that specific examples often reflect different underlying scenarios behind the data. She noted that, in general, the intent of the policy is to protect the child at the top of the list so that a child who was referred more recently does not receive services before a child who has been waiting for 4 to 5 weeks waiting.
- Susan Evans explained that the simplest answer would be that agencies work to ensure the child at the top of the list receives services as efficiently as possible, including exploring alternative arrangements such as temporary private services. She further stated that, in most cases, children are not waiting without any services; rather, they often begin receiving other available services while waiting for a specific service that may not have an available provider. Evans emphasized that service delivery is not all or nothing, and that partial implementation of an IFSP typically begins even when certain services are delayed.

- Joyce Salzberg then added that her point is that the policy is not adhered to equally throughout the state.
  - Susan Evans responded that the department would need specific information in order to investigate and understand the circumstances behind particular scenarios. She explained that she could not comment on whether the issue was occurring without detailed examples, noting that specifics would be necessary to assess compliance appropriately. Evans added that while such details would not be discussed in a public meeting, ensuring compliance and policy adherence remains a priority for the department, and any identified issues would be addressed.
  - Joyce Salzberg then added that, although unintended consequences are acknowledged and families come first, there are also significant challenges related to recruitment. She noted that agencies, including Sunny Days and others, invest substantial resources in recruiting qualified practitioners to support families. Salzberg further stated that when practitioners have gaps in their schedules where they could otherwise be serving children and families, it is concerning and represents an inefficient use of available resources.
  - Susan Evans responded that agencies could instead focus on how to serve the child at the top of the list. She explained that if a provider has availability in their schedule, they could be directed to address the highest priority child in need of that specific service. Evans clarified that a speech therapist serving a child waiting for speech therapy would not prevent another child from receiving developmental intervention, physical therapy, or occupational therapy.
  - Joyce Salzberg stated reiterated that this is where the inequity arises, noting that the system may function in some parts of the state but not in others. Salzberg emphasized that this issue should be examined, as she believes it represents a health inequity that should not exist in New Jersey.
  - Josephine Shenouda added that Policy 9 has been in place since 2023 and has led to improvements in service access, including a significant reduction in the number of children on the waitlist and a reported decrease of nearly 60 percent since its implementation. She noted that while overall system performance has improved, some children at the top of the list may still experience delays of up to 200 days. She stated that the intent of the policy is to prevent children who have been waiting longer from being bypassed by those who recently enter the system. Shenouda also indicated that this was the first time she had heard concerns about inconsistent adherence across regions and thanked the group for raising the issue, stating that the department would look into it further.

- Nicole Edwards asked a question, referencing Susan’s earlier comment about children potentially “slipping through the cracks.” She compared the situation to a university system, explaining that in her experience, admission requests that go unanswered trigger daily system alerts until they are addressed, ensuring that no cases are overlooked.
  - Susan Evans explained that electronic systems already include alerts and tracking features to flag delays in service assignments. She noted that when there are too many children awaiting services, service coordination units actively respond by holding regular meetings to address and assign services.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked whether the current policy requires that services only be assigned to an agency that can provide all of the services outlined for a child, noting that she was not fully familiar with the policy details.
  - Susan Evans explained that the service assignment process prioritizes placing a child with an agency that can provide all services listed on the IFSP. She noted that, in accordance with policy, service coordination is expected to assign the child to the agency that can address the full IFSP whenever possible. If a comprehensive agency is able to deliver all required services, the child is assigned there. If no single agency can provide all services, assignments are divided among available providers based on what they can offer. She further explained that while services may sometimes be split across multiple agencies, this approach is preferred over delaying services while waiting for a single provider who can deliver the entire IFSP.
  - Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen noted that clarification is needed on how the rotation process is implemented in practice. She asked how the system proceeds when the first agency cannot accept all services for a child, and whether multiple agencies can then pick up the case in the next rotation cycle, including how consistency is maintained across that process.
  - Susan Evans explained that service coordination manages a high volume of active IFSPs daily by first determining whether any agency can provide all required services. When an agency is able to do so, the child is assigned accordingly, and the process continues in sequence for the next case in the rotation. She noted that implementation varies across counties, with some areas consistently having comprehensive agencies with available capacity while others do not. Evans acknowledged ongoing efforts to better understand and address these differences.
  - Susan Evans stated that she acknowledges and understands Joyce Salzberg’s concerns. She emphasized that, from the SICC perspective, service coordination is an active and continuously monitored process. She noted that the Procedural Safeguards Office is involved, including through county level meetings and regular review of case lists. Evans added that the department also receives weekly and monthly reports, including updates on children waiting for services. She further stated that, as noted, those numbers have dramatically decreased.

