

Friday, September 22, 2023
Meeting Minutes

Public Meeting 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
ZOOM Meeting Platform

A regular public meeting of the New Jersey State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) was held on Friday, May 19, 2023. The meeting was held via ZOOM meeting platform. The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:30 a.m. by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen. Joyce Salzberg, Acting Chair, was not present.

Welcome

Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen welcomed attendees and read the Welcome Statement.

Attendance

Maintained by the Department of Health (DOH)

Introductions

- I. SICC members and DOH representatives were introduced.
- II. Quorum requirements were not met.
- III. Public members signed their attendance through the chat box in the ZOOM platform.

Approval of Minutes

5/19/2023 Meeting Minutes not voted on due to no quorum. Meeting Minutes will be voted on at the November 17th meeting instead.

SICC Member Updates

Joyce Salzberg is being featured in the Woman Mean Business Sept. 26th issue.
Nicole Edwards provided the Division for Early Childhood Conference information.
<https://www.deconference.org/>

SICC Standing & Ad Hoc Committees Reports

Administrative/Policy Committee, vacant chair
No report given.

Service Delivery Committee, Virginia Lynn, Chair

Carolyn Russo-Azer presented. Spoke about the New Jersey Primer document the committee is working on as guidance for agencies onboarding new practitioners. This document was sent prior to Council Members for review and their comments will be taken back to the Committee. Several Council Members made verbal comments. Susan Evans will join the next sub-committee meeting to discuss the purpose and next potential steps with this committee about this document.

Fiscal Infrastructure Committee, Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, Chair

- I. The Committee sent out a survey regarding the Early Intervention Management System (EIMS) reports. The Committee and DOH decided that there will be a provider workgroup established. The goal is to modify the report structure if needed and/or user education, depending on the issues the agencies present.
- II. The Committee is continuing work on regarding how to work with insurance carriers as an alternative revenue source for services provided.
- III. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked if DOH knows the status of the data entered into the system for no-shows? Susan Evans stated the State will investigate the data for the non-emergent no-show category recently added to the EIMS.
- IV. Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen asked what the status is of the state pursuing a Medicaid rate increase for services. Josephine Shenouda stated this is under discussion at the Assistant Commissioner level.
- V. Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen asked when the rate study results may be released. Ms. Shenouda thanked everyone who participated. The vendor provided a draft to DOH, however, DOH has concluded the report is deliberative and confidential to the Department at this time and is still under review by DOH.

Personnel Preparation Committee, Corinne Catalano, Chair

- I. Corinne Catalano stated the committee has completed the Application Review and Guidance Forms and the forms are being shared at the REIC Provider Meetings. Ms. Catalano observed some overlap between what the Service Delivery Committee and the Personnel Preparation Committee are working on.
- II. The Committee is looking for guidance on their next steps. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen suggested a Council Member meeting to refocus the Sub-Committees. DOH agrees to a working session to set some priorities and direction for the next year. DOH will follow up with Council Members on a date & time for this meeting, sometime in November.

Family Support & Transition Committee, Nicole Edwards, Chair

- I. Nicole Edwards thanked Patty Green for her support and DOH for approving the Committees forms regarding child find. A doctor survey was approved by DOH and will be launched for the purpose of gathering doctors' feedback. The Committee put together a list of recommendations for the REICs regarding key things to think about in terms of improving the websites.
- II. A transition survey to send to Part C and Part B has been approved. Ms. Edwards requests guidance on the Committees' next steps.

Regional Early Intervention Collaborative (REIC) Update

Laura Washington shared a Power point about Early Intervention Week. Focus was on Early Relational Health. Each REIC held in-person and virtual events and handed out flyers and resources. The REICs reported a robust and successful EI Week that included families attending in person and online. The REIC Family Support Coordinators thanked the SICC for their Financial support of the EI Week activities.

