

Interagency Coordinating Council

February 14, 2005
9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Infoline – 4th floor
1344 Silas Deane Highway
Rocky Hill, CT

Approved 4-11-05

Minutes

Laurel Ross, ICC Acting Chair
ARC, Greenwich

Timothy Bowles, acting
Dept. of Social Services

Carmina Cirioli
Parent

Mary Ann Dayton-Fitzgerald
Dept. of Children and Families

Elizabeth Daly
Office of Protection and Advocacy

Mary Eberle, alternate
A.J. Papanikou Center for Excellence

Maria Engborg, alternate
Parent

Rita Esposito, acting
REACHOUT, Inc.

Ann Gionet
Parent

Linda Goodman
Department of Mental Retardation

Mark A. Greenstein, M.D.
Pediatrician

Clara Gutierrez, acting
Parent

Jeannette Haines, acting
BESB

Moirra Herbert, acting
Dept. of Insurance

Melvette Hill, acting
Parent

Cynthia Jackson
Children's Therapy Services

Robert LaCamera, M.D.
American Academy of Pediatrics

Joe McLaughlin
McLaughlin and Associates

Lisa Penick, acting
Stamford Early Head Start

Maria Synodi, alternate
State Dept. of Education

Robin Tousey-Ayers, acting
Dept. of Public Health

Myra Watnick
Rehabilitation Associates, Inc.

Diane Wixted
*Commission on the Deaf and
Hearing Impaired*

ICC Members Present: Tim Bowles, Elizabeth Daly, Maria Engborg, Rita Esposito, Linda Goodman, Dr. Mark Greenstein, Clara Gutierrez, Jeanette Haines, Moira Herbert, Cindy Jackson, Dr. Robert LaCamera, Joe McLaughlin, Lisa Penick, Lolli Ross, Myra Watnick, Diane Wixted

ICC Members Absent: Carmina Cirioli, Mary Ann Dayton-Fitzgerald, Mary Eberle, Ann Gionet, Melvette Hill, Rep. Denise Merrill, Maria Synodi, Robin Tousey-Ayers

The meeting began at 9:20 AM.

Introductions: Lolli Ross, Acting ICC Chair, welcomed everyone to the State ICC meeting. Council members and twelve members of the public introduced themselves.

Approval of December Minutes

Mark made a Motion to approve the minutes as written. Cindy seconded. The Motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

1. Patti Pallanck from the American School for the Deaf and the CT Early Hearing and Impairment Detection Task Force spoke on behalf of the Task Force, which was established to advocate for universal newborn hearing screening more than a decade ago. Currently 99% of babies are screened in Connecticut during the Perinatal period. A hearing level of 0 – 15 dB is considered to be within normal limits. Even a mild hearing impairment has significant impact on the infant's ability to learn language, since these babies typically miss plurals, tense markers, and other critical language components. Babies with hearing loss need and benefit from amplification, even if the impairment is only mild or unilateral. The

Birth to Three System has set eligibility at 40dB or greater, bilateral only, which leaves babies who could benefit from amplification without support. Parents tend to think these mild or unilateral losses are not significant since their baby is not eligible for Birth to Three, when in reality the infant is losing critical early exposure to the full range of language resulting in a negative impact on communication development. Ms. Pallanck requested that eligibility be modified to include all babies with hearing loss who could benefit from amplification, a projected 10 – 15 children per year for Connecticut. She noted that the families also need parent education and other supports to effectively manage their child's hearing impairment and how it affects development. It was noted that currently, a child found eligible due to language delay with a 35 dB loss would be amplified, whereas a child with a 70dB loss in one ear and a 35 dB loss in the second ear is still not eligible. Dr. Greenstein noted the impact of hearing loss on early literacy and that when the child reaches school age, a recommendation to “sit up in the front of the classroom” is not enough. Maria Engborg encouraged consideration of parent input, especially from those whose children were not eligible, to learn school-age outcomes for children with mild or unilateral losses. It was noted that insurance reimbursement is not related to the level of hearing loss. Discussion continued on the topic of tracking, with Ms. Pallanck reporting that the Department of Public Health tracks children identified via newborn screening, but they are understaffed and do not currently have a protocol to re-evaluate the hearing of all children identified in Connecticut. The ICC will invite Donna Masselli from the Newborn Hearing Screening Unit within the Department of Public Health to share additional information at its April meeting.

