

**MINUTES
January 10, 2008
Marlboro, Massachusetts**

Members Present: Robin Adair, Zulmira Allcock, Donna Marie Bolden for Pat Cameron, Holly Boykin, Darleen Corbett, Sandra Daly, Jen DerBogossian, Julie Fitzpatrick, Jen Greco, Jack Harris, Peggy Lee, Karin Lifter, Margaret Mahoney, Anne Marsh, Neal Michaels, Sara Miranda, Judith Nest-Pasierb, Nancy Phillips, Kathie Rose, Arlene Tannenbaum, Pam Wildnauer, Joanne Williams, Amy Young.

Members Absent: Kim Amato, Richard Breault, Leslie Gaffney, Pam Kuechler, Peggy Lee, Anita Moeller, Therese Murphy-Miller, Kimber O'Connell, Ronna Schaffer, Nancy Schwartz.

Non-Voting Committee Chairs in Attendance: Rena Ginsberg, Tom Miller, Alden Wood, Peter Woodbury.

1. Welcome: Co-Chairperson Margaret Mahoney welcomed the group. She introduced Holly Boykin, newly appointed Parent Representative to Steering Committee. Margaret stated that the new three-year ICC Strategic Plan will be presented at the ICC Meeting to be held March 13, 2008.

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of the ICC meeting held November 8, 2007, were approved with the following correction: On Page 2 in the second bullet under Discussion, behavioral health should replace the word autism.

2. Director's Report – Ron Benham: Ron congratulated Darla Gundler, who received the National Parent Leadership Award at the federal Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Conference held in December, 2007. Ron explained that the award is given each year by the Infant Toddler Coordinators Association which includes the Part C Coordinators from all the states and territories.

Federal Update: The federal Fiscal 2008 budget was recently passed. In general, Part C fared better than the Section 619 preschool programs known as "Baby B." However, because of Massachusetts' declining birth rate combined with increases in birth rate in many other states, this state will again see a downturn in Part C funding, even while numbers served in Early Intervention continue to increase.

State Update: There is a projected \$3 million budget shortfall for FY 08 and a larger one for FY 09. Contrary to what we were told earlier, \$1 million has been added to the retained revenue account to support anticipated Federal Financial Participation (FFP) claims, and the Executive Office of Administration and Finance is expected to put an additional \$2 million for EI into a supplementary budget. It is hoped that these additions will roll forward in the FY 09 budget. There are several reasons for the anticipated shortfall: Ongoing growth in EI and Specialty Services, an increase in self-funded private insurance plans that do not choose to cover the EI benefit, significant growth in the number of children receiving Medicaid, and a growing proportion of developmental specialists in the overall staffing pattern in EI programs. John Auerbach,

Commissioner of the Department of Public Health, has been well briefed on the EI system's needs. A recent meeting brought DPH, EOHHS, MassHealth, Health Care Finance and Policy, private insurers and MEIC representatives to the table to discuss issues and potential solutions. The challenge is to address both rates and growth in numbers served without having to tighten eligibility to pay for it.

Part C Public Hearings will be held soon in two locations, followed by a 30-day comment period before submission of the state's 22nd Year Part C Application to the federal government. Massachusetts anticipates a decrease in Part C funding of about \$250,000. There are a number of different developmental screening initiatives across the nation, for example First Signs, Acting Early, behavioral health screening recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, CAPTA legislation that mandates EI referral for children in the child welfare system, and Jack Shonkoff's work on toxic stress. Children screened in have a right to services; the challenge is to pay for it.

Ron gave an update on the federally funded Substance Exposed Newborns (SEN) pilot project which, in Massachusetts, is called A Helping Hand: Mother to Mother. John Lippitt is the Director. Ron thanked Neal Michaels, an ICC member, for facilitating the project interface between DPH and the Department of Social Services. As a result, funding has been set aside for both FY 08 and FY 09, so that the third and final pilot site can come on line. Likewise, the Department's Bureau of Substance Abuse will provide additional support over the same time period.