- Samuel Kivell shared that, from his family’s experience, his son received quality services from different agencies, and the specific provider mattered less than the care and coordination received. He noted that children needing multiple services may face delays if smaller agencies lack the capacity to provide all the services needed.
- Joyce Salzberg acknowledged Samuel Kivell’s perspective, noting that it was valuable to hear a parent’s experience. She shared data collected by Sunny Days, explaining that the organization currently has 377 children awaiting services across New Jersey counties. While she noted this is a significant improvement from previous levels that exceeded 1,000 children, she pointed out that the number remains in the 300s and was the same in February 2025.

### Fiscal Infrastructure Committee, Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, Chair

- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen reported that, following discussion at the previous SICC meeting regarding low statewide enrollment, members of the Fiscal Infrastructure Committee met with the Department of Health on February 12 to discuss challenges and potential strategies to address the issue.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen continued by stating that the committee identified general reasons contributing to the overall reduction in Early Intervention (EI) enrollment.
  - BDI: The use of the BDI-3 may be reducing EI eligibility for some children who may have qualified in prior years, prompting discussion about possible changes to eligibility criteria.
  - Family Cost Share: Some families avoid or discontinue EI services due to costs, leading to discussion about increasing family cost share eligibility from 300% to 400% above the poverty level.
  - Immigration Status: Immigration concerns may be affecting participation, with some families declining or withdrawing from EI services due to fears related to immigration status or limited access to public programs.
  - Marketing: Limited public awareness of EI may also contribute to lower enrollment, leading to discussion about enhanced marketing efforts, including a potential statewide campaign.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen stated that strategies to improve EI awareness and referrals were discussed, including advertising through baby product companies, supermarkets, and other family focused locations, as well as strengthening outreach to pediatricians and other medical professionals who refer to EI.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen added that the proposed strategies involve varying levels of resources, funding, and potential policy changes. She noted that the Department and its team will review the ideas to identify which can be implemented more easily in the short term, while also planning for longer term initiatives that may require more time but could have a more sustainable impact.

- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked about the Early Intervention budget, noting that it was referenced as flat in the Governor's recent budget report and requested clarification on what the budget will look like for July.
  - Josephine Shenouda stated that, as of March 19th, she has received communication indicating there are no changes to the budget.
  - Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen followed up by stating that, in reference to budgeting for services for a specified number of children, her understanding is that any unspent funds must be returned. She then inquired whether this is expected to apply for the current fiscal year.
    - Josephine Shenouda responded that, as of the previous day, she had not been informed of any changes to the state appropriations.
  - Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen also asked whether there were any increases to the rates.
    - Josephine Shenouda stated that this had not yet been communicated, noting that they are still in the early stages of the budget process and budget hearings.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen added that she did not want the discussion to lose sight of the Medicaid rate issue, emphasizing its importance despite the current challenges with Medicaid.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen raised an additional point regarding family cancellations, noting that she understood a prior committee discussion with Josephine Shenouda had resulted in a two week timeline for addressing cancellations. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen stated that she is hearing that family cancellations have been increasing, making it more difficult for practitioners to make up missed sessions. She requested that the group revisit and reevaluate the policy in light of current conditions and changing circumstances.
  - Josephine Shenouda responded that they could definitely reevaluate the issue.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen continued by stating that the Part C application had been distributed to those on the distribution list and noted two related points. She indicated that, at the upcoming retreat or whenever it is held, she would like to recommend an overall discussion or orientation on the components of the Part C application. She added that, since SICC is a direct result of Part C funding, it would be helpful to have a broader understanding of what the application entails.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen continued by suggesting that when the new Part C application or annual updates are submitted, the council should also receive highlights of what changes occurred. She noted that, upon reviewing the application, she observed changes primarily in the budget rather than in policy or narrative content, including increases in SICC activities and a significant rise in funding for child find activities within the Regional Early Intervention Collaborative (REIC). She requested that future submissions include a high level overview of overall thematic and budgetary changes to better support the council's role in review and oversight.

