

**MINUTES**

**March 6, 2003**

**Worcester, Massachusetts**

**Members Present:** Zulmira Allcock, Joan Bejune, Claire Brady, Hope Colen, Renee Duseau, Karin Elliott, Magalie Eugene, Peggy Freedman, Mary Jones, Mary Lutz, Margaret Mahoney, Sarah Miranda, Therese Murphy, Pat Pellegrino, Joyce Rowell, Mark Sandt, Judy Sleeper, Mary Ellen Thompson, Deborah Turiano.

**I. Welcome and Member Updates – Hope Colen:** Vice Chairperson Hope Colen welcomed members on a day when an impending heavy snow storm required an abbreviated meeting schedule.

The following Member Updates were given: **Zulmira Allcock**, representing the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium, reported that the MEIC has formed three working committees: Best Practices, Legislation, and Supervision. The MEIC requests that the ICC adhere to its published agenda because some interested parties have had the experience of coming for a specific topic only to discover that the meeting was already over. The MEIC also requests that the ICC consider developing a, educational document regarding the prescriptive recommendations that are sometimes given to families of children on the PDD/autism spectrum. **Karin Lifter** reported on her recent attendance at an OSEP – Office of Special Education – conference in Washington, D.C. for representatives of federally funded higher education programs. Karin summarized trends that were evident at the conference: Greater flexibility for children with special needs within the “Leave No Child Behind” federal initiative; increased options for parents; and increasing emphasis on research-based best practices. Karin also introduced a graduate student from the EI training program at Northeastern University, and stated that Northeastern will be offering a “hybrid” program leading to EI certification that will combine face-to-face and on-line instruction to make it easier for EI personnel to achieve their certification. **Peggy Freedman** distributed brochures for a *Sibshops* conference that ARC Massachusetts is sponsoring later in March, and announced that MDDC – the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council – will hold its annual Legislative Reception and Forum on March 25<sup>th</sup> at the State House in Boston. Tom Miller announced that the 20<sup>th</sup> Annual New England Regional Seminar for parents of the visually impaired will take place at Perkins School for the Blind in Watertown on May 3, 2003.

**II. Director’s Report – Ron Benham:** Ron described the process of gaining approval of the state’s 17<sup>th</sup> Year Part C Application to the federal government. A Public Hearing was held on January 24<sup>th</sup> at which there were 17 attendees. Nine people submitted verbal or written testimony. The Application will be held open until March 21<sup>st</sup> for further public comment. Ron requested that the ICC vote on the application today, stating that any further substantive changes would be brought to Steering Committee for approval. The Federal Fiscal Year 03 budget that has just been approved by Congress in Washington includes an additional \$300,000 in Part C dollars for Massachusetts, all of which will go toward direct service. Ron summarized public

comments received to date, most of which were received in January just at the time when new cost reduction measures were first being implemented. Most comments are generally supportive of the EI system and urge that the Department not “do anything drastic.” One comment suggested that EI personnel need more experience and training with low incidence disabilities.

One comment from an organization offered commendation regarding working with the provider community, achieving an increase in provider reimbursement rates and a new community group rate, increasing use of technology to communicate with the provider community, continued emphasis on family-centered services, and reducing certification competency requirements from 69 to 35. The same organization expressed dissatisfaction with the overall certification process, the quality of training provided, and the difficulty of negotiating CEUs for training provided by programs and other entities. Concern was also expressed regarding the fact that monitoring of programs is not consistent across the state and programs do not receive written feedback after monitoring visits.

Ron reviewed the Part C budget contained in the application. Most items are essentially level funded. One position (Data Manager – Jean Shimer) has been moved onto the Part C budget. The remainder of the application consists of mandated forms. Ron requested that the ICC give its approval of the application at this time.

**It was moved and seconded that the ICC accept the Part C 17<sup>th</sup> Year Application as presented. Approval was unanimous.**

Ron summarized the current status of FY 03 state funding for EI. The system was running over budget, growing toward a \$2 million shortfall if something wasn't done because there is no option to request a supplemental appropriation for FY 03. Cost reduction measures were implemented in January and, though spending appears to be moving in an appropriate direction, there is continued need to be cautious. In general, spending for specialty services is now on target, and some saving in transportation is anticipated. Regarding FY 04: EI projected a need for an additional \$1.4 million; that it was level-funded in House One actually seems like a victory. Anticipating an increase of 5% in numbers of children to be served in FY 04, the Department believes that by continuing the cost reduction measures already implemented, the system will remain within budget. The Department is exploring the possibility of tightening the administration of eligibility requirements without changing the requirements themselves. The possibility of charging fees for services is also back on the table; it would be challenging to find a way to administer a fee system that will be manageable for both families and programs.