Ron updated the ICC on changes in eligibility requirements instituted by the Department effective 1/1/08. These changes are designed to enable the system to deal proactively with budget shortfalls. These are some of the changes: Children with acquired torticollis will no longer be automatically eligible unless they also have documented delays or other risk factors. Eligibility will be for six months rather than 12, with re-assessment required before services continue. Intake visits will be billed as home visit hours rather than assessment. For children presumed to be on the autism spectrum, use of an approved screening tool will be required, and formal diagnosis by a specialist must take place within 180 days.

Discussion: The following points were clarified during discussion: The Department will write a formal response to a letter sent to the Commissioner by the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC). The letter posed questions about the anticipated financial benefit of the recent eligibility changes. Ron stated that the Department could consider revising some of the changes if they don't achieve desired results. He acknowledged that changes initiated by the Department always leads to push-back – that is the very nature of good advocacy. However, the Massachusetts EI system has experienced multi-million dollar shortfalls in 13 of the last 16 years. Children identified have a right to be served, providers have a right to be paid for services delivered, and the Department has a responsibility to insure that both things take place.

3. Presentation – OSEP Conference Attendees: Margaret Mahoney led off, commenting on how inspiring it was to attend the conference in December, and especially to be present when Darla Gundler was honored. Massachusetts was well represented. In addition to Margaret and Darla, Suzanne Gottlieb, Faith Piaggi and Amy Young also attended. Ron Benham expressed great disappointment that he was not able to attend due to a family emergency. These comments summarize impressions of the attendees: It was inspiring to gain a national perspective, not just about policy, but also about leading edge clinical approaches and advocacy efforts. The “dance” of

the parent-professional partnership permeated the proceedings. The conference is especially energizing for parents. Founding members of the Early Intervention Family Alliance from all over the country were present. Massachusetts can be especially proud of what our state has accomplished.

4. Update on State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report – Patti Fougere: Patti distributed a handout and explained that Massachusetts submitted its first State Performance Plan to OSEP in December, 2005. There are 14 Performance Indicators that we must report on annually, seven of which require 100% compliance. Patti went through the indicators in considerable detail. Massachusetts especially needs to focus on the way it reports on child outcomes. Consequently, Patti plans to convene a Task Group that will hold its first meeting in February to invite input and make a plan. The MEIC requested that a representative of each of its regions be included in the Task Group.

5. Committee Reports:

- **Personnel Preparation Committee – Rena Ginsberg:** The committee recently met with representatives of higher education, and it will offer a session at the MEIC conference in May.
- **Standards Committee – Alden Wood:** The committee has received its charge from Steering Committee, and will present its new three-year Strategic Plan at the ICC meeting in March.
- **Program Planning Committee – Joanne Williams:** The committee has finalized its Strategic Plan and will share it with the ICC at a future meeting. The plan includes a continuing major focus on infant mental health.
- **Specialty Services Committee – Tom Miller:** Tom distributed the committee's report. He noted that Peg Freedman recently left her position at the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, and thanked her for her many years of participation on the committee and the ICC. The committee is considering holding an Autism Forum with the goal of encouraging more partners to advocate for the needs of these children and families.
- **Fiscal Committee – Peter Woodbury:** The committee continues to strategize about anticipated budget shortfalls for FY 08 and FY 09. An overriding goal is to re-establish funding equilibrium – to rebalance the system so that all payers are full participants.

6. Member Updates: **Karin Lifter** noted that the Council for Exceptional Children will hold its national conference in Boston in April. This is a good opportunity to form a Massachusetts Chapter of the CEC Division on Early Childhood. The Call for Papers for the DEC Conference to be held in October is available on the CEC website. **Zulmira Allcock** announced that the MEIC Conference will be held at the Best Western Royal Plaza Hotel in Marlboro on May 7-8, 2008. **Sara Miranda** announced that the Federation for Children with Special Needs will hold its annual conference at the World Trade Center on March 1, 2008. The brochure is available at www.fcsn.org. **Tom Miller** announced that the New England Seminar for Families of Children with Visual Impairment will hold its 25th Anniversary Conference on May 3, 2008. **Holly Boykin**, new ICC member and representative to Steering Committee, introduced herself. She has experience in public health, chairs the Finance Committee in the Town of Stoughton, and looks forward to participating on the ICC. **Darla Gundler** alerted the group to a possible change of location for ICC meetings in March and May.

7. The ICC Meeting adjourned at 12:27 P.M.