- Josephine Shenouda responded that she agreed it was a good idea. Susan Evans noted that, in her experience since 2018 working on the Part C application with Chris, this was the first time the SICC had raised significant questions about it, as the process had typically become more routine. She emphasized that it is appropriate for the SICC to closely review the application. She also highlighted that the application includes not only funding information but also assurances regarding policies and program practices and stated that she planned to review these assurances to ensure they are current, accurate, and being properly implemented.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen stated that Samuel Kivell and Saira Hussain Akhter's group could further develop a stronger knowledge base of the policy components and how they function. She noted the importance of understanding which items require public comment and which do not, emphasizing that there is a significant distinction between the two.
- Susan Evans stated that, as part of the Department of Health (DOH) update, the public is invited to comment on the application during public meetings. She explained that a public hearing would only be required if there were significant changes to the application, such as modifications to the system of payment or eligibility criteria. Susan Evans noted that public hearings have not been necessary for many years, referencing the time when family costs were introduced as the last instance requiring one. She also shared that instructions for submitting public comments are included with the application posted on the website, and that submitted comments are reviewed and considered during preparation of the final application, with comments directed to Josephine.
- Nicole Edwards asked Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen whether there is a way to track or capture the number of families anticipated or suspected to be leaving Part C Early Intervention (EI) services due to immigration-related concerns.
  - Susan Evans responded that the program does not collect immigration status information in any capacity. She explained that, because immigration status is neither tracked nor required to be disclosed by families, there is no way to determine how many families may be leaving Part C Early Intervention (EI) services due to immigration related concerns.
  - Nicole Edwards added that, while immigration status is not tracked, families may still be receiving messaging that leads them to withdraw services in anticipation of concerns. She suggested that there may be a need for a stronger communication campaign to better address and clarify these concerns for families.

- Samuel Kivell asked about the state budget allocation for the program, specifically inquiring how much funding is allocated annually and whether it amounts to several hundred million dollars. He referenced an estimate of approximately \$100 million.
  - Josephine Shenouda explained that the federal grant funding is determined by a federal birth cohort formula and is therefore outside the program’s control. She stated that Medicaid funding comes from reimbursements, while Family Cost Participation (FCP) consists of co-payments. Josephine Shenouda added that the state appropriation, as Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen referenced, was not expected to change for the next fiscal year based on current information. However, she noted that the budget was still in the early stages of review in March and would continue through budget hearings in April.
  - Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen added that the Early Intervention (EI) budget can be difficult to interpret because legislative changes may include both reductions and increases. She explained that, in the current fiscal year, a budget reduction due to lower enrollment was partially offset by additional funding to support a 1% rate increase, resulting in only a slight overall decrease. She noted that this is why a “flat” budget may still reflect internal funding adjustments.
- Corinne Catalano suggested leveraging existing partnerships with preschool expansion districts to increase awareness of Early Intervention services. She noted that many districts have community parent involvement specialists who engage in family outreach and could help inform families about EI, particularly for younger siblings. Corinne Catalano emphasized that using existing resources and partnerships could be a practical, low cost approach to increasing awareness rather than relying solely on consultants.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen stated that the team discussed creating a comprehensive marketing campaign that would include multiple components and possibly involve outside assistance and input from other members.
- Susan Evans noted that a recent February study found Part C participation had declined by 1% nationally, emphasizing that the issue is not specific to New Jersey, though she agreed the strategies Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen discussed were still worth pursuing.

### Personnel Preparation Committee, Corinne Catalano, Chair

- Corinne Catalano stated that she had previously circulated two documents regarding proposed revisions to personnel standards. She referenced that the conversation began at the September 19th meeting, during which the group had already agreed to recommend collapsing three positions into a single role. The group also previously deliberated on whether to propose one or two titles and ultimately agreed to recommend a single title: Early Intervention Educator.

- Corinne Catalano explained that a revised table had been shared with members outlining categories, current standards, proposed EI Educator standards, notes and justification, and alignment with the current documentation in the New Jersey EIS system. She acknowledged Terry Ann and others from the personnel preparation committee for their significant contributions to restructuring the material.

*MOTION:* Council members were asked to vote on whether to move forward with submitting the proposed recommendations to the Department of Health (DOH) regarding the Early Intervention educator standards for the New Jersey Early Intervention System, including the recommended title changes and revisions to the standards. Motion made by Corinne Catalano and seconded by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, APPROVED: 6 approved, no opposed, 4 not present during the voting.

#### Family Support Committee, Nicole Edwards, Chair

- Nicole Edwards noted that the committee consists of 12 members, including representatives from the Department of Health, the Family Support Committee, a parent representative, and professionals working in director and resource roles. She also expressed appreciation for the committee members and recognized their contributions.
- Nicole Edwards explained that findings from a doctor-focused needs assessment revealed significant misinformation and misunderstandings about Early Intervention services. In response, one subcommittee is developing an infographic to address common misconceptions identified in the survey, such as referral requirements, specialist availability, and service timelines.
  - Nicole Edwards also noted that another subcommittee is exploring ways to improve communication after referrals are made, including processes for following up with providers and keeping them informed about outcomes while maintaining family consent and privacy.
- Nicole Edwards shared that Deepa Srinivasavaradan and Beth Lohne have been working extensively on a dispute resolution training presentation designed specifically for families. She explained that the committee has been reviewing the training in depth to ensure it is family friendly and likely to be well received, rather than being primarily focused on providers. The committee has already conducted one detailed review and planned another session to further evaluate the training's effectiveness for families.

