



Friday, January 17, 2025

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, January 17, 2025. The meeting was held via ZOOM meeting platform. The meeting was called to order at approximately 9:30 a.m. by Joyce Salzberg, Acting Chair.

Welcome

- I. Joyce Salzberg welcomed attendees and read the Welcome Statement.

Attendance

- I. Maintained by the Department of Health (DOH)

Introductions

- I. SICC members and DOH representatives were introduced.
- II. Quorum requirements were met.
- III. Public members signed their attendance through the chat box in the ZOOM platform.

Approval of Minutes

- I. The November 22, 2024 Minutes were *APPROVED*; 8 Yes, no opposed, 2 not present,
There was discussion to include a comment from Saira Hussain Akhter.
Minutes have been updated to include the comment.
Motion by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, seconded by Catherine Colucci.

SICC Member Updates

- I. No Member updates expressed at this time.

SICC Standing & Ad Hoc Committees Reports

- I. **Administrative/Policy Committee**, Samuel Kivell, Chair and Saira Hussain Akhter, Co-Chair
 - A. Samuel Kivell mentioned the SICC is trying out a muting functionality to address any outbursts such as the one at the last meeting. Brandy Acolia and the Administrative/Policy Committee will continue to refine this process.
 - B. Saira Hussain Akhter added she and Mr. Kivell had spoken several times to discuss the purpose of this Committee and have reviewed documents and will present further at the retreat. Also looking at tracking, decision making in relation to when the SICC should be involved in the creation or dissemination of a more robust framework in relation to the purpose of the SICC where the SICC Members' decision making body needs to be consulted and may be considered.

II. Service Delivery Committee, Virginia Lynn, Chair

- A. Virginia Lynn shared the Committee has not met since the last SICC meeting. Ms. Lynn mentioned awaiting for the retreat discussion regarding Committee reorganization before moving forward.
Susan Evans stated the DOH is in the process of looking at the childcare recommendations from the November meeting.

III. Fiscal Infrastructure Committee, Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, Chair

- A. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen updated that the Committee has a meeting with the Connecticut ICC to continue looking into other states and how they work professional development incentives.
Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen asked the DOH if there was any update on the Medicaid rate increase process.
Josephine Shenouda responded DOH has met with others and have a game plan to move forward.
Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen asked if there is an update on the Provider Liaison position.
Ms. Shenouda clarified this is the Program Manager Position and the DOH is working on filling it.

IV. Personnel Preparation Committee, Corinne Catalano, Chair

- A. Corinne Catalano shared a power point. It was requested the Committee provide recommendations on revisions to the Personnel Standards. The Committee is receiving consultation support from the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA.) A helpful document has been the Division of Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC) Position Statement on the role of Special Instruction in EI which came out in September 2024.
- B. The Committee is focusing on making recommendations for the criteria and the competencies for the Child Development Specialist role as well. The Committee is looking at what else may be acceptable besides a Bachelor's Degree (BA), perhaps alternate route degrees. This will go along with how the system will provide professional development and support.

V. Family Support Committee, Nicole Edwards, Chair

- A. Nicole Edwards shared the Committee is focusing on how to improve referrals for children in the first twelve months of life. The Committee is reviewing Parent feedback, a doctor survey, and looking for parent representatives on the Committee. Welcome to Miray Mankarious from the DOH for joining the Committee. Joyce Salzberg added that since she has been in EI, it has been an issue getting referrals for children birth to twelve months. Ms. Salzberg thinks it would be helpful to have a Pediatrician on the Council.

VI. Transition Committee, vacant Chair

In process of organizing

At this time, Corinne Catalano asked how close are we to having the 619 Coordinator approved because she believes she is actively working on Transition right now.

Josephine Shenouda stated that her name as well as six others, including a Pediatrician and two Parent Members, are with the Governor's Office and hoping approval soon.

Regional Early Intervention Collaborative (REIC) Update

- I. No comment for this meeting in lieu of the Annual Performance Report.

