

MINUTES

November 10, 2005

Worcester, Massachusetts

Members Present: Zulmira Allcock, Pat Cameron, Darleen Corbett, Sandra Daly, Maureen Flaherty, Peggy Freedman, Jen Greco, Jack Harris, Karin Lifter, Ann Marsh, Anita Moeller, Judith Nest-Pasierb, Kathy Patisteas, Roberta Perry, Nancy Phillips, Barbara Prindle-Eaton, Kathy Rose, Joanne Williams, Amy Young.

Non-voting Committee Chairs in attendance: Maureen Flaherty, Margaret Mahoney, Tom Miller, Alden Wood, Peter Woodbury.

1. Welcome, announcements, approval of Minutes: Co-Chair Amy Young welcomed the group and gave a special welcome to the following newly-appointed members of the ICC: Pat Cameron, Department of Education Representative; Jen Greco, Northeast Provider Representative; Jack Harris, At Large Parent Representative; Ann Marsh, MetroWest Provider Representative; Judith Nest-Pasierb, Division of Medical Assistance (Medicaid) Representative; Kathy Rose, Greater Boston Provider; Joanne Williams, Greater Boston Parent Representative.

Amy briefly re-capped the ICC Retreat held at the Wachusett Mountain Inn and Conference Center in Westminster, Massachusetts on September 22 and 23, 2005. Positive results were achieved in two days of hard work. Some possible new charges to committees are now under consideration by Steering Committee. Activities on the first day focused on national issues with these invited guests: Pascal "Pat" Trohanis, Director, National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center; Jacqueline Twining-Martin, our Massachusetts Project Officer, US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Division of Monitoring and State Improvement Planning; and Sharon Walsh, National Early Childhood Consultant. On the second day the ICC focused on state issues. Keynote speakers were Commissioner Paul Cote, Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and Commissioner Ann Reale, Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care.

Approval of Minutes: The Minutes of the ICC meeting held June 9, 2005 were approved as written.

2. Director's Report – Ron Benham: Ron gave a special welcome to a group of graduate students in Early Intervention from Wheelock College who were attending this ICC meeting.

Ron then gave the following updates:

- The process of developing a proposed state budget for FY 07 is going forward on schedule. The Department's request for Early Intervention has been submitted. It is based on presumed modest growth in general EI services, and continued more rapid growth in specialty services. We await House One, the Governor's budget, which will be made public in mid-January. Further steps include: House budget in April, Senate budget in

May, and Conference Committee budget in mid-June. It will be late in June before state agencies know their final budgets for FY 2007, the fiscal year that begins July 1, 2006.

- Regarding the federal budget, as of this date there are threats to K-12 education, with reductions in special education funding a real possibility. There are also threats to Head Start funding, student loans, and other programs directly relevant to Early Intervention services. Most Medicaid reform discussion focuses on prescription drugs for seniors; however, there is also continuing debate about the fate of EPSDT – Early, Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment. Each state submits its own plan to Medicaid for what will be covered. Once a state chooses to participate, there are core services that must be provided and some others that are voluntary. Ron urged everyone to stay tuned.
- At the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Division personnel have been directly involved in planning for Continuation of Operations (COOP) in case of a flu pandemic or other general threat to health and safety. If such a crisis should occur, Early Intervention would be considered a non-essential service. The Department is attentive to the impact that any disruption of services might have on programs and the children and families they serve.
- The state's application to the federal Office of Special Education Programs for 20th year funding for the Part C Early Intervention system is due in Washington on April 7, 2006. The required 30-day notice for a public hearing in late January will be published in the *Boston Globe* and disseminated in mailings and on the website.
- Our State Performance Plan is due December 1, 2005, even though Part C regulations have yet to be issued. There are heavy demands coming from the federal government to the state EI system. Ron acknowledged the pressure this puts on providers to respond to requests for information, sometimes with very short turnaround.
- Representatives of the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium, with Mary Ann Mulligan, their legislative advocate, recently had a very positive meeting with Ron, Sally Fogarty and Commissioner Paul Cote regarding the Consortium's Quality Workforce Initiative. The next step will be to request a meeting with the Governor or Lieutenant Governor. The Consortium's request is for 8% increases over three consecutive years amounting to a 24% increase in the reimbursement rate structure for the EI system. This increase is necessary in order to achieve parity with school systems and rehabilitation settings that compete for the same pool of very scarce professional staff.
- The Department has submitted a proposal to OSEP, in collaboration with the Department of Early Education and Care and the Federation for Children with Special Needs, for a General Supervision Enhancement Grant. The goal is to find a way – while fully protecting family rights to privacy – to use common identifiers for children served in the three entities in order to track what happens to children when they leave EI. While it doesn't seem necessary to involve the Attorney General's office; at every decision point along the way, appropriate advisory councils in the three agencies will be involved. It appears that if the grant is funded, the work could be legally done.
- There is a proposal in the Senate to create a program of pediatric palliative (hospice) care that could be of benefit to EI families and providers.

3. State Performance Plan and Focused Monitoring Process – Presentation by Katharine Thomas: Massachusetts is required to submit a State Performance Plan to the federal Office of Special Education Programs on December 2, 2005. This is a six-year plan requiring public input on 14 indicators of the success of the Early Intervention program. The state's plan is updated each year through an Annual Performance Report. Ours will be due in February, 2007.