Part C received a \$20 million increase in the federal budget, but the entire account also received a .65% reduction. It has been a goal to achieve parity for Part C with Part B. Whereas Part B is mandatory, Part C is voluntary, and a few states are considering dropping out. When advocating for Part C at the federal level, there is concern that most outcomes are process-oriented. Measurable outcomes are harder to define for babies and toddlers than they are for older children, and much work is needed to put consistent data gathering mechanisms in place across all states.

**III. Revision of CSPD – Karin Lifter and Katharine Thomas:** The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development is being revised this year. Two documents were distributed: the CSPD with revisions highlighted, and a handout containing the Power Point slides for today’s presentation. Any state that participates in Part C is required to have a CSPD. This revision contains changes in language regarding best practices, adapts wording to use a more active voice, and provides clear designation of responsibility for the various tasks that are outlined. In this revision, there are four subsections: Recruitment, Preparation, Qualifications, and Retention. A previous fifth subsection, Support, has been infused into the above four sections. The CSPD revision is meant to be a back-drop for an Action Plan.

**IV. Committee Reports. Standards Committee – Zulmira Allcock for Dan Couet:** The Committee has distributed a survey to programs designed to elicit feedback about the use of co-treatment, and problems encountered within the current co-treatment Standards and billing practices. The Recruitment and Retention Task Group will be presenting its findings at the next ICC meeting. **Program Planning Committee – Joanne Sweeney:** Three documents were distributed, each of which needs to be voted on today. The Committee recommends that the ICC approve each of these documents as presented today, and refer each of them to the Department for adoption.. The three documents are as follows:

1. IFSP Support Document
2. Individualized Family Service Plan Brochure (Welcome to the IFSP)
3. Individualized Family Service Plan form

**The ICC voted unanimously in favor of recommending all three of these documents to the Department.**

**Low Incidence Committee – Tom Miller:** Minutes of the Committee meeting held February 23, 2003, were distributed. Brochures on Vision Loss and Vision and Hearing Loss have been printed, with the assistance of the New England Regional Center for Deaf-Blind Services. They will be available electronically through the Early Intervention Training Center, and Tracy Osbahr at the Department will have hard copies available upon request. The Puzzling Behavior brochure is now in final draft. Tom also described the Hilton Perkins website which is under development in association with Children’s Hospital. When completed, it will provide information for parents, physicians and teachers about visual impairment. It would enable parents to take a virtual tour before taking their child into the hospital for treatment. It will include a discussion board for parents, hot topics, a calendar, and various useful links. **Fiscal Committee – Michelle Fagnano:** The Committee continues to review matters related to claims payment, timeliness of insurance reimbursement and barriers encountered, and the provider community’s training needs regarding HIPAA – the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act. Three documents were distributed: Report on EI Accounts Receivable, dated March 6, 2003, website addresses and Billing Guidelines for the three major insurers.

**IV. Transition Initiative Update – Claire Brady:** Although Claire has recently assumed the position of Coordinator of the Massachusetts Family Network Programs, until further notice she remains the Transition Coordinator at Early Learning Services in the Department of Education. She announced that award letters have gone out to 15 grantees for the second phase of Project

Playgroup, in which school systems and EI programs collaborate to provide community-based parent child group activities which welcome all young children and their families. Claire also described “Continuing the Journey,” the latest phase of what was previously known as “Turning Three.” This initiative will take a broad look at basic rights and will sponsor evening “Meet the Community” forums for families to provide information on local community resources.

**V. Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grant – Katharine Thomas and Steve Shuman:** A handout to accompany a Power Point presentation was distributed. At the end of March, the Department will be submitting a grant application to the federal government under the State Maternal and Child Health Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems Grants. This grant program is non-competitive – there is one available to every state. The applicant must be the Title V agency in each state; in Massachusetts, this is the Bureau of Family and Community Health in the Department of Public Health. Grant funds would support a two-year planning process at \$100,000 per year, followed by three implementation years at not less than the same amount. Comprehensive early childhood service systems must include these critical components: access to comprehensive pediatric services and medical homes; supports for social-emotional development of young children; early care and education; parenting education; and family support. DPH staff is soliciting input from the early childhood and family support community regarding current initiatives, service gaps, and future needs. A support letter will be requested from the ICC. The purpose of the grant program is to plan, develop and ultimately to implement collaborations and partnerships to support families and communities in their development of children that are healthy and ready to learn at school entry. Massachusetts intends to take the broadest possible view of readiness to learn. Planning for a comprehensive system fits well into the proposed reorganization plans of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services in Massachusetts. The ICC is viewed as an advisory body that will help to guide planning and implementation. Individuals who have questions or suggestions are invited to contact Steve Shuman or Katharine Thomas at the Department.

**VI. Adjournment: 12:33 p.m.**