Lead Agency Report, Susan Evans, Part C Coordinator

- I. Susan Evans presented an overview of what the Annual Performance Report (APR) is.
 - A. The Part C Program is required to submit to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) an annual report of The system's performance. This annual performance report is outlined in measurement tables, and it is standard Across the States. All States that have Federal funds are required to answer the questions that are contained in this performance report. It is also required that the Council review, comment, and provide input to this report and ultimately approve it, or decide to turn in your own report. Public Members also have the opportunity to comment and provide input to the DOH. The APR data submitted results in a Determination, issued in June 2025, that indicates if the program "meets the requirements of Part C of IDEA."
 - B. In addition to the Indicators already in the APR, the DOH is required to submit a new General Supervision Plan in the introduction of the APR and there is an Indicator 12. The progress and data for FFY 23/SFY 24 is from July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024.
- II. Patty Green introduces the Monitoring Team and the team presented a powerpoint
 - A. Indicator 1, Timely Provision of Services – presented by Melody Lee

Indicator 1 states that new services must start within 30 days of the signed parental consent date to be in compliance. The sample is based on individual children. All services for those children are assessed for timeliness. If a child has at least one untimely service, that child is considered untimely. Reasons for delay that do not impact compliance include Family Delay, child or parent illness/hospitalization, and severe weather/emergency closure. Reasons for system delays that do impact compliance include delays on the service coordination units and delays on the early intervention providers and access to timely services, formerly known as no provider available (NPA). Ms. Lee went into the details of the data used. There was no slippage this year. FFY 2023 findings: 6 findings were issued as a result of the annual FFY 2023 desk audit-3 Service Coordination Units and 3 Provider agencies. Upon data verification of the existing findings, non-compliance was found resulting in an additional finding. Ocean County Service Coordination Unit was issued a finding. All of these findings were corrected according to both prongs within 12 months of the original finding date. There are currently no open findings for Indicator 1.
 - B. Indicator 2, Services in Natural Environments – presented by Patty Green

Indicator 2 is the percent of infant and toddlers with Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs) who primarily receive Early Intervention services in the home or community-based setting. 99.8% of services this year have been provided in the natural environment, which is great. The target was 99.6%. Community setting examples include daycares, parks, libraries, going to a restaurant or a store.

DISCUSSION – When comparing the State's recovery from COVID, DOH stated the key to understanding the data in Indicator 1 is that the compliance factor is 100%. However, most children may be missing 1 service timely, but receiving other services. There is a trend right now where the Monitoring Team is seeing a decrease in timely services which is good and Compensatory services are going down. When asked if the loss of Practitioners in our system is something reported, DOH responded the report answers only what is asked and perhaps the data can be drilled down further. DOH commented that the data is past tense and we are seeing a trend of improvement.

Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked what are the efforts being taken to increase the numbers for Cumberland and Burlington for Indicator 1? DOH stated there are things in the works including trying to increase awareness and referral. Systems delays include accessing timely services when the Service Coordinator has done all they could, but a provider was not available. A Service Coordinator can reach out to providers in other counties to provide a service if there is not a provider available in their county. Service Coordinators also offer the families Telehealth services. Counties hold monthly meetings with the provider agencies to discuss providing services

to children. The DOH stated a consideration for the suggestion of a work group to look at the southern region and discuss strategies to improve.

C. Indicator 3, Early Childhood Outcomes – presented by Susan Evans

Indicator 3: 3A – Children have positive social-emotional skills (including social relationships)

3B – Children acquire knowledge and skills (including early language and communication)

3C – Children use appropriate behavior to meet their needs.

The system uses the Battelle Development Inventory (BDI) to answer these questions. Children are evaluated upon entering and leaving the system. Our system had a data completeness rate of 61.2 1%. This is the highest data completion rate New Jersey has ever had. Summary Statement 1 Data FFY 2023 (made substantial progress): 3A – 32.51%; 3B – 57.38%; 3C – 67.47%.

