



Friday, March 21, 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, March 21, 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 January 17, 2025 Minutes were *APPROVED*; no opposed, 1 abstain, 1 not present, no discussion. Motion by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen, seconded by Corinne Catalano.

### **SICC Standing & Ad Hoc Committees Reports**

- I. **Administrative/Policy Committee**, Samuel Kivell, Chair and Saira Hussain Akhter, Co-Chair
  - A. Saira Hussain Akhter shared the Committee will be working on the organization of tasks, tracking, review of the current policies and procedures as they relate to the SICC, and how to structure Public Comment better. Samuel Kivell added the Committee added two Members and would welcome more Members.
- II. **Service Delivery Committee**, Virginia Lynn, Chair
  - A. Virginia Lynn stated the Committee is looking for new Members.  
Ms. Lynn shared the Committee is in the process of developing a new focus.

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

- A. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen shared the Committee met with the Connecticut Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and discussed their professional development funding initiatives and the potential for similar initiatives for New Jersey. Connecticut has implemented a comprehensive internship protocol program where Practitioners would receive a stipend and the agency would receive a stipend for the oversight of the Practitioner. The Committee is going to partner with the Personnel Preparation Committee to come up with recommendations on how New Jersey may wish to proceed with this type of program. The Committee discussed the possibility of offering Continuing Education Units (CEUs) for practitioners and the idea of a fee structure that supports the use of Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants (COTAs) and Physical Therapy Assistants (PTAs.)
- B. Ms. Hinnigan-Cohen mentioned the Committee was going to look at a Training Protocol for Service Coordination that Connecticut has.
- C. The Committee has no updates at this time on Insurance and Family Cost Share.
- D. Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen asked the status of the Medicaid rate increase.  
Josephine Shenouda clarified that the rate increase is currently stalled due to competing projects.  
Ms. Shenouda shared she will be sending the Council the Scope of Work of the Rutgers Study soon.  
Joyce Salzberg mentioned that Connecticut has higher reimbursement rates than New Jersey.

**IV. Personnel Preparation Committee, Corinne Catalano, Chair**

- A. Corinne Catalano presented the Personnel Prep Committee is reviewing the Personnel Standards and plan to make recommendations for revisions in the future. The Committee plans to reach out to other states for more information.
- B. Ms. Catalano listed the Committee Members: Kate Colucci, Erin Beischer, Jennifer Blanchette McConnell, Barbra Bowers, Bobbie Dihoff, Jenaya Ingram, TerraAnn Madden, Ashley Morrell, and Kristin Kugelman.

**V. Family Support Committee, Nicole Edwards, Chair**

- A. Nicole Edwards reports the committee met recently to discuss outreach efforts and potential initiatives, including addressing misconceptions about Early Intervention.
- B. The Committee has collected survey responses from 88 pediatric healthcare providers and are beginning to analyze the data.
- C. Ms. Edwards listed the Committee Members: Patty Green, Miray Mankarious, Amber Hummer, Deepa Srinivasavaradan, Usha Ramachandran, Laura Washington, and Karen Loaiza.  
Nicole Edwards placed the following in the chatbox: Looking for new parent representative with a child currently in Part C EI. Email Nicole at edwardsn@rowan.edu.

**VI. Transition Committee, Steven Weiss, Chair and Josephine Shenouda, Co-Chair**

- A. Josephine Shenouda stated the first Transition Committee meeting will be on April 2nd.

### **Regional Early Intervention Collaborative (REIC) Update**

- I. The Family Support Coordinators presented-Karen Loaiza, Family Link; Nicole Brogden, Southern; Laura Washington, Helpful Hands; Tiffany Martinez, Mid-Jersey CARES

Welcome, Tiffany.

The Family Support Coordinators emphasized their efforts in educating families, providing guidance, connecting them with resources, and facilitating communications between families and service providers. The team shared their progress in community outreach, education, and awareness, including participation in events, partnerships with community organizations, and maintaining active social media presence. They will be focusing on strengthening child find efforts, particularly for the 0 to 1 population, and increasing referrals.

Joyce Salzberg mentioned Sunny Days will have a table at the American Occupational Therapy Association (AOTA) Conference in Philadelphia starting April 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Ms. Salzberg suggested streaming in the doctor's offices.

Nicole Edwards shared the link for the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) in the chatbox.

<https://exceptionalchildren.org/membership/access-for-all>

### **Lead Agency Report, Susan Evans, Part C Coordinator**

Susan Evans shared a power point.

#### **I. Federal Updates**

- A. The Department of Education (DOE) Secretary, Linda McMahon, released a statement titled "U.S. Department of Education Initiates Reduction in Force."
- According to the order, nearly 50% of the career staff working at the DOE have been placed on administrative leave beginning March 21<sup>st</sup>.
  - Staff from the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) were not included in the reduction in force (RIF.)
  - Staff from the Office of Civil Rights, the Office of General Council, and the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services Policy (OSERS) were included.
- B. The DOE will continue to deliver on all statutory programs that fall under the agency's purview, including formula funding, student loans, Pell Grants, funding for special needs students, and competitive grantmaking.
- C. The Federal Application for Part C funds has been prepared and is ready for public comment on the website. [Nj.gov/health/fhs/eis](https://nj.gov/health/fhs/eis)  
SICC and other stakeholders will be sent the application and instructions for providing public comment. The application is based on the allocation New Jersey received last year as appropriations have not yet been released from OSEP.

#### **II. State Updates**

- A. Early Intervention Provider (EIP) Meeting on General Supervision  
April 15, 2025 9:30am – 11:00 am Virtual Meeting by ZOOM
- B. Passaic Service Coordination Unit (SCU) Transition
- Catholic Family Community Services (CFCS) decided not to apply to continue as the Passaic County SCU.
  - A Request for Application (RFA) for Passaic County SCU was issued.
  - Youth Consultation Services (YCS) was awarded the grant on 9/1/2024.

iv. CFCS and YCS Transition Activities

1. Required YCS Implementation and CFCS “de-implementation” at the same time, while ensuring services to families and meeting all obligations.
2. It was necessary to operate 2 grants during this process for Passaic County for this year.
3. Since September YCS has secured office space, hired & trained Service Coordinators (SCs), began with caseloads January 1, 2025, and held their official ribbon cutting on March 14<sup>th</sup>.
4. CFCS will continue to provide service coordination for children who are turning 3 before the end of June, close out their grant with the DOH in June, and remains as a Targeted Evaluation Team as part of the NJEIS.
5. The transition team includes Patty Green, Kendra Taggart, Nicole Ramirez, Kim Peto, Erin Beischer, Danielle Cuskey, Nancy May, Christina Colon, Kelly Butryn, Joe Murray, Lisa O’Connor, Sarah Greiss, Yanela Espinoza, and Robert Livengood.

C. 2025 New Jersey Early Intervention Services (NJEIS) Conference, announced by Kristen Kugelman

- i. Stronger Together: Enhancing Connections Through Quality Early Intervention  
Friday, May 16<sup>th</sup> 8:00am-3:30pm Princeton Marriott Forrestal
- ii. Keynote: Robin McWilliam, PhD, Originator of Routines-Based Model; NJEIS is integrating Routines-Based Interviewing into the FIM/FDA.
- iii. Kristen Kugelman shared the conference will be held in-person and virtually and will feature 8 breakout sessions, exhibitors, and a mobile app for attendees. Registration will open in April, with in-person attendance limited to EI case-carrying staff and virtual attendance open to everyone. The conference will offer professional development opportunities and will be free of charge.

Corinne Catalano mentioned that DEC representation will be present at the conference and that DEC is offering free membership until the end of the month.

Joyce Salzberg asked about CEUs, but Kristen Kugelman clarified that they will not be offered due to the extensive approval process.

Susan Evans clarified Samuel Kivell’s funding question by stating that the funding is State and Federal, but State is the largest part of our funding.

Erika Nava questioned will the DOE still be administering our Part C grant.

Susan Evans responded IDEA has a requirement for an Office of Special Education. Whether or not this is housed in the Federal Department of Education or a different department is being considered through public comment.

Josephine will communicate the RFA status once the statement regarding the RFA status is out.

Susan Evans answered Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen’s question stating, no change is needed for the Part C application if the allocation to an REIC changes.

Josephine Shenouda mentioned the hiring freeze so there is a hold on the Early Intervention Provider (EIP) Liaison position. DOH is working with the New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women Infants and Children (WIC) to improve referral in the southern region and are exploring strategies to improve service and engagement there.

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

A. Beth Lohne presented.

i. Administrative Complaints SFY25 = 11

2 Pending (18%), 4 Findings/Cap (37%), 2 Withdrawn (18%), 3 No Part C Violation (27%)

1 Formal Mediation held, agreement reached

B. Summary of Dispute Categories

| <b>DISPUTE<br/>CATEGORY</b> | <b>TOTAL<br/>CASES</b> | <b>FINDINGS of<br/>NON-COMPLIANCE</b> | <b>CORRECTIVE ACTION<br/>REQUIRED</b> | <b>OTHER<br/>OUTCOMES</b>            |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Family Cost Participation   | 2                      | 2                                     | Yes                                   | -----                                |
| Practitioner Conduct        | 4                      | 3                                     | Yes                                   | 1 complaint withdrawn                |
| Timely IFSP Services        | 1                      | 1                                     | Yes                                   | -----                                |
| Eligibility Disputes        | 3                      | 0                                     | No                                    | Determined not a Part C<br>Violation |

C. Procedural Safeguards Office (PSO) Initiatives

i. Office Hours SFY25: In September 2025, the PSO resumed monthly dedicated office hours, completing 5 sessions with a total of 362 attendees.

ii. Training Initiative: Provided “Formal Dispute Resolution Options under Part C” training to over 250 REIC staff, Service Coordination Units, Early Intervention Providers, and DOH staff.

iii. Ongoing Initiatives: Monthly Office Hours, Regular sessions to address questions, discuss trends, and provide support.

