

**Friday, September 20, 2019**  
**Central Jersey Family Health Consortium - MidJersey Cares – REIC**  
**Lakeside East Office Complex**  
**30 Silverline Drive, Suite 1**  
**North Brunswick, NJ 08902**  
**Public Meeting 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.**

A regular public meeting of the New Jersey State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) was held on Friday, September 20, 2019 at the Central Jersey Family Health Consortium, MidJersey Cares, REIC in North Brunswick, New Jersey. The meeting was called to order at 11:04 a.m. by Catherine (Kate) Colucci, Acting Chair. A quorum was declared present.

**Attendance** – Maintained by the Department of Health

**Welcome** – Kate Colucci welcomed attendees, read the Welcome Statement and announced the next SICC public meeting scheduled for November 15, 2019. Kate reviewed the process for addressing questions received from the Public. Comments and/or questions are limited to three minutes. SICC members may respond to the public question or comment, but it may also be addressed at a later time.

**Introductions** - SICC members introduced themselves followed by the REIC Directors and public members.

**Approval of Minutes** - Motion from Kate Colucci to approve July 2019 meeting minutes. July 19, 2019 meeting minutes approved.

**SICC Member Updates - No updates**

**SICC Standing & Ad Hoc Committees**

1. Administrative/ policy – Chanel McDevitt, Chair and Susan Marcario, Co-Chair reported:
  - The budget had been decreased from previous budget due to underutilized funds; however, if funds are needed DOH will provide. Budget needs approval.
  - Joyce Salzberg asked why the “education” line item was reduced. Susan Marcario responded that the initial intention was to form a committee to identify and retain guest speakers. However, due to EIMS, it did not happen.
  - Motion from Kate Colucci to approve current budget. Members approved budget.
2. State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)/Assessment – Rosemary Browne, Chair – No update. Susan Evans commented that the SSIP has momentum specific to practitioner

training and education. A pilot program in Monmouth County is addressing practitioner methods to increase family engagement. They are also focusing on the Keeping Babies and Children in Mind (Montclair State University training) and the Pyramid Model Leadership team.

3. Service Delivery – Joyce Salzberg, Chair

- No update, next meeting scheduled for October 10, 2019

4. Higher Education – Kate Colucci, Chair reported

- The Higher Education Committee group is focused on investigating a statewide mentoring program led by Jaime Bergstein of Virtua and was announced on EIMS. To date, no response. Kate requested to meet with Susan Evans and Kristen Kugelman to ascertain their priorities on collaborating with higher education and how the committee can best serve and advise. Recruitment and retention of EI professionals has been a challenge. Several EIPs, such as Sunny Days, Virtua, Rowan University, Children’s Specialized Hospital, St. Joseph’s Hospital and St. John of God all work to recruit student interns. Cynthia Newman from MidJersey Cares REIC reported working with UMDNJ and their doctoral students.

5. Lead Agency Report – Susan Evans, Interim Part-C Coordinator

Part C Administration: State Business:

- Acting Commissioner, Judith M. Persichilli, joined the Department of Health (DOH) in August 2019. Susan Evans and Sandra Howell met with the Acting Commissioner to keep her apprised of the New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS). DOH is in the early stages of conducting a rate study. The DOH is working with Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives’ (REIC) Executive Directors on updating the responsibilities of the REICS and how the Regional entities can best support the system. Surveys will be sent out to Early Intervention Providers (EIPs) Service Coordination Units (SCUs) and SICC members requesting their input on the future roles of the REICs.

Joyce Salzberg inquired whether or not families would be sent a survey. Susan Evans responded that it was not part of the plan, but if a survey would be sent to families, it would be different.

Susan Evans reported on the Family Cost Share (FCP) monitoring process as a result of the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) on-site visit in 2018. Part of OSEP’s concerns surrounded the assurances given to families on their cost share. As a result, the DOH team created and is currently executing a multi-tier approach to improving the processes and supporting service coordinators with carrying out the Family Cost Participation (FCP) requirements. Service

Coordination Units (SCUs) will receive training and implementation monitoring to begin in October 2019.

