

Connecticut Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council Meeting Minutes – June 15, 2026

Location: Legislative Office Building, Hearing Room 1A

Time: 9:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Attendance:

Present: Cindy Jackson (ICC Chair), Lisa Obert (Parent Representative), Rebecca Smith (Lead Agency, Birth to Three), John Lamb (Department of Public Health), Jill Eisenberg (UConn UCEDD), Rebecca Breen (EastConn Birth to Three), Kristina Gilberti (Rehab Associates), Anne Giordano (EdAdvance), Julie Hall (Mobility), and Elaine Balsley (Reach Out), Robb Dunn (Parent Representative), Shanda Easley (Parent Representative, Remote), Mary Welander (House of Representatives, ICC Member), Jennifer Leeper (House of Representatives, ICC Member); Elena Trueworthy, Commissioner, Connecticut Early Childhood; David Morgan, Deputy Commissioner, Connecticut Early Childhood.

Welcome and Introductions (9:10 – 9:15)

The meeting opened Cindy Jackson, ICC Chair welcoming all participants. She initiated introductions and reminded attendees to use the microphone when speaking, especially for the benefit of virtual participants.

Attendees introduced themselves in sequence. The transcript records the presence of Cindy Jackson (Children's Therapy Services), Lisa Obert (Parent Representative), Rebecca Smith (Lead Agency, Birth to Three), John Lamb (Department of Public Health), Jill Eisenberg (UConn UCEDD), Rebecca Breen (EastConn Birth to Three), Kristina Gilberti (Rehab Associates), Anne Giordano (EdAdvance), Julie Hall (Mobility), and Elaine Balsley (Reach Out).

Additional attendees beyond those audible in the transcript may have been present according to the agenda's expected participant list.

Public Comment was requested and none was offered.

Recognition and Council Membership Updates (Public Comment Section 9:15 – 9:20)

During the early portion of the meeting, the Council recognized **Anne Giordano** for her longstanding service and advocacy in infant mental health and homelessness. Anne shared reflections on her time with the Council and expressed appreciation for agency staff, directors, and families.

Council leadership noted the continued need for additional **provider members** and **family representatives**, citing aging-out families and upcoming vacancies. Members were encouraged to refer potential applicants to the Membership Workgroup.

A brief update was offered regarding the **ICC parent recruitment video**, which had been previewed at the previous meeting and will be posted online when finalized.

Old Business (9:20 – 9:40)

Quorum and Minutes

The Council was unable to approve minutes from February and April due to lack of quorum.

Legislative / Fiscal Update

Rebecca Smith shared that the Birth to Three system successfully secured **\$10.4 million** in the state budget for rate increases. Tentative rates were reported as **\$142/hour for professionals** and **\$95/hour for paraprofessionals**, though these amounts reflect only approximately 25% of what the full rate study recommended.

System Support / PD

The System Support/PD group had not met since the Family Focus meeting.

Communication & Outreach

The group discussed developing a letter to invite families to participate more deeply with ICC activities and committees.

Bylaws Workgroup

The Bylaws Workgroup was reported to be about **three-quarters through** the review and revision process. Proposed changes include the formal establishment of **voting members** and broadening member representation in areas such as infant mental health, childcare regulation, tribal representation, military representation, and other specialized domains. Final draft bylaws are anticipated for **October**, with a vote planned at that meeting.

Membership Workgroup

The Membership Workgroup is awaiting additional direction from the Director of Appointments regarding appointments and membership status before proceeding with next steps.

Childcare Workgroup

The Childcare Workgroup provided an extensive update. Work continues with Nicole (Lead Agency) on childcare licensing questions, Early Head Start coordination, documentation requirements, and provider responsibilities. A provider survey was developed to identify barriers, training needs, and mutual misunderstandings between Birth to Three and childcare programs. A parallel survey for childcare providers will also be disseminated. These surveys are intended to clarify roles, reduce confusion, and improve inter-system collaboration.

New Business (9:40 – 10:00)

CPAC Family Connections Report

CPAC presented a comprehensive update on its work supporting families within the Birth to Three system. CPAC highlighted efforts to develop a **Parent's Guide** to Connecticut's Early Intervention System and expand the family-focused webpage on the Birth to Three website. Plans for quarterly family workshops were outlined, covering topics including IFSP processes, communication strategies with providers, and social-emotional development.

The Parent Mentor Program continues to grow, having added two new mentors. CPAC reported **24 calls** for family navigation support, with **17 families** engaged and **7 pending contacts**, and noted increased need for supports related to preschool transition, sibling impacts, family dynamics, and behavior concerns among children nearing age 3.