**Transition Committee, Steven Weiss, Chair and Josephine Shenouda, Co-Chair**

- Josephine Shenouda indicated that the SICC would review the proposal, which had been shared earlier in the week for feedback, and that a vote would take place at the June meeting before handing the presentation over to Nicole Brogden.
- Nicole Brogden presented a transition packet developed by the committee to support families as their children transition out of early intervention services. She explained that the packet was designed as a comprehensive, family-friendly resource that guides families through each step of the transition process, outlining what to expect and explaining each stage in clear and accessible language. She noted that the packet highlights the full range of transition options available to families, not solely the preschool special education (Part B) pathway, ensuring families are informed about multiple options as they plan for their child's next steps.
  - Nicole Brogden reviewed the packet's table of contents, explaining that it was designed to be easy for families to navigate. She noted that the document includes clickable sections that allow users to quickly access specific topics, such as the various transition options available to children. She also highlighted that embedded links throughout the packet provide families with opportunities to explore topics in greater depth and access additional resources as needed.
  - Nicole Brogden highlighted that the packet includes clickable links, worksheets, and visual aids to help families navigate the transition process. She explained that these features were designed to support planning, reflection, and decision making throughout the family's transition journey.
  - Nicole Brogden noted that the packet contains a comprehensive FAQ section based on common questions and concerns raised by families over several years. In addition, the final section provides a collection of helpful resources for parents, including information about Statewide Parent Advocacy Network (SPAN) and Special Child Health Services Case Management Units.
  - Nicole emphasized that the packet was developed not only for families but also as a resource for service coordinators and practitioners. She explained that the goal is to promote consistent, accurate, and up to date information across the state, replacing outdated materials and strengthening transition practices while supporting family engagement throughout the process.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked whether the packet would be updated with her recommendations. Nicole Brogden confirmed that it would be.
- Corinne Catalano praised the transition packet, noting that it was well designed, family friendly, and particularly effective in helping families stay organized through the forms included. She also stated that she had several recommended edits and asked how best to submit them to Nicole Brogden.

- Corinne Catalano raised a concern regarding the section on related services, noting that some information could be misleading. She clarified that certain services, such as recreation and camp related programs, are not free, and emphasized that the list may inaccurately represent what families can access at no cost under Part B.
- Corinne Catalano noted additional Part B wording issues requiring further review for consistency and accuracy. She recommended consulting with the Department of Education (DOE) particularly in light of preschool expansion changes. She emphasized the need for precise terminology regarding inclusive preschool settings and clarified that all general education classrooms are considered inclusion eligible, noting that the current language may unintentionally suggest co teaching models that are not typically used.
- Corinne Catalano further noted concerns about the section on autism, acknowledging its importance due to its prevalence in the state. However, she questioned the emphasis on autism without comparable sections for other disability categories. She also pointed out that the linked definition from Autism New Jersey is outdated and does not accurately reflect current classification standards, including sensory considerations in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), and recommended updating it for accuracy.
- Josephine Shenouda commended Nicole Brogden and the subcommittee for their work, noting that the proposal represents the beginning of the process. She emphasized that feedback from all SICC members is being sought as the group moves forward with its review and development.
- Nicole Edwards asked a question from the Teams chat about whether the document would be available in other languages.
  - Nicole Brogden responded that the goal was to first finalize and approve the packet in English. She noted that there are plans to translate it into Spanish initially and then into additional languages as needed.
- Samuel Kivell asked whether the packet would be included in the exit packet provided to families as they leave the program, posted on the website, or distributed through other means, and inquired about the plans for distribution.
  - Josephine Shenouda responded that the document would be shared in multiple ways and invited Nicole Brogden to add more details. Nicole Brogden explained that the goal is to provide the information to families as early as possible so they can begin planning for transition even before the transition planning conference, ideally by the time the child turns two. She added that it would also be posted on REIC websites and the Family Matters website to ensure it is widely accessible to both families and professionals.

- Joyce Salzberg praised Nicole and the committee for their work. She highlighted the importance of reminding families that there are options beyond Part B, including other preschool programs or choosing not to enroll their child in preschool. She emphasized the value of presenting all available options to families rather than focusing solely on Part B.

