

**MINUTES
March 10, 2005
Worcester, Massachusetts**

Members Present: Zulmira Allcock, Donna Marie Bolden, Valerie Carbone, Hope Colen, Darleen Corbett, Maureen Flaherty, Peggy Freedman, Valerie Gibbemeyer, Mary Jones, Margaret Mahoney, Julie Leahy, Anita Moeller, Kathy Patisteas, Nancy Phillips, Ronna Schaffer, Judy Sleeper.

Non-voting Committee Chairs in attendance: Michelle Fagnano, Tom Miller, Alden Wood.

Welcome, announcements, approval of Minutes – Hope Colen. Hope welcomed ICC members and other attendees. Dawn PaPointe, Chairperson for the 26th Annual Conference of the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC), announced that conference brochures are available. The conference will be held May 11 and 12 in Marlborough, Massachusetts. Information is available on line at www.maeic.org.

The Minutes of the ICC meeting held January 13, 2005, were approved as written.

Director’s Report – Katharine Thomas for Ron Benham: Katharine announced that Ron Benham is away because he is representing Massachusetts at the board meeting of the National Center for Special Education Accountability and Monitoring (NCSEAM).

Katharine gave the following updates:

- House One, the Governor’s proposed state budget for FY 2006, contains an added \$600,000 for expansion of Early Intervention services. This would be adequate at present rates to cover the projected growth of about 5% in numbers to be served. This projection takes into account that Massachusetts may not have seen the full impact of implementing the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) in Massachusetts. We await an official policy on how the Massachusetts Department of Social Services will implement the law; a draft policy is nearing final approval.
- Paul Cote is the new Interim Commissioner of the Department of Public Health. He is experienced in public health issues, chairs the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy, and heads the Health Cluster in the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. He has been making the rounds to get acquainted within the Department.
- The new IDEIA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act) was signed into law in December 2004. A packet of information has been released to states listing policy changes. The Massachusetts 19th Year Part C Application to the Office of Special Education Programs contains a statement that policies are already in place to comply with changes in IDEIA, or will be revised and put in place by April, 2006.
- The Department has issued RFRs (Requests for Responses) for renewal of two major contracts: the Early Intervention Training Center and the Regional Consultation Programs.

Discussion: Tom Miller noted that, regarding the FY 06 budget; MEIC has initiated an advocacy campaign on behalf of a request for an additional \$2,000,000 for restoration of previous budget cuts for Early Intervention. Fact sheets have been distributed and programs should encourage parents to call their legislators.

Presentation by OSEP Conference attendees: Darla Gundler introduced the reports of several parents who attended the recent OSEP Conference in Washington by showing a short video to the tune of “Come Away with Me.” The video shows the Massachusetts display, and many familiar “characters” in attendance. **Maureen Flaherty** reported that, by attending workshops and interacting with parents, she learned a lot about ICC roles and tasks and how they vary from state to state. **Valerie Gibbemeyer** commented that she is further along the path – her son will be 14 soon, and she also brings the perspective of a single parent. She learned a lot about funding issues and how differently states provide for EI. She was particularly impressed by the Surgeon General, who worked his way up in the ranks and brought the message “you can do it if you really want to.” **Julie Leahy** explained that she was new on the ICC last September, and especially appreciated the opportunity to get a comprehensive view of how the various laws and government departments work in relationship to Early Intervention. Attendance at workshops helped her understand other people’s situations. She enjoyed learning about person-centered transition planning focused on clarifying what you want for your child and what will be fulfilling in life. **Erin Ward**, a new member of the Parent Leadership Project, felt privileged to be “at the table;” it validated for her what parents can contribute and left her especially proud of all that Massachusetts does to support parents.

All the parents thanked Darla for her excellent planning that made the trip go very smoothly for everyone. Dawn LaPointe thanked the parents for their participation, and encouraged programs to recognize their parent leaders.

