

**MINUTES
May 8, 2003
Worcester, Massachusetts**

Members Present: Lois Aldrich, Zulmira Allcock, Robert Scheaffer for Margrit Bechara, Joan Bejune, Claire Brady, Hope Colen, Kathy Dunn, Renee Duseau, Peggy Freedman, Louise Eldridge, Mary Jones, Karin Lifter, Margaret Mahoney, Sarah Miranda, Pat Pellegrino, Judy Sleeper, Mary Ellen Thompson.

Voting by Proxy: Karin Elliott, Therese Murphy, Roberta Perry, Barbara Prindle-Eaton, Amy Young.

Non-Voting Committee Chairpersons who were present: Dan Couet, Michelle Fagnano, Tom Miller.

I. Welcome and Announcements: Hope Colen – Vice Chairperson: Hope welcomed the group and announced that Peggy Hayden would be the facilitator for the ICC Retreat to be held on June 12. Peggy is experienced in working with ICCs across the country.

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of the ICC meeting held March 6, 2003, were approved as written.

II. Director's Report – Ron Benham: Regarding approval of the state's Seventeenth Year PL 105-17 Part C Application to the federal government, Ron explained that the ICC had approved the draft application at its meeting on March 6, 2003. However after that, we learned that we would be required to introduce a fee system for Early Intervention in Massachusetts. Our OSEP Project Officer, Jackie Twining-Martin, informed us that, because this is a policy change, a Public Hearing is required. A Hearing was held on April 22, 2003, and the public comment period remains open until May 23. The ICC can vote today or can provide a "sense of the group" to guide the Steering Committee, which will make the final decision to submit the Application.

Ron further explained what is being proposed: Beginning July 1, 2003, a Cost Participation system for EI services will be implemented in Massachusetts. It means that, for families receiving ongoing services under an IFSP, those earning less than 200% of federal poverty guidelines will be exempt from paying any fee. Families earning between 200% and 400% will pay an annual fee of \$25; those earning over 400% will pay \$50. It is called a "Cost Participation" fee because it is not directly tied to the amount or type of service received. Income verification is by self report; a family can indicate inability to pay and still receive services. Provider agencies are being asked to determine how many enrolled families fall within each income category and report those figures to the Department. The total yield will be reduced by 10% to cover costs of collection. Beginning in October, 1/9 of a program's assessment will be deducted from its payment voucher each month through June. Twenty-six individuals attended the public hearing; ten offered testimony and 17 written comments were received.

Discussion: The following ideas were presented and clarifications given during discussion: Most families who receive Medicaid will be in the exempt category. If programs collect more than

their original projections, they will not be able to keep that overage. Fees are quickly becoming a reality in most state agencies. The Department requests the opportunity to gain a year's experience with this system, after which adjustments could be made if necessary. A family could refuse to provide income information; they would simply sign the form and pay the fee. A compilation of Frequently Asked Questions has been useful in the past; such a document can be provided.

A motion was made and seconded that the Cost Participation fee proposal be included in the Seventeenth Year Part C Application. Fifteen members who were present voted in favor of the proposal, and four proxy votes in favor were also received. (A Quorum is 19).

Ron continued his report with a budget update: In the House Ways and Means budget recently submitted, the Governor's 9C cut to Early Intervention was restored. Ron extended thanks to the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium, Infant-Toddler Advocates, and families for their advocacy; there is tremendous political support for this program. If the current funding level holds, the EI system will still be \$1.4 million short, but service changes implemented in January are expected to take care of that.

Regarding reauthorization of IDEA – the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act – both Part C (Early Intervention) and Part B (Preschool programs) are due for reauthorization. Particular issues in Part B involve the ways in which parents can bring forth information when disagreements about educational plans occur, protections for children, and caps on attorneys' fees. Issues for Part C include changes in language to reflect greater emphasis on language development and pre-literacy skills, greater use of "evidence-based" practices; and greater attention to issues of mental health, child protection, and homeless children. States would be required to describe their collaboration with Early Head Start and child care, as well as their policies and practices regarding child abuse, fetal alcohol syndrome, and neonatal drug exposure. There is interest in ensuring that children in the latter groups are referred and assessed, but thus far, no new money is being proposed to support such efforts. Authorization levels for Federal Fiscal Year 04 (State FY 05) are proposed to be \$447 million, a \$17 million increase and \$7 million over what the administration requested; thus far, there is no consideration for states such as Massachusetts that are serving a higher percentage of children.

Other matters: Ron read the list of eight programs recently awarded EI Partnerships Programs. He stated that the Department expects to continue Regional Consultation Programs even though support from the Department of Education will not be available in FY 04, and acknowledged DOE for over \$4 million received over the past few years.