At this time, DOH is looking to add at least four more staff members, including the Part C Coordinator and Procedural Safeguards Coordinator. Sandra Howell reported that there has not been any progress in filling the Part-C Coordinator position. Susan Evans stated there are other unfilled positions including the SCU State Coordinator (supporting all SCUs) and a LOA-Contract liaison (person retired five years ago).

#### Part C Administration: OSEP:

- At the July OSEP Leadership Conference, OSEP proposed major changes to the Determinations Rubric for States. The changes included adding a newly devised rating system of the SSIP and adding Indicator 4, Family Outcomes into the overall scoring rubric. NJ and other state leaders did not support the proposed changes and feedback was provided to OSEP at their request. States have not yet been informed of the decision.
- NJEIS received the 2019-2020 Differentiated Monitoring Support report from OSEP. NJ was determined to be in “Intensive Technical Assistance” for Fiscal components and also “Results” due to the slippage in the data on progress for Indicator 3: Child Outcomes in the 2019 APR. DOH had explained the slippage to OSEP and is now getting back on track.

#### EIMS/PCG:

- DOH staff continues to meet with PCG team weekly to address on-going issues, prioritize what needs to be addressed and discuss the development of enhancements.
- There was a successful pilot with two large EIPs on implementing enrollment online (as opposed to paper). An upcoming training on electronic enrollment will be announced soon.
- DOH plans to meet with PCG to propose a plan to narrow the window for entering billing. Initially, that window was expanded to allow for back-billing. Part of the back-billing impacted families’ invoices (families received bills from services provided a year ago). When family invoices are not reflective of real-time provided services, the system cannot expect to impose a suspension for unpaid services.

Joyce Salzberg asked about the 30-day turnaround time and if there was any flexibility.

Susan Evans stated DOH will re-examine the 90-day window. DOH is looking at the design and what is or is not working in real time (ex. 30 days vs 45 days)

Sandra Howell explained EIMS is a new system that works differently; the EIPs will need to do business in a different way. DOH is looking to reduce the 90-day window because the service logging technically should happen in real-time. DOH will begin with the 90-day window but will revisit it at a later time. DOH will collect data on how and when practitioners enter their logs (i.e., 30 days, 60 days, 90 days) to help with the determination.

Joyce Salzburg stated that 45-60 days would be a good compromise. It will allow EIPS to review and correct errors. Joyce agreed that practitioners need to enter their logs in timely, however, 30 days is too short a period of time.

Kate Colucci expressed from a professional perspective, the Occupational Therapy Association (OTA) has strict documentation practices. It is unacceptable to enter information at a later time; it can be lost (from memory). In addition, all practitioners need the ability to see the documentation from each other that serve the same family.

Joseph Holahan concurred the importance of documenting and sharing of information between team members.

- Susan Evans reported working with PCG on ways to obtain electronic signatures, upload documents and ways to expand the parent portal. The parent portal is the most expensive and difficult, in terms of logistics, to implement.

Kate Colucci asked if the ability to share information between professionals was on the priority list.

Susan Evans stated that the priority list is quite expansive. At this moment, they are addressing evaluations and Form-25 in EIMS.

- Sandra Howell reported on the backlogging and recoupment process. The last back-logged claims were processed in September 3, 2019. Claims for children that aged out of the system were the most difficult to enter into EIMS. A list of “bypassed” children (not entered into EIMS) was given to EIPs to verify and return back to DOH for payment. To date, 95% have been processed. There is still a very small amount of claims that need to be entered. Sandra is monitoring the EIPs that experienced a hardship and collects and compares the data to what has been entered (claims) and reimbursed. Most EIPs are claiming at 100%. It is important that claims are entered timely because it impacts families, their

invoices, insurances and double-billing issues. PCG's Help Desk and DOH are assisting families. Families have not gone into debt collection.

Susan Evans reported that the Southern REIC Data Department has been assisting with the gathering of FCP documentation for families that have been requested through PSO.

- Susan Evans is currently serving on a national committee with the Infant Toddler Coordinator's Association. It is a new task force taking an updated look at how Part C programs address the needs of children with autism, including personnel standards and the role of BCBA licensure within EI.

Susan Evans announced that she is in the process of scheduling bimonthly SICC conference calls (that are not SICC public meeting months) sometime in October 2019.