Discussion: Zulmira Allcock asked the parents for suggestions about how programs could reach out more effectively to parents. Erin Ward responded that parents should be encouraged to expand their thoughts and horizons. Think really broadly at the program level about engaging families – every family has an important story to share. Suzanne Gottlieb commented that families respond when there is an open climate and a clear set of expectations demonstrating that their involvement is wanted and respected. Darla Gundler described a father who is on the federal ICC even though his own EI program had not informed him of opportunities to get involved. She urged that program staff not make presumptions about which families would have ideas to contribute.

Focused Monitoring Update and Discussion – Katharine Thomas: Katharine distributed copies of PowerPoint slides titled *Massachusetts Focused Monitoring: Report to ICC, March 10, 2005*. Focused Monitoring is a process that “purposely selects priority areas to examine for compliance/results while not specifically examining other areas for compliance to maximize resources, emphasize important variables, and increase the probability of improved results.” Working with NCSEAM allows us to focus on programs that most need technical assistance rather than continuing to ask the same repetitive questions of every EI program in the state. Our state was asked to partner with NCSEAM as a model. We selected *transition* and *service coordination* as the two areas on which to focus. At our 2002 Data Verification visit, four areas were identified that needed work: Inconsistent follow-up after problems were identified; lack of Department staff resources; Program accountability; and Inability to focus on “trouble spots.” The goal is to identify areas where work is needed, design a corrective action plan, and close on the issue within one year. With NCSEAM staff, Massachusetts created a Vision Statement and a list of Core Values. We chose transition because we were under a corrective action plan. We chose service coordination because though we are in great shape comparatively speaking, like every other state we have trouble completing IFSPs within the required 45-day time line. Programs are grouped just according to size and the two programs with the poorest compliance in each size category are selected for focused monitoring.

Massachusetts offered to assist NCSEAM when another state dropped out of piloting NCSEAM’s nationwide family survey. Even with a late start, Massachusetts has done better at collecting surveys

than any other state. The current goal is to develop a database of survey items that are validated across the nation after piloting in ten states. In the next phase we will receive technical assistance from NCSEAM re how to do a family survey in this state with these nationally validated items. Darla Gundler has been asked to meet with NCSEAM staff to share our successful experience. Faith Piaggi has re-designed the questions used with family focus groups during program re-certification visits to reflect the validated survey questions.

Next steps include piloting some parts of Focused Monitoring, and a stakeholders group meeting with Sharon Walsh in April to develop protocols for the survey. In addition, there will be revisions to the Annual Report format that all programs use. For example, programs will do an annual reconciliation of the personnel data already given to DPH rather than providing a complete list every year.

Discussion: These points were further clarified: Focused monitoring will always focus on two programs in each size category, always the two at the bottom in the first year, with second year follow up of those programs. In the third year there will be a new analysis to see where programs then fall and, in addition, the two priorities might change. The Department is always responsible for the overall compliance of all programs, but not through on-site visits. Commendable practices will be highlighted so that other programs can examine why they may be having problems by looking at best practices in other programs.

Distribution of the Battelle Developmental Inventory: One copy of the BDI II will be shipped directly to each program from the publisher, Riverside Press. Three trainings have been scheduled across the state in April. Programs are expected to send at least one staff person, preferably two. The Department is working with the publisher to try to obtain discounts for programs that wish to purchase additional copies of the test. Programs will be able to continue using the Michigan and will have the option to use the Battelle. Julie Leahy and Hope Colen questioned how programs might decide which test to use and whether families could request that a child screened out with one tool could be re-tested with the other.

Vote on Revised ICC By-Laws: A motion was made to accept the Revised ICC By-Laws. The motion was seconded, and the ICC voted unanimously in favor of acceptance. The Revised By-Laws may be reviewed at www.eiplp.org by clicking on the yellow post-it note in the top right hand corner.