Lead Agency Report, Susan Evans, Part C Coordinator

- I. Susan Evans shared a power point.
- II. Josephine Shenouda shared updates to the State Senior Management; Dr. Kaitlan Baston, Acting Commissioner, New Jersey Department of Health and Dr. Sejal Hathi, Deputy Commissioner, Public Health Services. Ms. Shenouda also shared Early Intervention Staff updates; Joshua Brackeen, Monitoring Coordinator, Sarah Greiss, Financial Analyst, and Mary Torres, PSO Assistant, and added three more new members should be added by the end of the year. Ms. Shenouda has sent nominations for the SICC Council to the Governor; a DOE 619 Coordinator, three parents, and one pediatrician.
- III. Alvina Seto, Regulatory Officer, shared information regarding the Letter of Agreements (LOAs) for EIPs. Release date to EIPs is 10/30/2023 with an effective date of 1/1/2024. A virtual meeting with the EIPs for a full discussion on the process and requirements will be held on 10/25/2023 at 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. An updated Family Cost Participation Handbook is anticipated to be released April/May 2024. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked what the current Letter of Agreement (LOA) format looks like. Josephine Shenouda is sending out a Memo regarding this.
- IV. Procedural Safeguards Office (PSO) Updates- Four formal complaints: two administrative complaints that are still under investigation, and two requests for mediation, which both have been withdrawn, but have ongoing follow up from the PSO. PSO received three allegations of fraud, waste, and abuse involving three practitioners: one allegation was substantiated and two are currently under investigation. 1,012 informal requests for assistance have been received.
- V. Compensatory Services – New Guidance and Procedures – A Procedure Manual will be released to the field. It updates the way the New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS) approaches the provision of compensatory services, contains stakeholder input from the Service Coordination Units (SCUs), and will be effective as of October 1, 2023.
DOH will continue to communicate expectations and processes.
- VI. The American Rescue Plan Funds – The last round of expenditures went to
 - A. Supporting increases to the SCUs for Service Coordination operational costs, including personnel,
 - B. Technology funding for Targeted Evaluation Teams (TETs) and REICs,
 - C. Translation and Over the Phone Interpretation (OPI) services for family documents,
 - D. The creation of a Statewide Broadcast System (SBS), and
 - E. Continuation of professional development activities stipends for practitioners.
- VII. Learning Management System (LMS) and Procedural Safeguards Modules updates
 - A. The LMS:
 - i. Improves and modernizes access to professional development (PD) materials and training for the EIS statewide workforce,
 - ii. Updates the mandated training modules on Procedural Safeguards,

- iii. Added the old “Welcome to EI” and “Introduction to IFSP” courses to the LMS,
- iv. Additional content is being developed and added to provide a robust system for professional development needs,
- v. The LMS is part of the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) and long-term system support.
- vi. PD Champions will meet on September 26th with DOH for updates and next steps.

VIII. The Statewide Broadcast System (SBS)

- A. All SCUs and Early Intervention Providers (EIPs) will use one system for broadcast purposes;
- B. DOH will cover the cost of maintenance and operations of the SBS;
- C. User training will be provided; and will be launched in late October/November.

IX. FEDERAL UPDATES

- A. NJEIS MET REQUIREMENTS based on our State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) submission in February.
- B. Federal allocation to the NJEIS this Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) is \$13.7 million.
- C. Current federal budget negotiations may affect the next FFY allocations.
- D. Part C programs will not be affected in the event of a federal shutdown.

X. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) Guidance on General Supervision

- A. On July 24, 2023, OSEP released an updated guidance document on the General Supervision Responsibilities of Part C and Part B under IDEA. The guidance is effective immediately. It has been provided to states “to ensure and strengthen the rights and protections guaranteed to children with disabilities and their families under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).”
- B. As the Lead Agency under Part C, and as a condition of funding, DOH is responsible and required to implement a system of general supervision that includes all EIS “programs and providers.”
- C. A reasonably designed system of general supervision includes the components of:
 - i. Data,
 - ii. Fiscal Management,
 - iii. Implementation of Policies and Procedures,
 - iv. Integrated monitoring, SPP/APR,
 - v. Technical assistance/professional development,
 - vi. Sustaining compliance and improvement, and
 - vii. Dispute resolution/procedural safeguards.
- D. All states need a fully written plan and full description of their monitoring process which describes and operationalizes:
 - i. How monitoring works,
 - ii. What data influences decisions,
 - iii. How information is gathered through monitoring,
 - iv. How the collected information is connected to other components of the general supervision system, and
 - v. What sanctions and/or enforcement actions may be taken as a result of the monitoring/general supervision process.

XI. OSEP Clarification 1:

- A. OSEP has clarified that DOH must fully monitor all EIS Programs at least once every six years.

NJEIS understands “EIS programs and providers” to include EIPs, SCUs, and REICs.

States have asked for additional guidance if the definition of providers includes individual practitioners.

B. What this means for NJEIS: DOH will need to create a cycle of monitoring that includes all EIS programs and providers and each EIS program and provider will be monitored at least one time every six years. The start date of the monitoring cycle has not yet been determined.

XII. OSEP Clarification 2:

A. The guidance emphasizes that monitoring includes more than monitoring on APR Indicators, Identification of non-compliance for all EIS programs and providers, Issuing findings of non-Compliance, and Correction of non-compliance in a timely manner.

B. What this means for NJEIS: DOH will be establishing new monitoring protocols that will be applied to the six-year monitoring cycle. These new protocols will be in addition to APR monitoring. EIS programs and providers will be required to actively participate and respond to monitoring as a condition of the LOA and Grant status.