Overall Indicator 3:

Indicator	Summary Statement 1	Summary Statement 2
3A	Did not meet Target No slippage No Meaningful Difference	Did not meet Target No slippage No Meaningful Difference
3B	Did not meet Target Slippage Meaningful Difference	Met Target No slippage No Meaningful Difference
3C	Did not meet Target Slippage Meaningful Difference	Met Target No slippage No Meaningful Difference

There has been very little shift in the pattern over the years,

although there was some slippage in 3B & 3C, but progress in 3A. Summary Statement 2 is the percent of children who were functioning within age expectations in each outcome by the time they exited NJEIS.

Summary Statement 2 FFY 2023 (left EI “with peers”): 3A – 54.44% ; 3B – 54.01%; 3C – 82.88%.

D. Indicator 11, State Systemic Improvement Plan, Part 2, Proposed Activities for FFY24 in Support of Evaluation Plan – presented by Kristen Kugelman

State identified Measurable Results (SiMR) – Infants and toddlers with disabilities will substantially increase their rate of growth and development of positive social emotional skills by the time they exit the program, as measured by Indicator 3A, Summary Statement 1. The Theory of Action strands are infrastructure development, early relational health messaging and communication, IFSP service provider development support, and service coordinator development and support. Kristen Kugelman went into detail regarding the specific activities for each of the 4 above mentioned.

*2025 Conference on May 16th – Stronger Together, Enhancing Connections through Quality Early Intervention

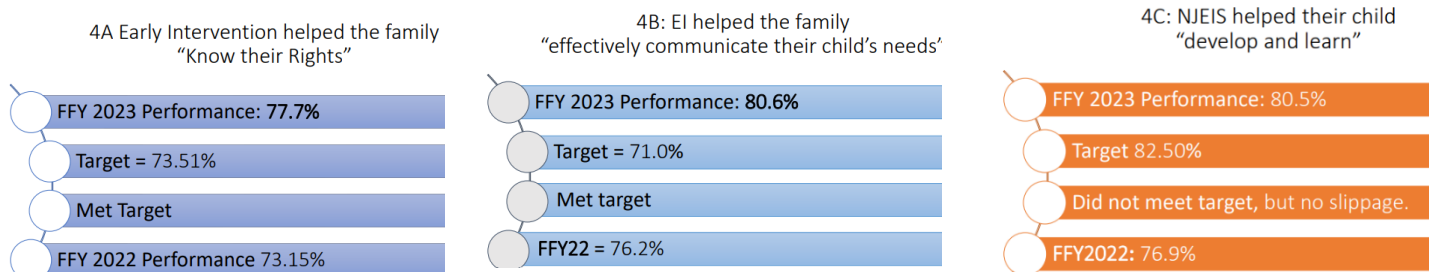
The conference will be in person in Princeton as well as live streamed.

DISCUSSION – DOH stated there is no discussion at this time regarding overhauling the Child Outcome

Summaries. Corinne Catalano stated she is the current Acting President of the New Jersey Division of Early Childhood (DEC.) Susan Evans mentioned that the data for this year is 94% BDI 2 to BDI 2 and 6% BDI 2 to BDI 3 comparison. Next year will be BDI 3 to BDI 3.

E. Indicator 4, Family Involvement – presented by Patty Green and Kendra Taggart

Indicator 4 has 3 subsets – A. Know Their Rights, B. Effectively Communicate their Children’s Needs, and C. Help Their Children Develop and Learn. Conduct a Family Survey using the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Family Outcomes Survey Revised (FOS-R). Ms. Green reviewed the Methodology and business rules. Kendra Taggart reviewed the specific survey details.



DISCUSSION – The data is collated by county.

F. Indicator 5, Child Find Birth to Age One – presented by Susan Evans

Indicator 5 is the percent of infants and toddlers birth to one with IFSPs compared to National Data. The system has made some very nice progress in the birth to one category. Josephine Shenouda added that this translates from year to year as a 15% increase. Ms. Shenouda commended the great job by the field.

