**Autism Commission**

 **Birth to Fourteen Years Old**

**Subcommittee Meeting**

**Via-Zoom**

**May 29, 2025**

Present on Zoom: Carolyn Kain (co-chair), Dianne Lescinskas, Iraida Alvarez (co-chair), Emily White, Megan Glassberg, Mary Kate Haswell, Stephanie Coburn, Zach Houston

Meeting Minutes: Carol Gracia

Carolyn Kain called the meeting to order and welcomed all members of the Birth to Fourteen-Year-Old Subcommittee. The members voted and approved of the October 11, 2024 meeting minutes.

Iraida Alvarez shared the meeting agenda and had the members do an introduction ice breaker.

The meeting began with a presentation by Dr. Emily White, the Director of Massachusetts Early Intervention Division.

**Highlights from the Presentation**

***Overview of the Massachusetts IDEA Part C/Early Intervention System.***

**What is Part C? Why is it important**?

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the program for infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities and minimize potential developmental delay.

Maximize the potential for individuals with disabilities to live independently.

Reduce educational costs by minimizing the need for special education and other services for children.

Enhance capacity for families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities.

Enhance the capacity of state and local agencies to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of all children.

`

**How does Part C work in Massachusetts?**

 Referral

 Evaluation

 Eligibility Determination

 Enrollment

 Transition

**Successes of Part C in Massachusetts**

 MA Part C served over 41,000 infants and toddlers.

 79% of children who entered EI below age-expectation substantially increased their acquisition and use of knowledge and skills.

92.4% of families enrolled in EI reported that services helped their children's learning and development.

98% of services were provided in the child's natural environment by embedding learning within their everyday routines.

**Key Priorities for FY25**

 Improve data completeness

 Improve children’s outcomes

 Revise monitoring to meet federal guidance

Improve data quality

**Comments and questions**:

Is it the responsibility of early intervention to do the referral to school districts? Does early intervention let the school districts know before the 6-month window of the child turning 3 who they have so school districts can set their expectations for capacity?

It is the responsibility of the local early intervention providers to inform the local school districts when students are potentially eligible when they are coming. One caveat is that Mass has an opt-out policy where families can choose to not tell the local school district that their child is coming. About 500 or less families per year exercise their opt-out option.

The requirement to inform the school district has to be at least 3 months prior to the child’s third birthday and no more than 9 months prior to the child’s third birthday.

Dr. White has been working closely with a 619 coordinator to revise the memorandum of understanding to make sure that notifications are happening early enough that school districts can plan and families can feel supported. Just not too early in the process that the district is evaluating a child 6 or 7 months before they turn three.

Are there investments outside of IDEA, is this all IDEA funded?

Mass EI services has robust state funding. There is a state line item which is about 40 million dollars annually designed to help us pay for services and both EI services and services designed for children with Autism are in the Commonwealth ACA definition of essential services. They have to be paid for by commercial plans and MassHealth. The information is available on the EI website.

Where do students go after EI, subseparate classroom, inclusion classroom?

There is data available on qualifications, and on exiting reasons, but there is no data on where the students wind up after EI.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned.