

Early Intervention Advisory Council
May 23, 2023
Columbus Developmental Center, Columbus, Ohio

Attendance

*Jody Vice Beall, *Carrie Beier, *Kathy Muehlbauer (for Tracey Chestnut), Cindy Davis, Denielle Ell-Rittinger, *Kathy Greenawalt-Cherry, Lisa Houseworth, *Bonnie Hubbard-Nicosia, Susan Jones, Maggie Gons, *Lori Mago, Karen Mintzer, Cheree Nelson, *Jennifer Ottley, *Jenni Remeis, *Jamie Sanders, *Erin Simmons, Allyson VanHorn, *Susannah Wayland

Department Updates

Nathan DeDino started the meeting at 10:00am. Minutes from the March 2023 meeting were approved without additions or edits.

DeDino then provided updates from the department. He informed the group that the federal Part C application for funding had been submitted and included additional information around efforts to improve equity as required by the General Education Provision Act (GEPA). DODD is receiving an additional \$1.5M in federal funds and has increased the EI service coordination allocation.

There are currently two workgroups underway as part of the five-year EI rule review. We have completed the preliminary work on the eligibility and services rule. We are not proposing making significant changes to the rule. The most significant change is around the LEA opt out. The department eliminated the opt out provision for the local educational agency (LEA) notification and the workgroup was in favor of this as well. We have also begun our work on the forms related to procedural safeguards, consents, etc. We are exploring combining a couple of forms so that there are fewer forms for some of the activities.

We have begun the second workgroup, which is covering the procedural safeguards and system of payments rules. We have some county board business managers who will be working on the system of payment rule. In three to four weeks, we will begin the final workgroup that will focus on the service coordination rule.

The SFY24 EI service coordination grant is out. We decided to limit year-to-year reductions to 5%, rather than the 10% that we have typically used. We look forward to future discussions about the formula that we use. We also have solicitations out for hospital-based child find and services for children with hearing loss.

We have released county determinations and annual performance reports. This is an Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requirement for lead agencies whereby ratings are given to each of our local programs. We will be looking at making some changes to the determination process for the upcoming year. OSEP wants us to focus on increasing response rates.

Referrals remain elevated. The information is posted on the Early Intervention website and broken down by county. EI child counts are also increasing. The child count of over 14,000 is probably the highest it has been in 10 years. We will continue to offer support for the councils of government (COGs). We have a sub grant agreement and are using American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funding to help cover evaluation and assessment costs. One last COG is considering entering into an agreement with us, and we are looking at extending our work with the COGs and expanding the services that are offered.

Next, Diane Fox gave updates. Ohio is involved in the Ohio Practice and Policy Academy and works to support local teams with implementing Plans of Safe Care. DODD will be hosting Dr. Chasnoff who is an expert on addiction, alcohol, and the growing brain to do a webinar. Part of the Birth to 5 (B-5) grant allows for the expansion of online developmental screening for children 3-5 years of age. Another aspect of the B-5 work is the Center of Excellence whose initiative is called Ohio PROMISE. The goal of Ohio PROMISE is to ensure that every Ohio family is healthy and supported when needed. It has three components: to build a center of excellence (policy, research, and establishing a sustainable framework for early care and education), a scholarship program (providing scholarships to families with children with disabilities who are not otherwise eligible for publicly funded childcare), and inclusion certification (incentives and rewards for those who participate in additional inclusion-focused training activities).

The proposed Department of Children and Youth attended the Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB) Spring Conference and answered many questions from EI stakeholders. The new department is awaiting approval in the upcoming state budget. Follow HB33 for more information about its progression.

Shelly Palumbo then offered updates. She provided information about the EI program consultants and shared the regions they support. Each EI program has a technical assistance (TA) and training plan, which includes topics such as oversight and supervision, eligibility, assessment, the IFSP process, etc. The EI program consultants have been conducting on-site visits to counties, some of which include observation of home visits, discussion of policies with county boards, and providing oversight and trainings. They have provided 9 in-person trainings, 17 Teams/Zoom trainings, and have had 14 face-to-face consultations. We collect data on all the contacts that the consultants are making with the county boards. In April 2023, they provided 515 unique interactions within that period. During this past year, the DODD state team has focused on the EI eligibility process, including providing a statewide “train the trainer” webinar that included a bundle of resources.

Tiffany Madden provided updates. The EI Advisory Council and Stakeholder Group provided great feedback in making updates to the EI website, one of which was added diversity in the pictures on the website. Another suggestion that was made was to focus on “What is EI” for families, so we are in the process of creating additional resources for families.

One goal in the EI professional development space is to increase the diversity and number of professionals working in Early Intervention. Most interventionists are employed at the local level, which means we do not have a good idea of who is employed in our workforce. For this

reason, we have begun to obtain some preliminary data. The Ohio Association of County Boards (OACB) conducts a member survey and was able to share some of the salary data from their members. The recent upgrades to the Ohio Professional Registry (OPR), including the dashboard for service coordination, provided another opportunity to ask staff to include salary information, so we have that data as well. Our data shows differences in salary based on factors such as location of employment, geography, education, experience, etc.

We recently completed a community of practice with AnLar and they ran a successful training related to equity and supporting families who are on the margins. Their report should be available in the summer, but participant feedback was positive. The community of practice got them to look at the local systems and identify changes they could make.

Last year, the social work board revised their rule and will now allow certain state agencies to approve their trainings for social work continuing education units (CEUs) without submitting applications to the board. We have been working to create an internal DODD process and have finally completed that. We will have an internal committee that will review and approve each training. We have started with the asynchronous trainings that are housed on MyLearning. That information will be updated in MyLearning by July 1. The certificate printout in MyLearning is formatted with the requirements from the social work board.

Last year, we sent out the EI provider survey. We were able to obtain information from almost 900 providers and received responses from 423 providers. Data from the survey is being used to make training decisions, learn more about the EI field, and provide information for the State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP). The first questions were about general information regarding the services that are provided.

EI Family Questionnaire

DeDino then led a discussion about family questionnaire representativeness factors. He reminded the group that they discussed OSEP's requirement that states include an additional factor to look at the representativeness of responses to the state's annual EI family questionnaire. At the March meeting, the group engaged in a discussion and explored the use of county population density as a factor. DeDino facilitated a brief discussion and the appointed members of the group voted to use county population density (as presented at the March meeting) as the state's additional factor for representativeness of responses to the EI family questionnaire that are reported in Indicator 4 of the state's Annual Performance Report (APR).

Small Group Activities

The larger group then broke into smaller group to discuss two topics: the parent rights brochure and the EI service coordination manual. After each topic, the smaller groups reported out. For the discussion on the parent rights brochure, the groups had discussion around the reading level of the brochure, the use of jargon, the amount of white space, and the creation of additional supports around parent rights (e.g., videos and visual aids). For the discussion about the manual, the groups had discussion about providing both an electronic and print format, using the IFSP

process as the structure, keeping the information simple and targeted, obtaining feedback from users before distributing a final draft, and the importance of keeping the manual updated.

Adjournment

After the small groups reported out, the meeting adjourned at 2:00pm.