**Massachusetts Early Intervention ICC General Session**

**Thursday January 13, 2022**

**9:00 am - 2:00 pm**

**Zoom**

**9:00 – 11:00 Subcommittee Breakout Time**

**11:00 – 11:30 Lunch**

**11:30 – 11:45 Opening, Land Acknowledgement and ICC Orientation**

The ICC Co-Chairs welcomed all in attendance today, both voting and non-voting members! They explained that the role of the ICC is to advise and assist the EI division of DPH in its work to run the EI system in the state of Massachusetts. This input comes from the ICC (providers, parents, EI division) to identify priorities and set charges for the year. Each meeting will have time for committees to meet to discuss their priories. ICC Co-Chairs welcome participants to participate in a [land acknowledgment](https://nativegov.org/news/a-guide-to-indigenous-land-acknowledgment/) to reflect on what native land they are currently on.

**11:45 – 12:50 Early Intervention Division Director’s Update - Dr. Emily White (DPH)**

Dr. White shared results from the annual preference report on indicator data and asked for assistance from the ICC with target setting. Compliance indicators must be met 100% of the time while thresholds for quality indicators are set by EI. Annual performance data suggest that the composition of EI system mirrors the birth to 4 population across the Commonwealth. The children enrolled in EI are representative of the children that live in the commonwealth. However, Hispanic/Latino children are more likely than White children to exit due to unsuccessful contacts. IFSP data suggest that White families are receiving proportionately more services than our Black, Latin X and Asian families. This suggest that the current system is not effective for all infant and toddlers in the Commonwealth.

Based on data presented, the group was asked to provide insights on where future goals should be set for quality indicators. Target areas include child outcomes, family outcomes, connection to services, and transition outcomes. Dr. White will use results from the group polls to inform goal setting.

Dr. White presented an update on the EI Intervention Division Strategic Plan. The EI Division has undergone a strategic planning process to move forward with intention in a way that EI can identify what priorities and actions are, and set measurable timelines and measures to meet the strategic goal. The plan has been set and EI is now in the strategic action process. The overarching strategic goal is that Massachusetts EI is a high-quality Part C program. The division seeks to: 1) establish high functioning lead agency; 2) implement databased decision making, 3) eliminate disparities, 4) define policy and procedures, 5) standardize practice, evaluation, and oversight. As a next step, Dr. White will review ICC feedback and see how it influences the specific action areas and plans within these priority areas.

**12:55 – 1:25 Part B Indicators - Dr. Yi-Juin Liu (DESE)**

Dr. Liu presented APR data for Part B specifically around indicators 6 and 7 which focus on children who have IEPs. Dr. Liu presented prior and current targets for these indicators. Indicator 7 is focused on “the percentage of preschool children with IEPs (3-5) who improve in 3 outcomes.” There is a steady downward trend for this indicator which maps onto the national trend. Dr. Liu asked the group to consider what is realistic given the impacts of COVID on children and families. Should DESE be raising our expectations, lowering expectations or remain steady during this time? There must be an increase by 2025 but how fast should DESE expect to show improvements and what is realistic given what is going on in the state?

The group engaged in an open dialogue with Dr. Liu on these questions. Dr. Liu noted that school districts have been transparent with the issues they are experiencing firsthand. DESE is working to fill the gap between what districts are experiencing and what the Feds require. They are currently figuring out how the state can support districts through this.

**1:25 – 1:55 Subcommittee Updates**

Racial Equity’s Charge: *The racial equity task group will research strategies to promote diversity in providers, with input from the EI Division.* Updates from the committee:

The committee is taking a two-pronged approach to address this charge. 1) The committee will focus on addressing the eligibility of social workers and hiring practices. The current hiring practices are restrictive which prevents social workers from working in the EI system when there are other less restrictive systems to work in. 2) the group will research ways to incorporate a family liaison/coordinator into the system. This person would have lived experience with the EI system and would be able lend their experience and cultural perspective to the position.

* Next Steps: Connect with other programs that have similar positions to learn from their experiences, success, and funding mechanisms. The committee will develop a survey of other programs to gather this information. The group hopes to disseminate this survey to the ICC to share with their networks. Members should contact Johan if they would like to provide input on this topic.
* Biggest barriers: Funding for this role will be critical as this position is currently not billable for funding. Hoping to learn how other programs are funding this role.

Family Engagement’ Charge: *The Family Engagement committee will research strategies to promote social emotional health of families in EI, with the goal of distributing to broader audience, with input from the EI Division.* Updates from the committee:

The committee had a very productive conversation during breakout sessions. They spent time connecting all members to the shared drive and created a new spreadsheet to focus where resources get shared. They discussed potential access to the website as a central place for the committee to share resources. They discussed quality concerns regarding family access to resources (internet, printer, computer, translation, brail, etc.) and noted that this topic should be addressed in ICC and throughout the system. To address their change, the group decided that there is a lot of existing knowledge and resources that parents and families are entitled to and that there needs to be better information sharing on these materials. The group will focus on this issue.

* Next step: Meeting next month to refine documents and prepare documents to be posted publicly
* Biggest barrier: making sure the pieces are in place to have resources online and printed to make it more accessible to families and community members like pediatricians who disseminate information.

Fiscal Committee Charge: *The Fiscal Committee will explore new and revised funding mechanisms for EI, with input from the EI Division and work to increase funding for interpreter services, with input from the EI Division.* Updates from the committee:

The group will be focusing on how to better allocate funds from DPH for interpreter services and where external funds might be available. Will also look at if there are services that are not needed. Trying to determine if EI should be allocating more or less funds to interpreter services. If more, where are we going to get it from? If less, why, and where needs less? Focus on helping those that need more and can’t get it. Services are provided through third parties the state is contracted with. Trying to determine if third parties are the best options and if the services could be available in an a more equitable way through the entire EI division. The committee would like to conduct a survey to get feedback on current interpreter services, where funds are coming from and if funds are sufficient.

* Next Step: Examine the current reimbursement mechanisms and funding structure to determine routes moving forward. How can we be proactive, so we have a funding mechanism and structure in place to ensure quality services across the Commonwealth? Working to establish a monthly meeting for the committee to meet with regular representation from EI to inform efforts. Next meeting is Thursday Feb24th 10am
* Barriers: Timing- consistent contact from EI will help expedite these efforts.

Staffing Recruitment and Retention Task Group Charge ***-****The SRR TG will work to address the workforce crisis within EI programs, including all contracted vendors by identifying barriers to SRR, and develop recommendations to address these challenges in the short and medium term, including consideration of financial racial equity aspects in staffing, with the input from the EI division.* Updates from the committee:

The group discussed issues from experienced providers which include pay gaps, COVID concerns, and quality of life as issues related to retention and staffing. A next step will be to understand the EI operational standards around core requirements and which ones are the most challenging that leads to the loss of staff. The group will look to collect data around this point. Since the Racial Equity Committee will also be sending a survey, there may be an opportunity to coordinate to understand why programs are losing good candidates to other organizations. The group also discussed the strategy of partnering with graduate schools and their respective students to help address workforce retention issues. The region is rich with students so there is an opportunity to create a pipeline from graduate programs into the workforce that would be both beneficial to students and programs. The task group will be looking into incentives for this type of program to inform the design of this type of partnership.

**1:55 – 2:00 Closing**

**2:00 Adjourn**