### NIEER Presentation

- Allison Friedman-Krauss, Associate Research Professor at the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), presented an update titled “New Jersey Early Intervention System Deep Dive: An Update.”
- Allison Friedman-Krauss provided an overview of the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), describing it as a mission driven, nonpartisan organization focused on improving early education and expanding access to high quality programs for children from birth through age eight. She explained that NIEER conducts rigorous research, engages in policy work, and collaborates with state, local, and federal agencies.
- Allison Friedman-Krauss reviewed the broad goals of the deep dive into New Jersey’s Early Intervention System. She explained that the study seeks to understand how New Jersey’s system compares with those in other states, assess the sustainability of its current structure, and identify areas that are ready for improvement. The project also aims to develop recommendations that promote long term sustainability and equity, determine which components of the system require additional support, funding, and resources, and examine both the strengths and challenges of the system.
- Allison Friedman-Krauss provided additional details on the deep dive into New Jersey’s Early Intervention System. Presentation slides are included below:

#### NJ EIS Deep Dive Timeline

Deliverable	Status
Literature review	In progress & used to inform other deliverables
50 state scan	In progress
State comparison: structure	In progress
Family satisfaction survey	Ready to field pending signed data sharing agreement
Survey of EIPs	Beginning to plan
Analysis of existing data	Discussions about accessing data
NJ EI landscape	Draws on all other components
Final recommendations	Draws on all other components

## Family Satisfaction Survey Overview

- Goal: understand families' experiences with and opinions of EI
  - Different from the required Indicator 4 survey
- Approved by Rutgers' IRB and Rowan's IRB
- Questions developed based on literature review and previous EI satisfaction surveys
- Piloted with current EI families in the fall
- Web-based survey available in English and Spanish
- \$25 gift card for participants
- Ask for focus group volunteers

## Family Satisfaction Survey Topics

- Child/family demographics
- Referral date
- Opinions about Early Intervention (referral, evaluation, coordination, and services)
- Experiences such as family involvement in setting IFSP goals, outcomes, and services
- Staff consistency
- Location of services

- Allison Friedman-Krauss explained that NIEER has been participating in a Department of Health task force examining how Early Intervention Program (EIP) agencies operate. She noted that the goal is to develop a clearer definition of comprehensive and vendor agencies, better understand how they work together, and make recommendations to improve system efficiency. The task force includes representatives from both vendor and comprehensive EIP agencies across the state.

## EI Provider Structures in other states

- Agency-Only Provider Model (Connecticut, Delaware, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania)
  - Services delivered through comprehensive EI agencies
  - Providers must work as employees or contractors of an agency
  - Agencies responsible for evaluation, coordination, and services
- Individual / Mixed Provider Model
  - Independent therapists may contract directly with the EI system (Maryland)
  - Services may be delivered by agencies OR individual clinicians (New Mexico, New York)

- Allison Friedman-Krauss explained that, following the family satisfaction survey and additional progress by the task force, NIEER plans to conduct a survey of early intervention providers. She explained that the project is currently in the planning phase, with efforts focused on reviewing previous provider surveys and related research to develop survey questions. Work on the survey is expected to continue through the spring.
- Allison Friedman-Krauss continued by explaining that the upcoming task force meeting will be used to gather input on the planned early intervention provider survey. She noted that the survey will be distributed to all early intervention providers in New Jersey and will require a response. The survey will collect information on staffing rosters, hours worked compared to billable hours, service delivery costs, reimbursement rates, overhead and supervision, and whether providers conduct evaluations in addition to service provision. She also stated that a time use component is being considered to better understand the cost structure of early intervention programs.