2. Margaret Holmberg from LEARN, Partners in Birth to Three, discussed her program budget constraints under the current payment protocol. She reported that her budget looks awful, and cited the reimbursement rate for initial evaluations as particularly inadequate. The amount of staff time needed to review and discuss all necessary information with the family has increased, particularly since implementation of parent fees. Ms. Holmberg reported that the initial evaluation takes an estimated average of 8 – 11 hours of staff time across two professionals. Currently, phone calls prior to enrollment are not reimbursed; a visit is needed to receive payment. She reported that parents are taking longer to enroll their children which results in delayed reimbursement for programs. This unintended consequence of the parent fee implementation has a serious negative effect on programs. Discussion continued on this topic. It was estimated that making a separate payment for the eligibility evaluation, then the IFSP meeting, would cost an additional \$1 million per year. The current fiscal constraints under which the Birth to Three System is operating make this option unfeasible.

OSEP Conference Participants' Report

Maria Engborg, Rita Esposito and Clara Gutierrez participated in the national Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education OSEP conference representing the Connecticut State ICC. Maria reported that she returned re-energized with a realization of how hard everyone works and with a new appreciation for Linda Goodman as director. It was interesting to realize that Connecticut is doing really well compared to other states, even though we have complaints and areas in need of improvement. Mrs. Engborg notes that Massachusetts collected more revenue from insurance company reimbursements than from any other source. She came back to Connecticut with lots of questions and many ideas, particularly on how to reach legislators.

Rita Esposito thanked the Council for sponsoring her trip, and commended Clara and Maria for their participation. She reported having grown to understand that the information required by Birth to Three really is necessary for reporting to the federal government, and that OSEP is the “police officer” that monitors our system. Ms. Esposito reported surprise at the differences across the states. She found many states' early intervention systems to be complex and

cumbersome and came to see Connecticut as relatively smooth and seamless. Others view Connecticut as being ahead of the curve, particularly regarding our database and our provision of services in natural environments. The conference also afforded her a better understanding of the laws and changes to the federal law.

Clara Gutierrez thanked the Council for sponsoring her conference participation and the wealth of information that she is still absorbing. Mrs. Gutierrez found it reassuring that “people do care about our kids all across the country”, and thanked everyone in Connecticut for their good work in supporting her daughter and her family.

Other ICC members at the conference included Linda Goodman, Birth to Three Director, and Maria Synodi, Coordinator for Preschool Special Education at the State Department of Education. Joe McLaughlin commented that getting away from the usual monthly routine is beneficial and improves one’s broader perspective. He recently attended a workshop by Barry Prizant and found the information gained and the perspective achieved to be very helpful. Lolli noted that the ICC could also benefit from taking a step back to reflect and engage in planning future objectives and proposed that the April meeting agenda include discussion of an ICC retreat.

Lead agency Update

Linda distributed several handouts (att, 2, 3, 4). Birth to Three net invoices have been approximately \$2 million per month, with FY05 expenditures comparable to last year. The parent fee structure was revised in July with amounts reduced for many and a delay in commencing collection for all families, which led to a decrease in the net amount of parent fees collected. System costs for parent billing average about \$6 thousand per month with postage and credit card fees in addition. Discussion ensued re. the relatively high cost and low gains from parent fees. The Council asked Pietro to add a column showing insurance revenue so that this could be monitored more closely and improved if possible. Last year saw approximately \$3.2 million versus this year’s \$2.9 million in insurance revenue.

Linda reported that January referrals equaled 749, which was unusually high. The December 1st Child Count data was reported to OSEP. Connecticut was serving 3.16% of its population under the age of three years on that day. Medicaid reimbursement was lower last year than in prior years. An explanation will be sought and reported once known. FY06 proposed contract language changes are now available, with feedback requested from providers.

The federal appropriation for next year (*att. 4*) is significantly decreased. The current calculation is based on a federal estimate of births in each state and is perceived to be flawed. Linda noted that the Part C Directors Association is seeking to change this funding formula for the next round of IDEA reauthorization. Linda distributed the blank draft application for federal funding (*att. 3*), due in early May.

A regional meeting will be held in Washington, D.C. on April 5th. The ICC wants to send a representative, so interested parties should contact Lolli.

The draft Annual Performance Report was mailed out to all Council members for feedback and an Executive Committee meeting will be convened soon to edit before the March 31st due date.

A Credentialing Manual is being disseminated, with a study guide and observation manual under development for eventual posting on the Birth to Three website (www.birth23.org).

Together We Will will take place on April 8th with a focus on Challenging Behaviors. This annual conference is sponsored by the Connecticut Birth to Three System and the State Department of Education and brings together many practitioners and parents who enjoy learning about updated research and recommended practices for providing early intervention and preschool special education.

CPTV has filmed 30- and 60-second vignettes on The Birth to Three System to air beginning in March. The family featured is former ICC parent member, Mary Mansour, with her husband Eric and daughter, Isabella. This is the first of a series of vignettes designed to promote inclusive education funded by the Connecticut Council on Developmental Disabilities.