PSO Quarterly Trainings: Continuous education on Procedural Safeguard requirements for direct service providers. Assurance that families have been informed of their right to formal dispute resolution.

D. PSO SFY25 Compensatory Awards Data

| <u>MONTH</u> | <u>CHILDREN</u> | <u>COMPENSATORY HOURS</u> |
|--------------|-----------------|---------------------------|
| November     | 24              | 1,155                     |
| December     | 20              | 633                       |
| January      | 12              | 566                       |
| February     | 15              | 329                       |
| March        | 15              | 629                       |
| <b>TOTAL</b> | <b>86</b>       | <b>3,312</b>              |

E. Benefits of the new Compensatory Process

i. Early Implementation: Begins the process at 32 months of age, allowing more time for planning.

ii. Increase in Exit Data: Improved data collection, supporting better outcomes analysis.

iii. Timely Access to Services: Reduction in delays, ensuring families receive needed services on time.

iv. Proactive Missed Services Review: Missed services are identified and addressed earlier during Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meetings, ensuring that families’ needs are considered promptly.

F. Compensatory Process Timeline

120 Days before 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday – Identification of children that qualify for compensatory services due to delay or disruption in services.

90 Days before 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday – Parent has 10 days to respond to service coordinator of their intention to seek compensatory services.

60 Days before 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday – Exit Evaluation completed.

30 Days from child's 3<sup>rd</sup> Birthday – Post Transition Planning Meeting is held to discuss eligibility and identify missed services. Form submitted to the PSO.

PSO Determination – PSO reviews all documentation related to missed services. Compensatory award authorization letter sent to family and Service Coordination Unit (SCU.)

**G. Transition to a Proactive Compensatory Process**

- i. The responsibility for awarding compensatory services was transferred to the Lead Agency-Procedural Safeguards Office
- ii. On October 1, 2023, the PSO, in collaboration with Service Coordination Units, implemented a new process.
- iii. This change aligns with the NJEIS rules and aims to create a centralized, standardized process.
- iv. By centralizing this process, the PSO ensures equitable access to compensatory services for all impacted families.

Beth Lohne responded to Samuel Kivell's question the PSO Office hours are for individuals working in the system, not for the public. There are resources for families and the Family Support Coordinators at the REIC do family outreach.

Josephine Shenouda explained that Compensatory services are parallel to the exit evaluations and because this is voluntary for families, they need to go through an assessment, sometimes called the exit evaluation because it is completed around the child's third birthday.

**New Business**

Joyce Salzberg – Happy Social Workers' Month

**Old Business**

No old business at this time

**Public Comments**

**The following comments were made by members of the public (Statements below are summarized):**

Patty Carlesimo, ABCD – Can Josephine give an update on the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) study? Have they met any of their deliverables where data has been provided and suggestions made for changes in the EI system. And is there anything in writing?

Josephine Shenouda responded - The NIEER study started on October 1, 2024. The 1st step of that study is to gather best practices on a national level. We are in Phase One of a two-year study. Ms. Shenouda emailed the Council the Scope of Work. There will be more communication with SICC Committees and work groups, and we will be working on a bi-weekly status to gather more information and look at their status, as well with their progress.

Patty Carlesimo, ABCD – If there's been no decline in the birth rate, but a decline in eligibility, we think we heard 5%, What conclusions has the department made? Is this a BDI 3 issue by any chance?

Patty Carlesimo, ABCD –What is the position of the department on increasing utilization of Telehealth? And does that include increased training for support, coordinator coordination units?

Susan Evans responded - Telehealth is a welcome. The department is continuing to support Telehealth for meetings and services. We do not support Telehealth for evaluations. Ms. Evans is working on an updated policy. The Technical Assistants (TAs) and Family Support Coordinators in the regions have been a really good resource for helping families understand how telehealth works and how practitioners can help. If an agency



or individuals are looking for support, please reach out to them. One of the conference sessions will be on telehealth.

Patty Carlesimo, ABCD – Now that you have 4 staff dedicated to data collection in the department, is it possible for you to make statewide reports to the public on a regular basis? I was very excited to hear that the referrals from different entities have increased.