- Allison Friedman-Krauss concluded by describing a 50 state scan examining how New Jersey's early intervention system compares to models in other states using multiple national data sources. She explained that the analysis is ongoing, and reviews key areas such as governance, funding, eligibility criteria, service delivery structures, developmental screening practices, and evidence based approaches.
- Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked whether it would be possible to expand the questions being posed to other states to include the systems they use for communication, data storage, electronic signatures, and other related operational tools and processes.
  - Allison Friedman-Krauss explained that the current approach does not involve surveying other states, but instead relies on scanning state websites to understand their programs. She noted that while reaching out directly to early intervention coordinators could be considered in the future, it would likely only be feasible for a select group of states rather than all 50 and added that additional states may be included in that targeted list.
- Joyce Salzberg asked whether the outreach could also include questions about family cost share, specifically whether other states have such a system and how it is implemented.
  - Allison Friedman-Krauss responded that the existing 50 state scan includes only limited information on family cost share, primarily whether states allow it as a yes or no indicator. She agreed that more detailed information could be added to better capture how cost share is implemented across states.
  - Joyce Salzberg clarified that the term "early intervention providers" in the presentation may be confusing and suggested it be clarified to refer to programs rather than individual practitioners. She added that service coordination is only provided in New York, where agencies are permitted to do so.
  - Allison Friedman Krauss responded that the presentation previously shared with the task force included more detailed information by state, but that clarity may have been lost when it was condensed into a summary slide. She offered to share the more detailed state specific information to ensure the content is clearer.
- Corinne Catalano asked whether the scan of other states could also capture information related to personnel standards revisions, particularly how states support mentoring for staff and ensure required competencies and experience are met. She noted the importance of aligning this work to avoid fragmented reporting and requested information on how other state's structure and fund mentoring systems, especially in relation to shifts toward focusing experience on children birth to three.
  - Allison Friedman-Krauss responded that information on mentoring, competencies, and funding structures has not appeared in the 50 state scan resources so far. She noted that further research or outreach to other states would be needed to gather that information.

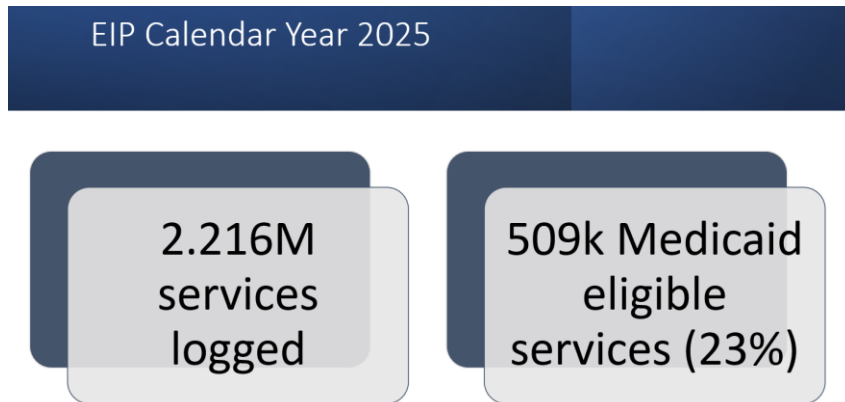
- Nicole Edwards asked how it is determined which parent in a family is selected to complete the parent survey, noting that the contact information in the system may not always reflect the parent who participates in sessions. She also asked how it is ensured that survey instructions clearly indicate who the intended respondent is within each family.
  - Allison Friedman-Krauss responded that the survey is currently sent to the contact listed in the system and was not originally designed with additional targeting or filtering for the most appropriate parent respondent. She noted that the survey focuses on family satisfaction rather than learning outcomes and acknowledged that clearer instructions may be needed in the email or survey introduction to guide the appropriate parent to respond.
- Nicole Edwards also asked for clarification on whether the comparison of primary service provider and traditional models includes programs across the country broadly, and not only those defined strictly by model type, but also programs that simply use or implement those approaches.
  - Josephine Shenouda responded that the work is beginning with neighboring states that have similar models, and that expanding to other models to identify best practices is planned for the next phase. Allison Friedman-Krauss clarified that the upcoming survey is not a satisfaction survey but is intended to better understand what agencies are doing. She added that if a time use survey is developed, it would likely be directed to actual service providers rather than agencies.
  - Nicole Edwards asked whether the questions could also address training needs and professional development needs, or if the focus would be on other aspects instead.
  - Allison Friedman-Krauss explained that training and professional development could potentially be included as part of the questions, as the work is still in a brainstorming phase. She added that it may also be useful to examine the workforce pipeline, including where individuals are earning degrees and whether entry into the profession is slowing down.
  - Susan Evans explained that the system is complex and difficult to compare across states due to differing structures and challenges. She noted that each state has its own strengths rather than a single model state to replicate. She added that New Jersey will build on its own strengths and that the upcoming family satisfaction survey is the immediate priority, which will inform the next phase of questions and refinements. Allison Friedman Krauss added that no single state has a fully optimal model, but reviewing a range of innovative practices across states can help identify ideas that may be adapted for New Jersey.

