



# *The Update:*

## News and Information for MA Early Intervention Providers

October 2008

Welcome to "The Update." This is a periodic newsletter focusing specifically on issues and information in MA Early Intervention. This edition highlights the upcoming changes, trainings and resources.

### **EI Program Eligibility - Implementing a 30% delay eligibility standard**



The Department of Public Health will be implementing changes to EI Program Eligibility. Effective on or around January 1, 2009 (the actual date will be determined shortly based on legislative approval) a child will need to exhibit a 30% level of delay or 1.5 standard deviation in one developmental area for eligibility based on "established delay". This level of delay must be identified using one of the two DPH approved eligibility evaluation tools: the EI Developmental Profile (EIDP) or the Battelle Developmental Inventory – 2.

The DPH will be developing the following documents related to the implementation of the 30% eligibility change:

- \*Notification letter to families
- \*Notification letter to community providers and referral sources
- \*Eligibility Grid – Applying 30% delay standard

In addition to revising the language in the EIOS to reflect the change in eligibility, the DPH has developed a report for local EI programs providing the number of children currently enrolled that would be impacted by the eligibility change. These reports will be disseminated shortly. Other changes and system upgrades to EIIS will be highlighted at the upcoming EIIS trainings in November.

### **Early Intervention & Specialty Services - Request for Response (RFR)**



The DPH will be re-procuring early intervention and specialty services. DPH will release an RFR for Community Early Intervention Programs and Specialty Services Providers to provide high quality Early Intervention and Specialty Services for eligible children, birth to three, and their families.

**Early January 2009** – RFR is released. Bidders will have 6 – 8 weeks to complete the RFR.

**End of February 2009** – RFRs due back to the DPH

**March – April 2009** – First and second level review

**May 2009** – Notification of Awards

**May – June 2009** – POS contracting process

**July 1, 2009** – Start date

The RFR is an open process and the DPH will be seeking providers to meet the needs of children and families throughout the Commonwealth. The following is the draft timeline for the RFR:

**December 2008** – Letter of Intent with a general description of the RFR will be posted on COMPASS with a date of release of the RFR.

### **OSEP Verification Visit**

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) is conducting Verification Visits on the Massachusetts Early Intervention Program during the week of October 27, 2008 to determine the effectiveness of: (1) the special education and early intervention data that the State collects and reports each year to OSEP and the public; (2) the State's systems for identifying and correcting noncompliance with IDEA requirements; and (3) the State's fiscal accountability system at the State and local level.

In preparation for its visit to Massachusetts, OSEP conducted a conference call with some of the members of the State's stakeholders. During the call, OSEP asked for input on the effectiveness and barriers of the State's systems for data collection and reporting, identifying and correcting noncompliance, and fiscal management systems. The DPH will keep the early intervention community informed of the outcome of the Verification Visit.

## EIIS Trainings

This is your reminder that the DPH has scheduled two EIIS training opportunities in November highlighting the importance of accurate data, federal reporting requirements, and the completion of EIIS Forms.

Providers are strongly encouraged to attend the morning session of one of the trainings which will discuss the changes to the EIIS based on eligibility changes implemented in January 2008, and the Massachusetts Early Intervention Diagnosed Conditions List (dated October 1, 2008), the importance of data, and system updates. The afternoon session will be optional and provide an overview and review of the EIIS forms and Error reports. The

trainings are scheduled from 10am - 3pm at the following locations:

**Monday, November 3, 2008**, Cafeteria at the Central Regional Health Office, 180 Beaman Street, West Boylston, MA 01583

**Tuesday, November 25, 2008**, Public Health Council Room, 250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108

**Please note that the registration for the November 3<sup>rd</sup> training is closed. If you haven't registered yet please do so for the November 25<sup>th</sup> training.**

## Certification for Early Intervention Specialist (CEIS) Competency Review Process

The CEIS competency review process of the current nine competency areas is nearing completion. The Competency Area Workgroups convened in January 2008 and met throughout the late winter and early spring and developed draft final competencies that were reviewed by all workgroup members in June 2008.

The draft competency indicator language was posted for public review and comment on the DPH and EITC websites from August 1 – September 19, 2008. Public comment was received from 7 groups or individuals including the MEIC Board, Region III Directors, representatives from individual programs and higher education. The comments addressed all competency areas and most of the comments were positive and reflected the hard work of the workgroups, consistency in formatting, less redundancy, clear and straightforward language.

There will be a formal presentation to the ICC at the November meeting to share the final workgroup language and the public

comment. An ICC vote on the revised competencies will occur in January 2009.

