

Early Intervention Advisory Council and Stakeholder Meeting

Meeting Minutes

August 17, 2021

I. Call to order

Nathan DeDino called the meeting to order 10:05 AM.

II. Roll Call

Jody Beall*, Carrie Beier*, Julie Brem, Maria Breno*, Tracey Chestnut*, Meredith Craig, Cindy Davis, Nathan DeDino, Christine Dobrovich*, Diane Fox, Kathy Greenawalt-Cherry*, Taylor Hammond, Arley Hammons, Ashley Hausmann, Bonnie Hubbard-Nicosia*, Susan Jones, Megan Kloss, Julie Litt, Lori Mago*, Beth Martin, Henry Matthews; Karen Mintzer; Josie Morningstar*; Cheree Nelson; Jennifer Ottley*; Michele Price; Jennifer Remeis*; Jamie Roe*; Jamie Sanders*; Erin Simmons*; Jessica Smith

III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

The minutes from the May 18, 2021 meeting were approved with no changes.

IV. Open issues

a) DODD Updates

DeDino discussed the next meeting and that the group would need to approve the APR. He discussed that the group would be moving back to in-person meetings soon. DODD will continue communicate with the group about in person vs. virtual options.

OSEP Determination. DeDino informed the group that Ohio received its annual determination from OSEP at the beginning of July. He indicated that he was happy to report that Ohio received the determination of “Meets Requirements” again and that this was the fifth year in a row the state was able to achieve that. He explained that it speaks to the hard work of the many people who are part of this meeting and working in local EI systems.

COVID-19 Guidance Updates. DeDino indicated that DODD provided some guidance at the end of July regarding COVID-19. As some of the restrictions were unwinding with the state of emergency, DODD received questions around a number of topics including virtual evaluations, in-person IFSP meetings, service coordinator check-ins, and documenting the method of service delivery on the IFSP. DODD provided updated guidance on these topics. In regard to virtual evaluations, DODD understands that there are concerns some families have around health and safety so DODD will allow these to continue through the end of the December if needed. Many people have expressed interest in allowing initial and annual IFSPs virtually. DODD understands the benefits, but this requirement is in Ohio’s EI rule because it is a federal requirement that these IFSPs must be completed in person. OSEP has temporarily allowed them to occur virtually so we will to follow OSEP’s guidance about whether to continue or not continue that going forward. For the past several months, DODD required service coordinators to check in with families on a bi-weekly basis. This requirement has been suspended, but the amount of time needed to check in should be individualized to family needs. Finally, regarding documenting the method of service delivery, a mixed method is possible, but for clarity DODD’s recommendation is that the two be clearly delineated on the IFSP. DODD is very cognizant of the rapidly changing situation and will provide further updates if needed.

SFY22 EI Services Contracts. DeDino informed the group that DODD has been working through the spring and summer to get contracts in place and is continuing to do so with additional requests for proposals (RFPs) and funding opportunities. He indicated that DODD-funded EI services for children who are deaf or hard of hearing went through the competitive RFP process and ended up with the same providers who had previously received contracts, maintaining coverage throughout all 88 counties. In regard to the Nutrition Services RFP, DODD was able to contract with two providers; a third previous provider chose not to continue their contract so DODD will be working to rebid that. DODD continued its contract with the Ohio State School for the Blind for EI vision services. Finally, DODD also renewed contracts with the five hospitals that do hospital-based child find that we have historically had contracts with over the past several years.

2021 Family Questionnaire. DeDino indicated that 2021 EI family questionnaires went out last week. He reminded the group that last year with the pandemic, DODD moved to a completely virtual survey as it would have been logistically very challenging to collect paper surveys at that time. Participant families were mailed a document that included information about the Family Questionnaire and included a link and QR code to use to respond. This past year, DODD staff reflected on lessons learned and surveyed EI Contract Managers and EI Service Coordinators about the process in order to determine how to proceed with this year's questionnaire. We found that online worked well for many families, but we wanted to accommodate those who could not complete or were not comfortable completing the questionnaire in this manner. We received input indicating it would be helpful if DODD could email the family questionnaire directly to families. To do this, service coordinators worked over the past year to collect email addresses from caregivers who were willing to share them. About 90% of those served on June 1 agreed to share email addresses. DODD emailed information and links to complete the questionnaire to those families and mailed a paper survey with stamp addressed return envelope to those who did not share an email address. DeDino also mentioned that OSEP has expanded requirements around representativeness and informed the group we will be working them to consider what else we should look into regarding these expanded requirements.