Josephine Shenouda - We're working toward that.

Saira Hussain Akhter questioned she heard from more than one source there is a screening tool that is screening out more children, perhaps the BDI, stating some benchmarks seem to be later so children can be doing things later.

Josephine Shenouda - I think we need more information. There may be some miscommunication.

You're talking about a screening tool. Others have mentioned a different tool. We are looking at our eligibility data over time and monitoring it. We do have an assessment, a very comprehensive assessment, that we do during the initial evaluation. We are definitely monitoring the numbers that are eligible over time and there was a change in tool that happened in June 2023. Tracking our eligibility numbers, some of it has come down more recently so there could be multiple factors involved here.

Cynthia Newman – We've been looking at our numbers, and we really don't see a huge difference. But one of the things we've thought about, for our children under one, we don't think the tool is as sophisticated as it might be. We really think people should be using clinical opinion, coming with other tools that might be a little bit more sophisticated to look at our very young children. It's something we've been thinking about, but our numbers didn't see a huge difference. Kids are a little bit in the gray, and we always say err on the side of the child, and either use another tool, or your clinical opinion. We prefer that we would at least have a child for a period of time and see how they do.

#### Submitted Chat Messages as Public Comments:

01:26:57 Deepa Srinivasavaradan: FREE CEC and DEC Membership for 1 year ends March 31st:  
<https://exceptionalchildren.org/membership/access-for-all>

01:27:15 Corinne G Catalano: Thanks Deepa!

01:28:07 Deepa Srinivasavaradan: Reacted to "Thanks Deepa!" with 👍

01:31:36 Carola d'Emery Sunny Days: Reacted to "FREE CEC and DEC Mem..." with 👍

01:31:42 Jennifer Blanchette McConnell: Reacted to "FREE CEC and DEC Mem..." with 👍

01:32:56 Terra Madden: Where does the budget originate for the conference?

01:33:39 dg820: Is the conference in May limited to 300 in person participants?

01:34:38 Terra Madden: Replying to "Is the conference in..."

01:34:53 Christine Nogami Engine, NJEIS-DOH: The federal application is the first submission without the true award amount so it will revised in May with the actual awarded amount.

01:35:06 Nicole Brogden: Reacted to "300 in person. Unlim..." with 👍

01:45:00 Nichole Gooding: Reacted to "Save Date for Early Intervention Week.pdf" with 👍

01:47:10 Deb: QR codes

01:47:26 Edwards, Nicole M.: <https://exceptionalchildren.org/membership/access-for-all>

02:03:21 Jill Glassman - Arc of Somerset: YAY !!!! SW !!!!

02:05:39 Maria Emerson, Virtua Health: Maria Emerson, Virtua Health - joining a bit late.

- 02:07:04 Jennifer Blanchette McConnell: One of the breakout sessions during the Conference is by a practitioner about Effective Telehealth in NJEIS :)
- 02:09:44 Nicole Brogden: that data we pulled from each of our regions and separated out by referral source and look at the change over time periods
- 02:10:02 Carola d'Emery Sunny Days: Telehealth works in EI if the families understand that our work is to coach them so they can lead their children's developmental journey. For families that are looking for therapy, which is a strongly hands on service, telehealth is not what they want.
- 02:11:07 Maria Emerson, Virtua Health: regarding child find and NICU - most Level III NICUs have a very robust Rehab support team. Many EIP therapists also work in NICUs. Maybe we need to change focus from the discharge nurses. I am happy to assist.
- 02:11:17 La Peruana's Cell: Is adding more presumptive eligibility help? Other states have a lot More Than the 10 we do
- 02:13:17 La Peruana's Cell: And not all evaluators are used to pulling other tools
- 02:13:35 Kristi Balent: Will the presumptive eligibility list every be updated? We have many children coming out of the NICU without the current presumptive diagnoses but many have brain bleeds/stroke and other very serious medical issues that cause delays as well
- 02:14:02 Carola d'Emery Sunny Days: The BDI 3 is a statistically re-normed instrument based on the BDI-2. Because some skills were moved to be expected later in life, some children may not be eligible, however, I do not think this would overshadow the ability to use a second instrument and clinical opinion.
- 02:14:04 Maria Emerson, Virtua Health: Re eligibility, I realize informed clinical opinion is still an option, however it is an assumption that we should not be using ICO more than 5% of the time, which is what we were told was the state average.
- 02:14:27 La Peruana's Cell: Reacted to "Will the presumptive..." with ❤️
- 02:14:39 Maria Emerson, Virtua Health: Reacted to "Will the presumptive..." with ❤️

**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 June 27, 2025 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

**MOTION** to adjourn the meeting by Kathleen Hinnigan-Cohen and seconded by Virginia Lynn at approximately 11:20 a.m.