**Next Steps** - The competency indicators provide the foundation for the Massachusetts CEIS process. The MA certification system will reflect the changes resulting from the competency review. The DPH will establish a formal process including broad public input to review and revise the current CEIS process and determine in which entries new competencies will be documented.

After the CEIS process is revised, there will be a revision of *Certification for Early Intervention Specialists* (the Green Book); competency-based trainings; training for portfolio review panelists in the new system; and a re-application by Institutes of Higher Education for approval of programs based on the new competencies. A thoughtful, measured phase-in of the implementation of the new system will take place. The DPH does not anticipate this to occur until sometime in 2010.

## Early Childhood Outcomes



The DPH continues its active discussion with the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Stakeholders and the EI community on how to best measure and report child outcomes that reflect the functional progress of children in EI. The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) reporting categories for the three Child Outcomes (positive social-emotional skills; acquire and use knowledge and skills; and use of appropriate behaviors to meet needs) compares the child's current functioning to "same age peers" and describes the type of progress children make between entry and exit in EI.

ECO Stakeholders have discussed and reviewed Federal and State reporting requirements, other State approaches to measuring child outcomes, sampling plans, and training needs and

developed a Vision & Mission statement that articulates the goal of increasing understanding and awareness to families and staff on the importance of early childhood outcomes.

**Vision Statement:** *The Massachusetts Measuring Progress – Optimal Outcomes Approach will reflect the impact of early intervention services for children and families.*

**Mission Statement:** *Information and resources on the Massachusetts Measuring Progress – Optimal Outcomes Approach will be embedded throughout the Massachusetts Early Intervention system to support the reporting of Federal early childhood outcomes data.*

The ECO Stakeholders were strongly considering the Child Outcome Summary Form (COSF) for the Massachusetts system. However, upon further reflection on the impact and stress

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to the system, the other option being seriously considered at this time is the use of the Battelle Developmental Inventory – 2, which would provide the use of one tool for determining eligibility and measuring child outcomes. Either option will require enhancing the current EI system infrastructure, including:

- Data Reporting & Tracking
- Financial Resources

- Development of resources for families and staff
- Training and support

The ECO Stakeholders will meet in November and December to continue the discussion of defining the Massachusetts Measuring Progress – Optimal Outcomes Approach. Please feel free to contact Patti or any other member of the Stakeholders group with any comments or suggestions for other approaches to measuring outcomes.

## Community Support Program and Care Coordination Programs for Children with Special Health Needs



Please share the following information with program staff.

The Community Support Program's toll-free (within Massachusetts) telephone line **1-800-882-1435** offers access to information, technical assistance and referral for families of children with special health care needs. Families and providers are welcome to call the Community Support Line.

Resource Specialists inform families about all the public programs they may be eligible for and about state and local resources that can provide additional assistance, including:

- Public benefits information and eligibility (SSI, CommonHealth, MassHealth, etc.)
- Catastrophic Illness in Children Relief Fund
- Family-to-family supports (Family TIES, etc.)
- Care Coordination services
- Programs within the Department of Public Health and other state agencies
- Community-based resources

### Referral Protocol to Care Coordination

All referrals should be initiated by a call from the EI services provider or RCP to the Community Resource Line 1-800-882-1435. EI staff should provide information about the child and family which will assist the Resource Specialists in determining eligibility for Care Coordination services.

Community Resource Line staff will assess the care coordination needs of the child and determine whether the child is eligible for Care Coordination services. If it is determined that the child is eligible, Care Coordination program proto-

cols for case assignment will be followed (i.e. geographic location of the child/family, level of need, and related factors included in the Care Coordination program standards).

### Involvement of Care coordination with EI Clients/ Providers:

Clients Transitioning from EI: Early Intervention may refer medically fragile children and children with complex coordination needs who are transitioning from EI to be assessed for DPH Care Coordination services after the child reaches the age of 2 years, 6 months old (or earlier if necessary).

Clients with Extraordinary Need: EI may initiate a referral for a younger child who is medically fragile to Care Coordination. Examples of the extraordinary circumstances may include a child who in transition from one EI program to another, who has been hospitalized frequently, or who has extraordinary medical coordination needs.

Consultation to EI Providers: EI providers may benefit from Care Coordinator expertise in relation to complex medical conditions of children less than 2.6 years old. If Care Coordination is determined appropriate the Care Coordinator will play a consultative role as it relates to the medical needs of the child. EI staff will continue to provide service coordination for the family, assess the family's needs, and make appropriate community referrals.

Information, referral, technical assistance and access to family-to-family support are part of a continuum of services available to families with special health care needs. Please share this information with program staff and families.

**Comments and questions to:**

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