Head Start Collaboration Office Presentation – Karen Pascale

Karen Pascale, Director of the Head Start Collaboration Office, described the creation of a new **Family and Community Leadership and Outreach Division** within the Office of Early Childhood (OEC). This division consolidates all major family-engagement streams, including Head Start, local governance partners, parent ambassadors, parent cabinet, and 2Gen work.

Karen provided an extensive overview of **Head Start on Housing**, a statewide housing-support program launched in 2022, including its shift from HUD vouchers to state-funded rental assistance certificates. To date, **151 families** (including **331 children**) have been housed through the initiative. Additional funding streams, including a \$2.25 million commitment over three years and a recent **Thrive from the Start** grant, were also discussed.

Karen and ICC members also discussed improved coordination between Birth to Three and Early Head Start, including opportunities to revise the existing MOU, participate in surveys, and expand joint training.

Legislative Committee (10:00 – 11:00)

Recognition of Legislative Champions

The Council recognized several legislators for their advocacy:

- **Representative Leeper**, champion of integrating Birth to Three fully under the Education Committee, who has now joined ICC as a member.
- **Representative Robin Comey**, acknowledged for long-term support and coordination with other legislators.
- **Representative Mary Wielander**, noted for her leadership in the Children’s Caucus and her consistent support of Birth to Three.
- Additional recognitions included **Representative Kate Farrar**, **Representative Jillian Gilchrist**, **Representative Exum**, **Senator Austin**, and **Representative Walker**, each praised for their critical roles in budget advocacy, Medicaid policy understanding, and resisting tiered funding structures.

Early Childhood Alliance Presentation – Meryl Gay

Meryl Gay described the structure and mission of the Early Childhood Alliance and reflected on recent advocacy successes. He explained the fiscal constraints facing Connecticut, the importance of unified advocacy across the early childhood sector and offered attendees a guided Capitol tour to improve legislative navigation and testimony preparation.

Lead Agency Report (11:00 – 11:30)

Rebecca Smith presented the Lead Agency report prepared by Nicole (on vacation). The state is awaiting its **federal determination** from OSEP, expected June 16. The updated **SPP-APR package** is posted for public comments, and the **Part C grant application** has been submitted. The OEC budget was increased by **\$6.2 million** for FY27.

Education and outreach activities were robust during the reporting period, including the **Kids Play Early Childhood Fair**, where 32 screenings were completed and five referrals generated. Additional community outreach events and promotional material distribution are underway.

Personnel development efforts include expanded collaboration with institutes of higher education to strengthen pre-service preparation, recruitment, and retention.

Accountability updates noted the completion of the 2026 Technical Assistance Series and revisions underway on statewide documentation and monitoring manuals.

PCG Billing Update

PCG provided detailed billing statistics:

Commercial insurance billing totaled **\$7.5 million**, with **\$3.1 million** paid to date. Medicaid billing totaled **\$50.3 million**, with **\$47.9 million** paid. PCG emphasized the consistently higher reimbursement rate for Medicaid (92–98%) compared to commercial insurance (35–48%).

Discussions followed regarding insurance barriers, the need for additional data on denials and reimbursement variation across programs, and exploration of legislative strategies to address gaps linked to self-funded plans.

Committee Breakout Sessions (11:30 – 12:30)

System Support / PD Committee Report

The committee discussed challenges in the paraprofessional-to-professional advancement pathway (DTA to DSP), describing the process as cumbersome and underutilized. Only 2–3 individuals have completed the process in approximately five years. The group emphasized the need for improved apprenticeship, shadowing, and inter-system coordination (including with UConn courses).

They also reviewed final refinements to the childcare survey and identified the need for improved communication with the Lead Agency during committee meetings.

Legislative / Fiscal Committee Report

The committee focused substantial attention on insurance billing questions, including the need to determine how many families decline insurance billing and how programs can improve insurance reimbursement rates. The committee discussed creating clearer resource materials for families and training enhancements for service coordinators. Opportunities to engage superintendents and municipal leaders to advance Birth to Three advocacy were identified.

Communication / Education & Outreach Committee Report

The committee discussed strategies to recruit more parent representatives, noting several members have aged out. CPAC mentor families will be contacted for interest, and outreach will also occur through the Birth to Three support group. Work has begun on a parent-module explaining ICC processes to help new parent representatives understand reports and responsibilities.

Next ICC Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for **Monday, October 19, 2026**, location TBD.

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