#### Procedural Safeguards Office (PSO) Report:

- Beth Lohne accepted a new position at the Southern REIC and will no longer be the PSO Parent Liaison. She will continue to assist with Formal Complaints. PSO is now without a Parent Liaison or Coordinator. The PSO is in the Office of the Assistant Commissioner. DOH staff has informed the Commissioner's office how important it is to fill those positions. Barbara King is taking all calls. There is still a NPA concern in some counties.

Sandra Howell reported that the Part C Coordinator position announcement went out a few times but the Department has not received many applicants. The Commissioner requested the position be advertised nationally.

#### 6. New Business –

- REIC – EI Week 2019 Presentation – Desiree Bonner and Carmela Balacco, Directors of Family Support at Helpful Hands and Family Link REIC respectively provided a presentation for EI Week 2019 on behalf of all the Family Support Coordinators throughout the state. They exhibited a variety of organized activities that took place statewide. Excerpts from selected family essays were shown as well as goodie bag items provided to participating families and prizes for selected essay winners.

It was suggested that the press be invited to some of the future EI Week events and activities, including, NJ News.

#### 7. Old Business –

- NJEIS Mission Statement – the statement will be reviewed once the SICC member seats are filled. Danielle Anderson Thomas, who was leading this charge, resigned her position on the SICC and that seat needs to be filled.
- SICC appointments – Kate Colucci reported no formal news but she is in constant contact with Maria Del Cid-Kosso, the NJ Legislative representative. Kate also reached out to Timothy Hillman, a Senior Advisor on gubernatorial appointments for the Governor’s office about the need to fill the open positions. NJ is out of compliance with the number of vacant seats. Steve Weiss, the only remaining family SICC member, technically is not eligible due to his child’s age (over the required age). There have been several individuals that expressed an interest to serve the SICC, however, nothing has ever happened with the applications.

**Discussion:**

Sandra Howell stated she has a meeting with the commissioner and will mention the need to fill the SICC member seats.

Kate Colucci asked how this can be moved forward. She asked if a letter should be sent to the Governor.

Michele Safrin suggested the request go to a legislator.

Kate Colluci : **NEED CLARIFICATION**: Assemblywoman on January 4th, from the commissioner to the governor.

Rosemary Browne suggested waiting to hear back from Timothy Hillman and then request a meeting.

Kate Colucci asked why OSEP does not review this circumstance and report that NJ is in violation.

Susan Evans and Sandra Howell expressed how the DOH is in a similar situation; they have provided a package to the governor’s office and is waiting to hear back.

- SICC meeting location – the meetings will continue to take place at the New Jersey Family Health Consortium, MidJersey Cares, REIC. Cynthia Newman will tentatively reserve the room at her facility for the following dates: 1/24/20, 3/20/20, 5/15/20, 7/17/20 (Retreat), 9/11/20, and 11/20/20.

**Discussion:**

Joe Holahan stated the current location (NJFHC) is a good location. The room provides an intimate feel and connection to the audience.

Joyce Salzburg stated the location was at first difficult to find and parking might become an issue, especially during the winter months. She suggested meeting at Bell Works in Holmdel. The facility has many conference rooms, restaurants, is inexpensive and there is ample parking.

The question is whether the SICC wants a space that is free or one that has a fee? Need to consider those that are driving from the southern part of the State; Holmdel might be more difficult location.

**ACTION:** Kate Colucci asked that location suggestions be emailed to her to discuss at the next SICC meeting in November.

#### 8. **Public Comment:**

**Cynthia Newman**, MJCREIC, has a copy of the Maine Solution Study – Cost to Provide Services from 20 years ago. She will share it with anyone who is interested in it. Cynthia commented that families are doing their best to keep up with the new system and their invoices. She inquired whether or not the system has a handle on the number of families that are waiting to pay their bill with accurate invoices. She commented that hospital employees are required to enter their logs timely. She is not clear as to why practitioners wait to enter their logs.

**Yarona Boster** – ARC of Essex County, agreed that it is important that practitioners enter their logs in on a timely manner. However, EIPs are concerned with errors. Administrators need the opportunity to review logs before submission to ensure that what is being entered is accurate. For example, there can be a quality assurance issue with some practitioners that work for a multitude of agencies. Some practitioners may not follow the appropriate protocol to enter logs. She also reported that she has the capability to view all the children from her practitioner's caseload – even when they are not assigned to her EIP.