(This stipulation is part of grants and LOAs now.)

XII. OSEP Clarification 3:

A. Lead agencies must make annual determinations about the performance of each EIS program and enforce Part C requirements.

B. What this means for NJEIS: DOH will clarify and set new criteria for EIP programs and providers from which a Determination will be made. Each EIS program and provider will be given a determination as part of the on-going monitoring of each program.

XIII. These are multi-step processes and not all next steps are known. All states are working with Technical Assistance (TA) centers and OSEP to prepare to meet these requirements. DOH is preparing updated general supervision requirements to accompany the LOAs. NJEIS programs and providers will have increased responsibility to report on their ability to provide services under Part C, in both compliance and quality results.

XIV. Susan Evans clarified that the Procedural Safeguards Modules have a two-week completion timeline and need to be completed prior to providing services. The Training & Technical Assistants (TTAs) in the regions all have been trained and do reflective supervision and consultation.

Josephine Shenouda clarified that the policy is not changing for the Broadcast System, just streamlining the operations.

Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen mentioned a concern with the current one-week period given to practitioners and providers to accommodate a family cancelation/reschedule. Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen requests a further look at the feasibility of relaxing that timeline. Josephine Shenouda acknowledged Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen’s concern.

New Business

A date will be determined for a working session for Council Members to discuss: The Calendar for 2024 meetings (The Federal obligation is to meet quarterly. This SICC meets more often.), should future meetings be held in-person, virtual, or a hybrid of the two, and Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen requested a discussion regarding when/how to approach Public Comment during the public meeting.

Old Business

No old business

Public Comments

The following comments were made by members of the public (start time 1:30:09):

David Kenneth Holmes, ABCD—Suggests that if the Council were to look at fewer meetings, the structure of the sub-committees should be extraordinarily strong. Mr. Holmes requests the results of the rate study report. Mr. Holmes thanked Josephine Shenouda for her efforts in increasing the SICC Membership. Mr. Holmes questioned if the State has enough staff to support the new supervision guidelines. Ms. Shenouda mentioned she is expanding the Monitoring Team. The DOH is familiar with Assembly Bill 55-61, regarding children who are deaf and/or hard of hearing.

Maria Emerson, Virtua Health – Ms. Emerson expressed a concern for children not being seen timely, not meeting family and caregiver expectations, and losing team members. Ms. Emerson read some testimonials from practitioners in the field with concerns such as travel time and cancellations. Ms. Emerson also read family quotes concerning signing documents and confusion regarding services. Ms. Emerson feels these concerns are systematic.

Karen Olanrewaju, Sunny Days – Policies and Procedures are fragmented when distributed via REIC. Ms. Olanrewaju suggested communication should be from the State level.

Nicole Edwards asked if Stakeholders could comment what they suggest the sub-committees focus on.

Susan Evans mentioned there is comment from listening sessions and surveys that can be used for this information.

Submitted Written Comments:

Maria Emerson, Virtua Health has submitted written comment via email, as well as her verbal comment above.

Submitted Chat Messages Comments:

Saira (50:35)– Will this survey be sent to parents who have had a child recently leave EI to get information about their experience transitioning? (58:04) Is there a plan to share the newsletter more widely to parents for resources? (01:01:12) Is there a plan to share the newsletter more widely to all parents that receive EI to share resources and to encourage them to join in the future?

Responses: Karen Loaiza (01:02:36) Hello, we also post the resources on our social media accounts.

Elisa Cohen (01:03:11) Our agency shares these updates with our practitioners and our current roster of EI families.

Karen Armas Landau (01:04:15) Yes-we as Family Support also share the information with our providers.

Mary Krupp (01:48:41) When can we expect to have the results of the rate study shared with us?

Jacqueline Jupin Manzi, Sunny Days (52:39)-Many NICU's are referring outpatient due to waitlist of services.

Nicole Brogden (59:08)-Attached is the recap of Early Intervention week that we had sent out to all families and our EI networks.

Kristen Kugelman (01:35:13) Reflective groups and COP groups already exist.

Eileen Masticova (01:47:39) I agree, maybe a hybrid model for SICC as there is stronger attendance

offering virtual. SICC committee maybe to utilize work-in-progress in-person meetings.

Colleen Dodi (02:01:52) Service Coordinators do not send the IFSP over email and expect parents to sign without understanding the document. Service Coordinators share their screens and allow the parents time to read and understand the entire document before finalizing and asking for a signature on the IFSP.

There were no additional public comments.

The Public can submit comments to the Department or in the Chat Box.

The next SICC public meeting is November 17, 2023, 9:30 a.m.

NO MOTION to adjourn as there was no quorum.