- Corinne Catalano asked whether the REICs are included as part of the service and if they would be part of the discussions or outreach.
  - Susan Evans explained that REIC involvement is primarily focused on the referral and intake process. She noted that while REICs also provide technical assistance and family support, the current scope of discussion is centered on referral related system processes and potential improvements, rather than their broader support functions.
- Nicole Edwards asked whether messaging will be shared with individual agencies about the upcoming survey, noting that parents would likely direct questions to their local agency contacts rather than the survey team.
  - Allison Friedman Krauss responded that the plan is to share information about the survey with agencies so they can help explain its purpose and encourage participation. She added that contact information will be available for follow up questions and that agencies would ideally send a pre notification email to families so they are aware the survey is coming and recognize the sender.
- Joyce Salzberg commented that fiscal and political support for early intervention varies widely across states, noting that in some states strong support from governors and legislators improves service delivery and helps with recruiting and retaining practitioners, while other states have made little progress. She emphasized that these differences in funding and political support are important to consider when reviewing state systems.
- Joyce Salzberg commented that fiscal and political support for early intervention varies widely across states, noting that in some states strong support from governors and legislators improves service delivery and helps with recruiting and retaining practitioners, while other states have made little progress. She emphasized that these differences in funding and political support are important to consider when reviewing state systems.
- Samuel Kivell asked when the next NIEER update would be available and whether the overall timeline is still on track for approximately a year and a half to two years to complete the full study.
  - Josephine Shenouda responded that the next update will likely come after the family satisfaction survey is distributed and data is collected. She noted that the timeline is still uncertain due to pending approvals to send out the survey, but confirmed that the NIEER study has been extended by one year to allow sufficient time to complete and process the work.
- Josephine Shenouda announced that the Early Intervention Program has been moved into a new DOH division called Nutrition and Developmental Services. She noted that the Assistant Commissioner position for the new division is currently vacant but is expected to be filled by the end of April, and in the meantime stakeholders can direct questions to her. She also announced that a team member, Kendra Taggart, will serve as the Targeted Evaluation Team (TET) coordinator or liaison, beginning her role this spring after previously working in monitoring and service coordination.

**Lead Agency Report**

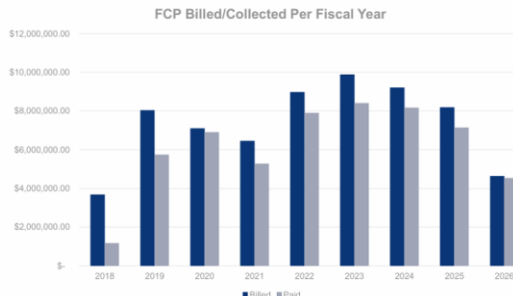
**Susan Evans, Part C Coordinator**

- Susan Evans provided a federal funding update, noting that Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) programs for FY26 were flat funded at the federal level. She explained that states had not yet received their official funding allocations, which are typically released in late April or early May, but New Jersey expects to receive an amount similar to last year. She added that the state uses the prior year's allocation when preparing its application and will make only minor adjustments to budget categories once the final federal award is confirmed, with no significant funding changes anticipated.
- Susan Evans announced that long time Executive Director Susan Marcario of Family Link REIC has retired. She added that the Family Link Board will be responsible for leading the search and selection process for the organization's next Executive Director.
- Kristen Kugelman presented an overview of the upcoming 2026 NJEIS Virtual Conference, "Stronger Together: Coaching, Connecting & Collaborating in Early Intervention."
- Susan Evans said the supplemental check run from the Senator Ruiz allocation adjustment was processed and should be received today, March 20, 2026.
- Susan Evans reviewed data related to EIP Calendar Year 2025. See the slides discussed below:



**Family payments received in FY26 percentage has increased 8 percent from same time period in FY25**

- **2018 – March 2026 FCP Payments\***
  - 371,153 payments made
  - \$66M billed
  - \$55M paid
  - 83% of billed has been paid
- **FY26 FCP Payments\***
  - 26,532 payments made
  - \$4.6M billed
  - \$4.5M paid



\*amounts in FY26 billed through January

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

- Beth Lohne reviewed the following Procedural Safeguards Office initiatives:



**OFFICE HOURS SFY26:**

- Beginning in March 2026, the PSO office hours will move to quarterly. The dedicated office hours will be an open forum focus on Procedural Safeguards for the DOH, REICs, SCUs, and EIP's, via Teams platform
- Upcoming Open-Forum PSO office hour, March 23, 2026.

**TRAINING INITIATIVES:**

- PSO Quarterly Trainings: Continuous education on Procedural Safeguard requirements for direct service providers.
- Mediator Refresher Training- Date TBD
- Assurance that families have been informed of their right to formal dispute resolution.

**ONGOING INITIATIVES:**

- Quarterly Hours: Regular sessions to address questions, discuss trends, and provide support.
- Partnership with the Statewide Parent Advocacy Network: Collaboration on a joint training for families on Creating Agreements and Formal Dispute Resolution Options in the NJEIS.
- SICC Family Support Committee collaboration.

- Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Investigations  
SFY26: 12 total; July 1, 2025 – March 9, 2026

Unfounded: 2,  
Substantiated: 5  
Pending Investigation: 5  
Suspended from NJEIS: 2

- PSO SFY26 Compensatory Awards Data:  
January – 4 Children, 108 Compensatory Hours  
February – 12 Children, 612 Compensatory Hours  
March – 13 Children, 963 Compensatory Hours  
Total: 29 Children, 1,683 Compensatory Hours

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

- Laura Washington stated that, while broader advertising efforts would be ideal, current resources require a focus on community based outreach. This led to the creation of Child Find Committees across the state's REICs. Composed of early intervention providers, service coordinators, board members, and REIC staff, these committees work to expand outreach and increase referrals.

- Laura Washington also reviewed the following information regarding Child Find and Early Intervention Week:



### Main Goals of Child Find

Child Find is a federally mandated program under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

- **Identify children EARLY**
  - Locate, Identify and Evaluate children from birth to age 3 who may have developmental delays or disabilities.
  - Target the birth to one age range
- **Increase awareness**
  - Educate parents, healthcare providers, childcare staff, and community members about the importance of early intervention, eligibility criteria, referral information and early childhood development.
  - Provide information about developmental milestones and signs of potential delays.
  - Challenge common misconceptions about child development, such as 'Wait and See,' 'Boys develop later than girls,' or 'It's just a phase.'
- **Promote equitable access**
  - Reach all families, including those in underserved or hard-to-reach communities.
  - Help families understand their rights and access resources regardless of income, language, or location.



**2026**  
**EARLY INTERVENTION WEEK**  
**Connections & Conversations:**  
**EI Parent Group**  
**SAVE THE DATE!**



Join us during Early Intervention Week for virtual parent groups focused on connection, conversation, and shared experiences.

Each session will explore a different topic, including:

**Bonding Through Play & Big Feelings - May 7th at 12:30pm**  
**Transition & Routines - May 19th at 6:00pm**

Whether you're looking to share what works for your family or hear ideas from other parents, this is a welcoming space to connect and learn.

*Registration details coming soon!*

<b>Helpful Hands REIC</b> (Bergen, Hudson & Passaic)	<b>Mid-Jersey CARES REIC</b> (Hunterdon, Mercer, Middlesex, Monmouth, Ocean & Somerset)	<b>Family Link REIC</b> (Essex, Morris, Sussex, Union & Warren)	<b>Southern REIC</b> (Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, & Salem)
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- Samuel Kivell asked whether funding for Early Intervention Week had already been secured.
  - Laura Washington replied that funding for Early Intervention Week is already included in this year's budget, which contributed to the increase in the Child Find budget line.

## Old Business

- No old business was reported at today's SICC meeting.

## Public Comments

The following comments were made by members of the public:

### Kenneth (David) Holmes, ABCD EIPA

- Kenneth (David) Holmes noted that the data presented addressed some of his questions. He referenced attending a February 12 meeting in Trenton with Josephine, Susan, and staff, where discussions focused on marketing, unexpended funds, Medicaid funding, and other infrastructure-related issues. He expressed appreciation for the detailed data provided and stated that he remains interested in understanding how anticipated unexpended funds during the fiscal year might be used to support and enhance initiatives such as marketing efforts. He reiterated his support for pursuing those efforts moving forward.
- Kenneth (David) Holmes asked for an update on Riverside training for CET staff regarding the BDI, including whether a schedule or timeline has been established for the next training session.
- Kenneth (David) Holmes cautioned that previous data collection efforts, such as the cost study, did not result in a final report being shared. He requested that findings and deliverables from the NIEER study be made available as they are completed and expressed interest in future family survey results and comparative state data, noting their value to providers operating in a challenging environment.

## Submitted Chat Messages as Public Comments:

02:33:24 Jennifer Blanchette McConnell: SICC members are of course welcome to attend any EI week events.

02:34:00 Unknown User: Reacted to " SICC members...." with ❤️

02:37:30 Edwards, Nicole Megan: Please email me information on EI week that I can pass along to the students in our undergrad ECE program. Thanks! [EdwardsN@rowan.edu](mailto:EdwardsN@rowan.edu)

02:47:00 Jill Arc of Somerset Glassman: Thanks All !!!

## Submitted Written Comments (Attached):

There were no additional public comments.

The Public can submit comments to the Department or in the Q&A section which are recorded for the Department.

The next SICC public meeting is June 12, 2026, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

## Adjournment:

MOTION to adjourn the meeting by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen and seconded by Corinne Catalano at approximately 12:01 p.m.