Ron introduced Louise Eldridge, Manager for Head Start and child care for Region I of the Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services. Louise commented on federal government activity regarding Head Start reauthorization; there is no legislative activity yet, and the process may possibly be extended one year. Themes in the debate have to do with early literacy and evidence-based practices. Two proposals are being discussed. The "block grant proposal" gives states flexibility while requiring coordination of Head Start with other preschool and child care activities in a comprehensive state plan. It would require Head Start to directly address language development, pre-reading skills, numeracy, and social-emotional wellness. Although parent involvement and a focus on social-emotional development would be retained, the shared governance of the current Head Start program may

not be. States would be required to serve at least as many 3- and 4-year-olds as they do now, to maintain at least the current level of funding for both Head Start and preschool, and to develop plans for professional development. Under Good Start – Grow Smart, the President’s initiative announced last year, Head Start programs will be assessing 4- and 5-year-olds at the beginning and end of the school year. There is a separate proposal to move Head Start to the Department of Education in Federal FY 05, with FFY 04 as a transitional year.

III. Presentation by the Recruitment and Retention Task Group – Kathy Dunn: Kathy distributed a *Recruitment and Retention Report*, dated March, 2003, which is being submitted to the ICC. The Task Group was formed as a subcommittee of the Program Planning Committee in early 2002. One goal was to produce a shared report resulting from the surveys and other work on recruitment and retention done by the MEIC, the Personnel Committee of the ICC, and early childhood faculty at Lesley University. Kathy summarized findings including those presented by Joy Curtis at the ICC Retreat a year ago. Typically, 25% of staff leave EI after one year of employment; 40% of staff who leave do so because of depressed salaries. Staff who are supported to achieve certification seem more likely to stay. The very best recruitment strategy is retention – it can cost as much as 150% of an employee’s annual salary to recruit, employ, orient and train a replacement while back-filling for lost productivity.

The final two pages of the report contain a series of *Recruitment Recommendations* for EI programs and the Department of Public Health, and *Retention Recommendations* for EI programs.

Kathy thanked the members of the Task Group for their hard work. She also referred people to two useful resources: www.workforce.com, and *Workforce Magazine*. In discussion, the following suggestions were offered: establish some consistent questions for all EI programs to address in their Annual Reports, and use MEIC regional meetings to gather information about why staff leave programs.

IV. Updates from ICC Members: Karin Lifter announced that Northeastern University’s training program that assists practicing EI professionals to achieve their EI certification now has a “hybrid” approach in which participants come to the University just once a month and do the rest of the work online. Scholarship money is available for at least the next two years, especially for persons from underrepresented groups such as parents of EI clients and people with disabilities. **Judy Sleeper** announced an Open House at the new Thom/Waltham EI program site located at 411 Waverly Oaks Road in Waltham. **Tom Miller** announced that Boston College has a grant-funded program which provides tuition scholarships for study in autism and deaf-blindness. University of Massachusetts/Boston has federal grant money for trainees in visual impairment in a program combining on-campus and online study. **Tracy Osbahr** announced that Smith College has training money for study in deaf-blindness.

V. Committee Reports: Personnel Committee – Karin Lifter: Very few additional comments were received after the Revised CSPD – the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development – was presented to the ICC at its March 6th meeting.

A motion was made and seconded to accept the Revised CSPD. Approval was unanimous.

Standards Committee – Dan Couet: At its meeting on April 9th the Committee reviewed responses to the Co-Treatment Survey. Given the current fiscal situation, little can change right now. Since only 12 surveys were received, information is limited, Dan requested that MEIC Regional Representatives poll their regions about co-treatment practices and issues. In addition, the survey will again be emailed to programs. **Program Planning Committee – Joanne Sweeney:** As soon as graphics are completed, *Welcome to the IFSP* will be re-distributed. The Committee will be developing marketing materials to help programs with staff recruitment. **Low Incidence Committee – Tom Miller:** The Committee has viewed the Children’s Hospital/Perkins Hilton Program website, and has discussed both the Cost Participation fee proposal and various budget scenarios, hoping to identify any potential impact on direct services. **Fiscal Committee – Michelle Fagnano:** The Committee continues to review the status of payments to programs; it tracks expenditures compared to projections, and the volume of service units being provided. The Receivables Group is reconvening and will be focusing on smaller insurers. An all-day statewide billing training has been scheduled for September 23rd at the Holiday Inn in Worcester.

VI. New Business: Ruth-Ann Rasbold announced that applications for Shishmanian Fellowships are available. Those for Senior Practitioners are due in July; for student stipends, in October. Applications for the Mentorship Program are due July 1st or November 1st. Information is available on the website at www.eitc.org.

Darla Gundler announced that the Parent Leadership Project website – www.eiplp.org – has an ICC icon with information about the ICC, including dates, and minutes from past meetings.

VII. The ICC meeting adjourned at 12:10 p.m.

SCHEDULE OF ICC MEETINGS FOR 2003-2004

Thursday, September 11, 2003
Thursday, November 13, 2003
Thursday, January 8, 2004
Thursday, March 11, 2004
Thursday, May 6, 2004
Thursday, June 3, 2004

The ICC Retreat will be held September 22-23, 2004, location to be announced