Committee Reports. Standards Committee – Alden Wood: The Committee met with Tracy Osbahr, representing the Special Services Committee. As many stakeholders as possible will be involved in giving feedback on revision of the Operational Standards. The PLP website, www.eiplp.org, will have links to the ten separate sections of the standards. Alden acknowledged the work done by Jocelyn Woog and Darla Gundler to achieve rapid turnaround on website revisions. All sections of the standards will be posted from the beginning so that anyone can respond to specific sections at any time during the ongoing process. Margaret Mahoney requested the committee continue to announce its schedule so interested persons will always know when specific sections are under review.

Personnel Preparation – Judy Sleeper: The committee meets monthly. The recruitment and retention brochure and an accompanying letter have been completed. Programs and parents are encouraged to give the brochure to anyone who may be considering a career in EI. The committee met with higher education representatives and plans another meeting in late spring. The committee is recruiting new parent and provider members. Contact Judy at jsleeper@thomchild.org if you are interested. **Program Planning – Patti Fougere:** One current task of the committee is to make recommendations to the ICC

and the Department regarding best practices in infant mental health. A survey will be distributed to determine current practices and needed assistance.

Specialty Services Committee – Tom Miller: Because Barbara Prindle-Eaton had requested a report on utilization of the Family Sign Language Program, Tom distributed a report of data and trends along with a copy of the brochure and an application form. Tom also distributed a handout called *Specialty Service Related Pre-Service Education Opportunities* that lists higher education options in Deaf Studies, Deafblind Studies, and Autism Spectrum Disorders Studies in Massachusetts. The committee will continue to meet with the Regional Consultation Programs after new contract awards have been announced. Information on vision services is being sent to program directors. The committee is reviewing funding alternatives for families wishing to pursue programs for the deaf. Available on the Perkins website, www.perkins.org: a document on specialty services for vision impaired and deaf blind children designed ultimately to facilitate inclusion.

Fiscal Committee – Michelle Fagnano: Michelle noted that Draft Minutes of the February committee meeting and a two-page document detailing the Department's interface with specific insurance companies is available to those who are interested. Michelle also gave various updates regarding the status of claims payment to programs for EI services already delivered, and reviewed deadlines: March 10 for FY 04 claims submission and April 30 for submission of documentation. Deadlines for Blue Cross and United Health Care are June 12. All major insurance companies now have the capability to pay programs at the new reimbursement rates that went into effect 1/1/05. Most issues related to implementation of HIPAA regulations are slowly being resolved. Programs are urged to become well informed, and to submit specific issues in writing to the Department. **Membership Committee – Darla Gundler:** The Boston Provider Representative seat on the ICC is still vacant. All committees are interested in recruiting new family members; this is a great way to get involved.

Member Updates: Zulmira Allcock emphasized that the MEIC website address is www.maeic.org. She stressed that there will be an important advocacy campaign for \$2M in additional EI dollars in the state budget and everyone – especially family members – is urged to get involved. **Tom Miller** distributed MEIC portfolios and asked everyone to remember the MEIC advocacy campaign when using them. Other announcements: Boston Expo 2005 is a career exposition to be held in Boston on May 6, 2005. The Executive Office of Health and Human Services is holding career fairs this spring. The national Children Without Homes Conference will be held in Boston April 27 and 28. The Boston Association for the Education of Young Children will hold its Fourth Annual Inclusion Conference in April. The Boston Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children will host a conference in Boxborough on May 5 and 6. Contact Janet Farrell at 617-624-5957 for more information. Julie Leahy pointed out that there is a mechanism by which a limited number of parents can be reimbursed up to \$500 for conference expenses through the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council.

Future ICC Meetings: Note that the May meeting is **May 5**, the first Thursday of the month due to the MEIC Conference on May 11 and 12. There is also an ICC meeting on **June 9**. Dates for the **ICC Retreat in September** will be announced soon.

The ICC meeting was adjourned at 12 Noon.