Indicator 5
December 1, 2023

FFY	Number of children	Census Birth to 1 population	Percentage	Target
FFY 2023	1,015	102,477	0.99%	0.73%
FFY 2022	886	102,910	0.86%	0.72%

G. Indicator 6, Child Find Birth to Age Three - presented by Susan Evans

Indicator 6 is the percentage of infants and toddlers birth to three with IFSPs compared to National Data. The target is a New Jersey target, not Federal.

Indicator 6
December 1, 2023

FFY	Count	Birth to 3 population	Percentage	Target
FFY 2023	18,169	307,055	5.92%	3.6%
FFY 2022	17,102	304,967	5.61%	3.5%

H. Indicator 7, 45-Day Initial IFSP Timeline - presented by Kendra Taggart

Indicator 7 is the percent of eligible infants and toddlers with IFSPs for whom an initial evaluation, initial assessment and initial IFSP meeting were conducted within Part C's 45-day timeline.

Ms. Taggart reviewed the Methodology involved for this indicator. The target was 100% and we reached that target this year. Ms. Taggart commended the field as these results show their hard work and dedication for continuing to be timely with this indicator. Patty Green added there's been a number of years where we've been at 100% and even last year was like 99%. This really shows the work the field has done to maintain that compliance indicator.

I. Indicator 8, Early Childhood Transition - presented by Patty Green and Joselin Chacon

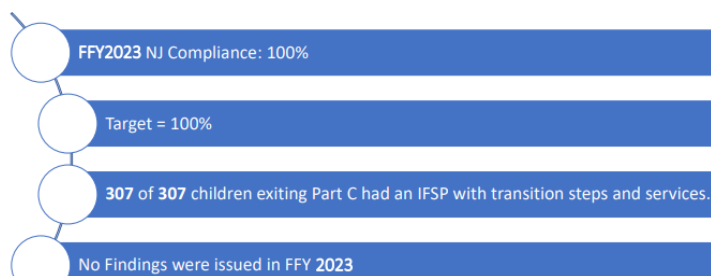
Indicator 8 is the percentage of toddlers with disabilities exiting Part C with timely transition planning.

There are three subsets:

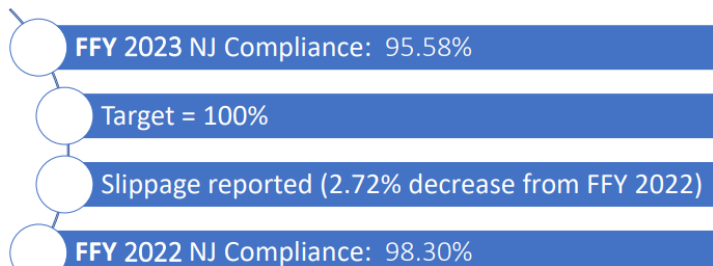
- **8A** Developed an IFSP with transition steps and services at least 90 days, and at the discretion of all parties, not more than 9 months, prior to the toddlers' 3rd birthday.
- **8B** Notified (consistent with any opt-out policy adopted by the State) the SEA and the LEA where the toddler resides at least 90 days prior to the toddlers' 3rd birthday for toddlers potentially eligible for Part B preschool services and;
- **8C** Conducted the transition conference held with the approval of the family at least 90 days, and at the discretion of all parties, not more than 9 months prior to the toddler's 3rd birthday for toddlers potentially eligible for Part B Preschool services.

Patty Green reviewed the Methodology. Joselin Chacon and Patty Green reviewed the below:

Indicator 8A: Transition Steps
Developed an IFSP with transition steps and services at least 90 days, and at the discretion of all parties, not more than 9 months, prior to the toddlers' 3rd birthday.