Katharine's presentation described the Department's plan for submission of the State Performance Plan, and also provided an update on focused monitoring. **XXXXX The Power Point slides accompanying Katharine's presentation are included/attached. XXXXX**

Today's meeting provides an opportunity for the ICC to give input. Out of the 14 Indicators, 7 are Compliance Indicators for which the goal is 100% achievement; incremental targets may be set to reach these goals. Program rankings showing progress toward these goals will be posted on the DPH website on November 14. There are five groupings of programs based on the number of clients served. The lowest-ranked program in each group will be selected for on-site focused monitoring this year. Ron explained that all of this is happening because Part C must be able to demonstrate to the federal Office of Management and Budget that children in Part C programs show improvement toward achieving specific, measurable goals. Massachusetts does very well and must maintain its achievements; many states still have a great deal of room for improvement. Providers recommended that data points required for reporting to OSEP be added to the EIIS – the Early Intervention Information System – in order to ease the burden on providers and DPH staff.

Only a few highlights from extensive discussion of the first three indicators are reported here. Readers are encouraged to review the Power Point slides, which contain content and background for the remaining indicators.

For **Indicator #1** (% of children with IFSPs who receive services in a timely manner – a Compliance Indicator): The state has defined “timely” as 21 days and is currently at 82% compliance. Our target for the Improvement Plan is to show *progress* toward the goal, which is always 100%. We must show that our data system enables the state to report on this indicator, and that problems are not systemic. (Inability to recruit and retain staff is a systemic problem that is not an acceptable reason for failure to achieve the goal.) **After discussion, the ICC recommended that Massachusetts use 30 days, like most other states.**

Indicator #2 (% of children with IFSPs who primarily receive EI services in the home or in programs for typically developing children): This is another Compliance Indicator – the goal is 100% achievement. We are at 99.2% and must pick targets that demonstrate an “improvement slope,” for example, 99.3, 99.4, etc.

Indicator #3: This new indicator requires demonstration of improvement in children's social-emotional, communication and adaptive skills. Data will come from assessment scores entered in the EIIS for every child who has an IFSP. A child who shows a 25% delay at 12 months and again at 36 months would show “no improvement” even though maintenance of achievement might be a big accomplishment for that child. **The ICC recommended we submit our plan to study the data, but not the data itself.** Ron then clarified that we would need guidance from our federal Project Officer in order to do that.

4. Committee Reports. Standards Committee – Alden Wood: The committee has revised its schedule because proposed revisions to the Operational Standards must be reviewed by Steering Committee in December before they can be presented to the ICC at its meeting on January 12, 2006. Both steps are necessary before the ICC can vote on the Standards in March. Alden thanked the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium (MEIC) for its recent assistance in email distribution of the latest revisions. **Personnel Committee – Margaret Mahoney:** The

committee has welcomed new members and still seeks a parent. Two representatives of the MEIC Quality Workforce Initiative recently met with the committee to work on a plan to request a meeting with the Chancellor of Higher Education. One focus will be to understand more about the number of allied health professionals graduating from the state university system. Mary Ann Mulligan, the MEIC Legislative Advocate, will help plan strategy.

Specialty Services Committee – Tom Miller: The committee has discussed proposed additions to the Parent Leadership Project website regarding specialty services; and the need to make materials available in other languages. Committee discussion with Regional Consultation Programs focuses on understanding guidelines for distribution of \$10,000 for assistive technology in the Massachusetts Part C budget. **Program Planning – Cindy Warren:** Two-thirds of EI programs have returned the survey of current practices and needed support for social-emotional development; this rate of return demonstrates high interest in the topic. Janet Price, from the Early Intervention Training Center, will attend a committee meeting to discuss training needs. The committee is also working to revise the transition manual.

Fiscal Committee – Peter Woodbury: Peter gave updates regarding claims status and reimbursement to EI programs for services already provided: Most payments for outstanding FY 04 and FY 05 claims should have been received. Payments for FY 06 claims are relatively current. Providers should already have received amendments for an additional \$1 million that is being added to cost reimbursement contracts as a result of successful MEIC lobbying for an additional appropriation in the FY 06 EI budget. Likewise, new cost participation fee agreements should have been received. Providers have also received settlement agreements for outstanding Blue Cross claims; Peter recommended that providers review these carefully to be certain everything they think they are owed is included in the settlement. **Membership Committee:** There are three vacancies on the ICC: Office of Child Care Services (OCCS), Division of Insurance, and Coordinator of Education for Homeless Children and Families in the Department of Education. Regarding OCCS, the existing ICC By-Laws call for representatives from both OCCS and the Department of Early Education and Care. We need to clarify whether one person can fill both positions.

5. Member Updates: Darla Gundler clarified that ICC New Member Handbooks for FY 2006 were distributed at today's meeting; the Operational Standards enclosed in these binders are the 2003 version. Members will receive the 2006 revision after it is approved by the ICC in March, 2006. **Anita Moeller** requested that members add the following website to the resource directory section of the binders they received today: www.massheadstart.org.

6. The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Next ICC Meeting: Thursday, January 12, 2006. ICC meetings are automatically canceled if the Worcester Public Schools are closed due to inclement weather.