Focused Monitoring (FM) Update

Alice Ridgway distributed attachments 5, 6, and 7. Alice explained the finalized program groupings and described the roll-out meeting held on January 26th for providers. Five parent FM team members and Alice will conduct on-site reviews beginning later this month. Hill Health, Family Junction, CT Children's Medical Center, and Cooperative Educational Services will all be reviewed before the end of the fiscal year. Discussion ensued regarding the programs' perceptions of FM. Some cited discomfort with the Program Profiles, especially their website posting. Alice explained that the web postings will each have an introductory statement explaining the context in which the reader should interpret the data and that postings will be updated twice yearly. Wide dissemination of Monitoring data is being required by OSEP. Feedback from the FM process will be solicited and is essential for improving the process. Alice offered to provide a wealth of data at the June ICC meeting on the first four monitoring visits.

Community Playgroups

Cindy Jackson reported on the playgroups funded by the Birth to Three System related to enhanced community learning opportunities for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities. She stated that there had been some success in the form of improved collaboration with Birth to Three providers. Some challenges included, (1) a Family Resource Center had to turn away families in order to keep their natural ratios of children with an IFSP and those without; and (2) one check that was intended for a library was paid to their town as requested, but the funds never reached the library. Discussion ensued, with a decision on whether or not to renew this funding opportunity postponed until the April ICC meeting.

Governor's budget

The proposed budget has been released by Governor M. Jodi Rell. The ICC may wish to either support the proposed budget or advocate for modification, e.g., specific to the Council's hoped-for change in Birth to Three eligibility, which was not funded. A budget forum will be convened by CT Voices for Children on Feb. 22 in the Old Judiciary Room of the Capitol building. Elizabeth Daly, Cindy Jackson, and Joe McLaughlin volunteered to participate on behalf of the Council.

Reports and Announcements

Jeanette Haines from the Board of Education and Service for the Blind announced that their two new teacher positions have been negatively affected by the Governor's hiring freeze. BESB will convene a conference for parents on March 19th in Meriden entitled, Fostering Independence. Invitations will be in both English and Spanish. The annual Perkins School for the Blind conference is set for April 30th.

Joe McLaughlin announced a symposium in early March hosted by Barry Prizant, Ph.D. focusing on Autism Spectrum Disorders. Fees collected will be used to support a parent summer

symposium. Dr. Prizant offers training on Social Emotional Regulation Transactional Supports (SCERTS). Joe proposed that Birth to Three bring in Dr. Prizant for technical assistance.

Linda Goodman announced that the Department of Public Health has proposed changes to the regulation governing child care. It is hoped that language will be added that requires compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Further, Early Learning Guidelines are under development by the Department of Social Services aimed at child care providers. Forums will be held around the state to solicit input from caregivers and other interested parties.

Elizabeth Daly from the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities announced her agency's work with the Office of the Child Advocate to gain access to the Hartford School District's records for children with behavioral issues.

Maria Engborg from Padres Abriendo Puertas announced that they have received funding to provide trainings for families on transition to special education which will be conducted in Spanish. ARC Greenwich will conduct similar programs in English.

Lisa Penick from Stamford Early Head Start announced development of their Framework for Infants and Toddlers which will provide valuable standards for child care providers.

Dr. Bob LaCamera announce the upcoming School Health Conference sponsored by the Academy of Pediatrics.

Tim Bowles from the Department of Social Services announced beginning the planning of an October 1st Administrative Service Organization meeting, with future details provided as they become available.

Eileen McMurrer announced a successful visit to Connecticut by a psychologist from Sendai, Japan on February 10th. Rita Esposito and Tammy Garris were exceptionally supportive in providing her with transportation to a parent support group at REACHOUT, a meeting at the regional Birth to Three office with Tammy and Eileen to view the orientation and transition videos, discuss our laws and philosophy and review our Procedures. Our guest left with a very positive impression of Connecticut's early intervention system.

Lolli then called for a **Motion** to adjourn. Myra made the Motion to adjourn; Cindy seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. The meeting ended at 1:25 PM

NEXT SICC MEETING

Monday, April 11th at Infoline in Rocky Hill, 1344 Silas Deane Highway, fourth floor conference room. If weather concerns arise, please check Eileen's outgoing voicemail message for confirmation or cancellation instructions. Ph. 860-418-6134 after 7 AM.

Please RSVP to Kathy Granata at 860-418-6146 or via e-mail to Eileen at eileen.mcmurrer@po.state.ct.us.

Respectfully submitted by Diane Wixted, Recording Secretary
With the assistance of Eileen McMurrer, lead agency staff support to the State ICC