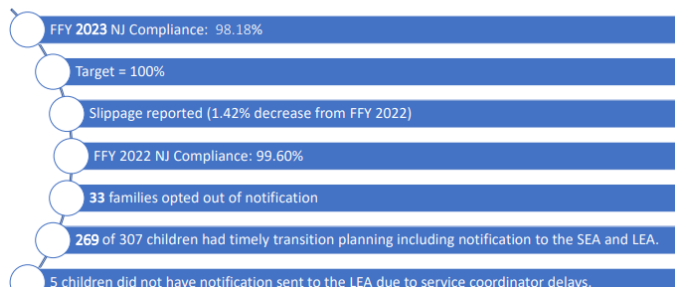


Indicator 8C: Transition Planning Conference (TPC)
Conducted the transition conference held with the approval of the family at least 90 days, and at the discretion of all parties, not more than 9 months prior to the toddler's 3rd birthday for toddlers potentially eligible for Part B Preschool services



Indicator 8B: Notification

Notified (consistent with any opt-out policy adopted by the State) the SEA and the LEA where the toddler resides at least 90 days prior to the toddlers' 3rd birthday for toddlers potentially eligible for Part B preschool services



DISCUSSION – Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen mentioned the results of this indicator show there is no issue with the legislation regarding the provider agencies being responsible for notifying the Local Educational Agency (LEA) for children turning 3 years old. Josephine Shenouda stated the DOH does not have information to comment on this right now, but she will look into it. Susan Evans added that this is public data published on the website by the end of June.

J. Indicator 10, Dispute Resolution - presented by Susan Evans

Indicator 10 is dispute resolution.

DOH does not have to report anything since there were less than 10 formal disputes in the year.

K. Indicator 12, New Reporting – presented by Susan Evans

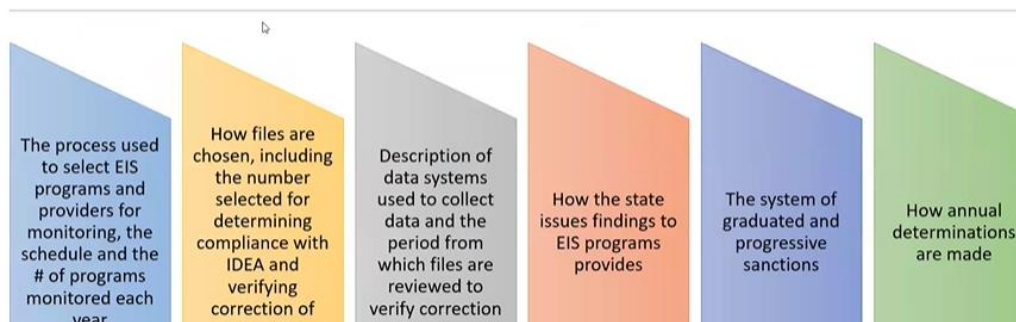
Indicator 12 is a summary of the findings that were given as a result of monitoring.

DISCUSSION – Josephine Shenouda gave a shout out to the great work the Monitoring Team is doing.

L. Required General Supervision of NJEIS

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) sent a document to all states describing what they need to have in order to have a proper general supervision plan. This includes the requirement to submit the general supervision plan with more detail and to make it public.

APR Requirement: States must describe the following:



DOH will have a follow up meeting with stakeholders for questions at a later date.

Ms. Evans went into detail regarding the specifics of the general supervision, including documents providers must provide to the DOH. There is a six year cohort cycle of monitoring. The number of files selected will be based on the volume of files per agency. DOH will describe in the data systems used to collect the information. DOH will continue to use the process that is done for the APR to issue findings; letters sent out, data verification checks, verification, follow up, closing, and tracking of those findings. DOH has a system of graduate and progressive sanctions. DOH is required to identify all programs and providers as either meeting the requirements, needing assistance in meeting the requirements, needing intervention, or needing substantial intervention. These are the same categories that OSEP applies to States. DOH has an established rubric to make determinations which includes performance on APR indicators, contract status, PSO findings, correction of non-compliance, and audit reports. DOH will institute a new determination matrix for individual agencies that will be based on their cyclical monitoring results, including the general supervision elements.