**Roni Scheuering** of Innovative Interventions agreed that practitioners need to enter logs within 30 days. However, the EIP administrators need a longer period of time to ensure errors are caught and corrected. For example, a practitioner may log in under the wrong agency, or enter the wrong day or time. It takes an EIP time to identify and correct errors. She is asking DOH to take into consideration the time it takes the EIP administrators to review and make any necessary changes.

Susan Evans stated that practitioners need to be professionals and be accountable; they need to log in real-time. The DOH is reviewing how to address the issue of when a practitioner works in multiple discipline roles, for example, when a practitioner works as either an OT or DI.

**Margaret Demsak**, Parent, inquired about the long wait-list for physical therapists in Sussex County. She spoke to her SC about it. She understands that EIPs have difficulty hiring people. She receives speech therapy for her child but was told that EI cannot provide feeding therapy. She wanted to know who she could speak to in order to address her questions. Her third question is in regard to her EI bills. She receives invoices both in the regular mail and online – they do not match. She is not always sure what she owes. Lastly, Margaret commented on the Family Portal; she stated there is no information on the site other than the bill.

Kate Colucci thanked Mrs. Demsak for coming to the SICC meeting. She stated that the SICC meeting is a forum for families to come and discuss their questions. She reiterated

Mrs. Demsak's questions. Her daughter receives speech therapy but also needs feeding therapy, which EI does not provide. The Family Portal (on EIMS) only shows the billing invoice and no other EI information and her concerns that there is a NPA for PT in her county.

Susan Evans remarked that the Regional Director could address her (parent's) questions.

**Cynthia Newman**, MidJersey Cares REIC, commented that when the REICs first were initiated most people in the field were hired as full-time employees. Now most are "independent consultants" which inevitably changed relationships. For example, consultants will select where they go to provide services. She asked if other states had similar issues and what they have done to address it.

**Edna Lee**, Lees Developmental Services, addressed her comments and questions to Sandra Howell. She had her auditor and accountant review her EIP's 1099, which included the advanced payment. She asked if the Department will revise the 1099. Edna also commented that DOH stopped the back-logging assistance in September, however, her EIP still has October, November and December that are outstanding. From DOH's perspective, her EIP is at 90-100%, but that is not her experience. She inquired how DOH came up with that percentage.

Sandra Howell acknowledged Edna Lee's earlier email requesting the revision of the 1099 form. The DOH-EI does not issue the 1099s, the financial department does that. An email with the audit was sent to Janice Lee. She asked Edna if she was copied on that email, Edna responded "no". Sandra stated the percentage she was referencing (96%) was the percentage of backloging that had been entered, however, the remaining had gone to the EIPs and REICs. Some EIPS are at 90-100%, but some EIPs are not yet at 85% or better. She has contacted those EIPS to see what was going on. The DOH will not do another upload and has no plans to do so. She encouraged finding out the root cause of not being able to backlog. For example, is an IFSP issue? If so, then the EIP needs to go to the SCU to have the IFSP entered into EIMS. DOH has identified an individual who is designated to work with the SCUs to ensure that documents have been entered. She stated to notify DOH if there was a different issue (ex. training).

**Roni Scheuering** of Innovative Interventions stated that all the back entering rests on the backs of SCs and they are extremely busy. She has advised her practitioners that if an IFSP is not entered into EIMS, not to provide services. She acknowledged that SCs are doing the best they can.

Susan Marcario of Family Link, REIC reported that her REIC has designated one of her data personnel to the Essex County Special Child Health Services unit to get all the data entered in that county.

**Virginia Lynn** from Children's Specialized Hospital stated her EIP has employees as full time staff. She asked that the DOH take into consideration those EIPs that employee full-time employees, when conducting their rate study as it is a costly, but effective model.

**Tanya Miller** from Montclair State University reported that logs are entered into EIMS but then seem to disappear. She has contacted PCG Help Desk.

9. **Adjournment** - 1:49 PM upon motion by Michele Safrin, and unanimously carried.

Next Meeting: November 15, 2019  
Central Jersey Family Health Consortium  
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