## **ICC Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Zoom Meeting

**March 11, 2021**

**12:00-2:00 p.m.**

**ICC Members Present:** Johan de Besche – Co-Chair, Helena Liedtke – Co-Chair, Lori Book, Pam Wildnauer, Alexandra Nano, Jennifer Clark, Nicole Constantino, Colleen O’Brien, Bob Gagnon, Yi-Juin Liu, Lindsay Rosenfeld, Melissa Adams, Colleen Wellman, Roy Karp, Johanna Fulford, Liz Fancher, Maura Buglione, Dina Tedeschi, Liz Daniels, Jessica Nuhibian, Jaunita Simms, Eliza Bessone, Vicki Anderson, Brenda Allair.

* The meeting was opened at 12:04 p.m. by the Co-ChairsJohan de Besche and Helena Liedtke
* The minutes from the January ICC meeting were approved by the ICC Membership.

**Directors Report** – Emily White, Director of Early Intervention/MDPH:

The DPH submitted the State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report to the Office of Special Education Programs on 2/1/2021.

* Highlights include:
  + Indicator 1: Timely Provision of Services: Measurement is based on the percentage of infants and toddlers with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) who receive early intervention (EI) services on their IFSPs in a timely manner (30 days from the date of parental consent as defined by the MDPH Early Intervention Operational Standards). Massachusetts reported 99% of IFSP services were provided in a timely manner.
  + Indicator 4.C: Percent of families receiving EI services who report that early intervention services have helped their child develop and learn. The data for this indication is gather through the distribution of the NCSEAM Family Survey by a cohort of parents who have received EI services for at least 6 months. Massachusetts reported 93% of parents who responded to the survey reported EI services helped their child develop and learn.
* Areas for continuous improvement include:
  + Indicator 8 which evaluates the timely transition planning and activities for children with disabilities who are exiting EI services at age 3. Specifically, Indicator 8B addresses the notification of children who may be eligible for special education and/or related services to the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (known as the State Education Agency – or “SEA”) and school districts (known as the Local Education Agency – or “LEA”) where the child resides at least 90 days prior to the child’s third birthday.

**Part C Application:** The Department is working to complete and submit the Part C Application to OSEP. There are no substantive changes to EI policies in this application. The application will be posted on the Mass.gov and Early Intervention Parent Leadership Project (PLP) websites for review by the ICC membership, stakeholders, and the public.

**COVID-19 Update**: EI and Specialty Services providers are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine as part of the Phase I, Group 5 vaccination plan (Home-based Health Care Providers).

**What Keeps Us Up at Night:** Emily spoke about the stressors to the system, particularly during this last year and noted both concerns and the importance of:

* Relationships with families who receive EI services, contracted EI providers and EI Stakeholders,
* Ensuring quality supports,
* The EI workforce,
* Ensuring equity for families, in hiring and retention practices.

**Upcoming Activities:**

* Early Intervention plans to:
  + Release a survey to EI providers to gather information related to preferences for communications from DPH,
  + Access the expertise of an epidemiologist,
  + Increase supports related to racial equity.

**Sub Committee, Work Group and Task Force Reports:**

* The **Family Engagement Work Group** continues to discuss the challenges faced by families of children with special needs during the pandemic. Members review and gather resources for self-care in various media formats (print/videos). Members recognize the challenge of families to feel comfortable to receive service in-person given the variabilities of the last year and the needs of their children.
* The **Racial Equity Task Group** continues to discuss racial equity in hiring and retention practices. This is a difficult conversation of hiring a diverse work force considering staff lay-offs and furloughs because of the pandemic, however, there will be a time when programs will resume hiring staff. One member did report out their organizational self-assessment that included having discussions about equity, self-reflection on implicit bias, and that their staff wanted to incorporate strategies in their work with families. Program director saw the process as a supportive way to begin conversations with program staff, change the environment so all staff are made to feel welcome and integral, so it ideally maintains a stable workforce.
  + Ongoing questions: How do we better support families of different culture? How do we support staff to support families of difference cultures?
* **Fiscal Subcommittee/Re-engagement Task Force:** Members noted appreciation for DPH’s acknowledgement of strains on the system related to COVID and frustration that some recommendations made last year had yet to be acted upon.
  + Members expressed concern about the capacity of the current transportation system and the importance to ensure that the transportation system would have the capacity to ensure EI services would be provided equitably. Members noted equal access to transportation services breaks down institutional barriers. Members also expressed concerns about the timeline with which Transportation Request forms and PT-1 forms were processed (two-weeks). Members proposed DPH consider a contingency plan if the two-week processing time becomes a barrier to accessing timely service.
    - Recommendation: DPH conduct a survey of EI programs to determine initial program needs for transportation as in-person services begin to resume.
    - Proposal: Are there any other flexibilities that could be explored during the Public Health Emergency (PHE).
  + PPE – Both the cost and access to PPE is problematic – EI programs are applying for community grants to fund the cost of PPE. EEC, as a system, has developed a plan for the distribution of free PPE to their providers.
    - Recommendation: EI to partner/consult with EEC of their distribution/funding process.
  + Co-Treatments – Members are awaiting a response from DPH related to why DPH re-introduced the formal waiver process for monthly co-treatments. Members noted monthly co-treatments was shown to be an effective clinical practice.
  + Outreach – Members extended their appreciation to the social media campaign by the EI Parent Leadership Project. Members requested a response related to their request for financial support from DPH to place an ad in the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics professional journal.
  + Supervision reimbursement – Members requested DPH reconsider the proposal from the 2018 ICC Program Planning Sub Committee work on financial support for supervision.

**Panel Discussion: Structural Racism and Micro-Aggressions –** Addressing Structural Racism related to program staff to parents, parents to program staff, anyone to anyone.

Meenakshi Agrawal, Vikki Anderson, Lori Tobey-Freedman, Johan de Besche,

Vicki shared her personal experiences related to her family when the use of masks was required.

Lori shared her experiences from a program leadership perspective and supporting staff of various cultures and background.

Johan share his perspective as a clinician working with families of varied cultures, beliefs, and backgrounds.

Discussion and perspectives facilitated by Meenakshi:

* Acknowledging and owning that you are not a person of the same race/culture.
* We can all do better at building relationships. If we do not have the ability to have the difficult conversation, we are likely not able to build a trusting relationship.
* Microaggressions happen all the time – even a simple comment or questions can be a microaggression. Name it.
* When microaggressions occur, what are some of the tools panel members use? How do you realize you need assistance?
  + “Call a friend” – when I needed support, I went to the person who I had an established relationship with as a listening, resource, or networking tool.
  + Racial microaggression directed toward staff: how it affected the individual staff person, other staff within the team, supervisors.
  + Noting microaggressions of others when you are a service provider for the family: Examples:
    - Attending an appointment with a family to a physician and the physician addresses the clinician and not the family members directly – re-directing the physician to address the family.
    - Attending an IEP meeting and the members of the IEP team address the EI clinician and not the family - re-directing IEP team members to address family members directly.

**Closing Thoughts:** There is still ongoing work to recognize and address implicit and explicit bias. Self-reflections, on-going intentional support, and awareness that racial bias, social injustices, and inequities exist in our society and communities.

**Next ICC Meeting:**

**June 10, 2021, 12:00-2:00 p.m.**