DISCUSSION – Nicole Edwards asked if the tools being used are used in other states and will you have some data to support their reliability? Susan Evans replied some of the collection methods have to be unique to us, based on our data system and what we can get and how much we think we're going to pull from us versus others, but we do a lot of borrowing from other states in terms of what they have already created, because it will save us time and energy and it gives us a good reference point.



MOTION: Council Members were asked to vote on the content of the APR to be submitted to OSEP.

The content is acceptable to submit as presented.

Motioned by Corinne Catalano , seconded by Catherine Colucci.

No further discussion.

APPROVED: 9 approved, no opposed, 2 not present during the vote.

Procedural Safeguards Office (PSO), Beth Lohne, PSO Coordinator

- I. No comment for this meeting in lieu of the Annual Performance Report.

New Business

- I. Future Meeting Dates:
March 21, 2025

Old Business

- I. Suggestion of Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives (REIC) representative on the SICC Council

Saira Hussain Akhter suggested a representative from the REIC be on the SICC Council.

Joyce Salzberg suggested discussing at the retreat.

Susan Evans mentioned the make-up of the Council is prescribed in the Federal IDEA law.

- II. Single Point of Entry (SPOE) Request for Application (RFA)

Joyce Salzberg expressed concern regarding the SPOE RFA.

Ms. Salzberg stated in order for the SICC to be an integral part of the system, it would be helpful if the Council were involved in changes such as this. Ms. Salzberg stated if you want people to change, it helps to incorporate the people into the change; hoping the Council is more involved in these changes and as an integral part of the system to advise and assist the DOH.

Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen added there is better success when the stakeholder are engaged and have input and hopes the SICC can be a part of the process in future major developments.

Samuel Kivell agrees with the previous statements.

Virginia Lynn expressed her concern with how this affects the entire system and is worried for a possible lag in referrals.

Saira Hussain Akhter stated she agrees with the above and stated, "you don't want is the folks that are involved in this forum and that are watching these meetings to feel like this body is just a rubber stamp on things that you know they're presented with things, and really they have no ability or efficacy or sway over anything. It's just like an information receiving body, but with no real ability to tangibly do anything."

Ms. Hussain Akhter expressed concern that this change is being made prior to the study of the entire system.

Saira Hussain Akhter asked if anyone from the REIC wanted to comment.

Susan Evans mentioned that because this is an open competitive process, there should be caution regarding any specifics discussed as some entities who have applied may be involved in this meeting and some may not.

The DOH has received comments.

- III. Passaic County Service Coordination Unit (SCU) Transition

Josephine Shenouda stated Youth Consultation Service (YCS) is now the Passaic County SCU. By April, they should be greater than 90% staffed. YCS should have all new referrals and have moved all active children in the system to their Service Coordinators by April 1st. Thank you to Patty Green and the team for working on this transition.

Samuel Kivell expressed a concern receiving the exit evaluations. DOH stated the evaluation team in the county has not changed and they are aware the exit evaluations will still be done.

IV. Update on Policy 14

Susan Evans sent out a message last week. DOH is taking some time to let Users work through it and some are sending in questions.

Public Comments

The following comments were made by members of the public:

Kenneth (David) Holmes, ABCD EIPA – Mr. Holmes' statement is summarized below:

Mr. Holmes stated discouragement regarding the SPOE RFA. Particularly in light of the fact that you have \$400,000 being used to look at and consult with the department all aspects of the early intervention system, there could be a potential domino effect across the remaining part of the system. ABCD Members wrote a letter to Josephine and to the Assistant Commissioner suggesting they reconsider the RFA and to stop it until we can get some more data. I have not heard of any problems with the SPOE units. Why couldn't some modernization be done with the existing SPOE units as opposed to RFA? Mr. Holmes expressed concern about the lack of specificity of the of the RFA, the difficulty to come up with a budget when they don't know the number of potential service coordinators that they need, and the inclusion of the family cost participation. Mr. Holmes stated the application is due the 31st of January and feels people were not given the opportunity to really dive into it and understand. Mr. Holmes stated the department was not very transparent in this whole process. You were working on it for 6 months, and we didn't know anything about it. Please use the providers and those individuals who have invested their entire careers in early intervention to assist you in making some of these decisions and coming up with information and data and direction for the for the department we are willing to participate. We're looking forward to some feedback from the department. Thank you.