Early Childhood Leadership Fellows. DeDino explained that ODE had been awarded a grant from OSEP around facilitating and fostering leadership of early childhood leaders involved with children birth through age five. They have started a fellowship program focused in certain school districts. On the EI side, we have looked at counties in which those school districts are located. For the first of the three cohorts, the focus is on Cuyahoga and Summit counties, including leaders from the county board and EI service coordination agency in both counties. DODD will provide regular updates as this process unfolds over the next several years.

Public Awareness and Outreach. DeDino informed the group that DODD is working with Bright Beginnings to put together a year-long plan focused on continuing our public awareness and outreach efforts. The plan should be completed by this autumn and we will have a more thorough presentation at an upcoming meeting. In general, the outreach will continue to focus on ensuring the referral and engagement of children with elevated blood lead levels (EBLLs), neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS), and underrepresented families, all under the umbrella of getting referrals as early as possible.

SFY21 Data. DeDino shared EI referral and child count data for SFY19 through SFY21. He indicated that referral numbers have increased over the past several months and point in time child counts have also increased as referrals have increased. DeDino also shared the SFY21 cumulative count, eligibility via informed clinical opinion, and total children served in SFY21 with eligibility based on NAS and EBLL.

TA & Training Updates. Diane Fox shared data on technical assistance (TA) topics addressed from March through June 2021. Fox explained that individual contacts with counties are tracked and sorted by topic. She indicated that the most prominent topics addressed over the past few months were around credentialing, compliance, fiscal, and developing and reviewing TA & Training plans.

Fox also indicated that DODD is working on revising the TA & Training plan templates. She explained that we currently have a good way to track TA and training trends, but we want to improve on it to be to evaluate results and to easily determine what types of technical assistance is needed to meet TA & Training plan goals. She also indicated that one of the recent bi-weekly updates included reflective questions for counties to think about in regard to their TA & Training plans and their overall goals and plans for their local program.

Fox informed the group that the EI consultants have been working on budget approvals and that they have all have been approved or conditionally approved. She also indicated that DODD is developing the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) agreement and criteria for reviewing and approving those agreements, which will be similar to EISC grant process. DODD will have an ARPA kickoff on September 27 where we will share more details about the agreement.

Fox indicated that much of recent technical assistance has focused on certification and credentialing. She also informed the group that DODD is partnering with OHMAS to add a total of three trainings per year in conjunction with master trainers around social-emotional development.

Fox informed the group that DODD is in the process of developing several contracts and issuing RFPs to focus on three areas: 1) family support and how EI can do better at supporting families in a family-centered way in a way that provides tools and resources to evaluate and try new resources; 2) how we communicate about EI and the EI process to families; and 3) an opportunity for funding to develop a series of trainings around equitable access for all families, with a particular focus on families of color, homelessness, food insecurity, and parents with intellectual disabilities.

Fox informed the group about plans for professional development and additional trainings. She indicated that we expect to be finished with the Principles of Service Coordination (POSC) and POSC modules/curriculum later this year. Fox explained that DODD added a coaching requirement for those seeking a one-year developmental specialist certification. Fox also informed the group that the Donuts with Di series will be somewhat different this year regarding the target audience; half of the Donuts with Di sessions will be dedicated to interventionists, and

the rest will be focused on role of EISC and role of the leadership in EI. Finally, Fox provided a high level summary of the trainings DODD offered May through July.

b) ARPA Activity

DeDino told the group that their discussion at a meeting earlier this year helped inform DODD on how to best move forward in distributing the ARPA funds. He explained that we have more information from OSEP now in regard to the use of the funds and also mentioned DODD is not anticipating the fiscal reporting requirements to be much to be different than what is required for the EI service coordination grant. DeDino reminded the group that Ohio EI received almost \$7 million in ARPA funds.

DODD explained that the ARPA funds would be distributed based on three priority areas, including oversight, evidence-based practices, and technology. He indicated that the intent to apply was due this week, that funding will be provided through FCFC admin agents and available through June 30, 2023, and that separate grant agreements would be put in place for these funds.

The group separated into smaller groups and discussed the following questions:

- What will success look like?
- With the three focus areas of oversight, evidence-based practices, and technology, what are specific initiatives and activities that local EI programs should consider?
- What should local EI programs consider about sustainability?

c) Partner Updates

- Erin Simmons informed the group about a Family Resource Guide a stakeholder group is creating that she will present on at OCALICON this autumn. The guide will be available for anyone who works with a child from birth to about third grade, but can be used with older children if needed. ODE will be housing this guide. If there are resources you would like to see included in this toolkit, email them to Erin. Erin hopes the guide will be available early next year

V) Adjournment

DeDino adjourned the meeting at 12:00 PM.