Cynthia Newman, Mid-Jersey REIC - Ms. Newman's statement is summarized below:

Ms. Newman stated she has been in this business for 26 years, and shares some of the concerns about where this is going. Ms. Newman stated she would have preferred to modernize, do a different referral process; that the REICs would have had an opportunity to try something. Ms. Newman stated our hearts are still in this after all these years, when all our friends and family have retired. Many of us are still fighting the good fight, so I guess we'll see where we go, but we've had a very long run. I don't really want to give it up. I guess grants do get rebid and focus changes.

Patty Carlesimo – Ms. Carlesimo's statement is summarized below:

I also agree with Cynthia, and David, and their concerns about the RFA process, and would have preferred to have been a part of that process as a stakeholder. Ms. Carlesimo stated what may be critical in this rollout is the transition from the current system to the new system because she thinks that's where EIMS really took a dive. If there's any way that the rollout can be gentle, and maybe 1 region at a time. Let's get it right so that we don't have that kind of slow down or stoppage in the system. Ms. Carlesimo stated the Governor's report may be a really great opportunity for the Council to speak to the issues for Early Intervention and also sing the praises of Early Intervention. I know every time we get to speak to the governor's office it's a pleasure, and we get to educate some folks who are not really familiar and it's always a positive experience in the end. Ms. Carlesimo expressed concern about the 5% cut to some of the departments because of the revenues being less than expected and what that would do to us would be to deny any step up we took because of the slight increases that we received during Covid. We're just starting to be able to hire and compete a little bit more on even ground with those other organizations that hire therapists. Ms. Carlesimo has written a letter to the Governor's office. Ms. Carlesimo stated she watched the State Address and the Governor did seem to be concerned about our most vulnerable families. If there's an opportunity in your report to the Governor to say how critical the funding increases have been and how positive they've been taken, it would really be devastating to have a cut. Thank you.

Submitted Chat Messages as Public Comments:

03:43:16 Patty Green: we are hearing the opposite. Districts are not evaluating and encouraging kids to go to gen ed programs

03:45:08 Corinne G Catalano: Patty I would love to connect on this. I am hearing this from several districts...one of which is a former Abbott and has a 40% classification rate. I know this will be something that the Transition Committee..when reconvened...would address.

03:45:41 Melissa Gordon: Reacted to "we are hearing the o..." with 👍

03:45:41 Charlene OBrien, Resource & Referral Services Manager: Reacted to "Patty I would love t..." with 👍

03:45:48 Jessica Stengel: Reacted to "we are hearing the o..." with 👍

03:45:53 Patty Green: yes lets connect. i have two districts in a complaint.

03:46:56 Corinne G Catalano: Can you share if those districts have Preschool Expansion Aid funding?

03:47:40 Patty Green: lets talk

03:48:30 Carola d'Emery, Sunny Days: Replying to "we are hearing the o..."
If the EI children transition with a recent BDI exit eval, the school may want to use the data, specifically the percentile ranks, to decide on "classification" because the eligibility determination for Part B and Part C are different, it is not surprising to see such discrepancies in classification percentages. Additional Special education students imply increased funding for the district, and I would be very concerned if this is a factor used to classify our children. Carola.

Submitted Written Comments (Attached):

No written comments submitted.

There were no additional public comments.

The Public can submit comments to the Department or in the Chat Box which are recorded for the Department.

The next SICC public meeting is March 21, 2025, 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

MOTION to adjourn the meeting by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen and seconded by Samuel Kivell at approximately 12:50 p.m.