

*Early Intervention Providers Association (EIPA):
Accomplishments for 2006-07*



Current Focus:

- Long-term responsible funding of EI System
- Improved communication and coordination in EI System structure
- Provider Standards

Overall Impact, 2006-07:

- Launched and expanded the membership of the Early Intervention Providers Association (EIPA), formerly the EI Coalition.
- Established EIPA as the largest EI advocacy coalition in the state as its members currently provide services collectively to over 50% of NJ children and families in the EI System.
- Continued to build contacts and nurtured relationships with Lead Agency officials at the Department of Health and Senior Services (DOHHS), REICs, including meeting on a regular basis with the Assistant Commissioner for Family Health Services and staff on issues for providers and the individuals they serve.
- Actively participates in the EI Steering Committee meetings and regularly speaks during the public comment period at the SICC on provider concerns and issues, including reimbursement rates, billing and training concerns.
- Serve as an active member of the EI Work Group which is comprised of EI advocates from Legal Services of NJ, Rutgers University Law School Special Education Law Clinic, Arc of NJ, and others organizations. The group meets on a regular basis to discuss and formulate strategies on issues important to the EI community.

Policy Areas:

I. Legislation/State Policy

Recognized by Governor's Policy Staff, Department officials, and Legislators and their staffs as providing balanced information and advocacy on behalf of EI Providers and children and families that use the EI system:

- Invitation-only testimony at the Senate Health Committee supporting S-223, a bill to mandate that DOHSS applies for a Home and Community-based Services waiver to net additional federal funds for EI. Also spoke out on the issue and broadened community and provider awareness for this critical bill to improve funding for EI. (2006).
- Testified at public hearings and submitted written public comments on changes to the Family Cost Share program which reflected provider concerns resulting in changes to the Family Cost Share proposed by the Department. (2006).
- Completed a comprehensive analysis of the State's proposed Part C Regulations. Submitted comments and suggestions on behalf of providers and continues to monitor regulatory process accordingly (2006-07).

II. Training

Successfully advocated for additional training in Procedural Safeguards for Early Intervention Provider staff, resulting in more seminars for providers:

- Identified gaps in EIP training structure through the provider network. Continuing to advocate for more frequent and accessible trainings for providers (2006-07).

III. Provider Letter of Agreement

Effective in recommending changes to the Provider Letter of Agreement with the Department of Health and Senior Services:

- Reviewed Provider LOA with EIPA members for strengths and weaknesses and created a proposal to the State for changes to the LOA which would make the agreement more equitable to providers. Issue areas included notification windows, billing, etc. (2007).
- Subsequently met with DOHSS officials in order to discuss proposal and achieved success with various requests for adjustments to the LOA. This meeting was noted by Terri Harrison, Part C Coordinator, during the Lead Agency's report to the SICC meeting on May 25, 2007)
- Currently awaiting State's formal response and amendments to the LOA and continuing to work with the DOHSS in order to improve the LOA.

IV. Provider Notification

Obtained a change in DOHSS' notification to providers of suspension of services to families from three to five days:

- Identified problems with State's notification delivery system for providers upon suspension of services because of a family's non-payment of the cost share. The State initially put forward a policy of three day (including Saturdays and Sundays) notice of suspension of services to a family, which could potentially cause confusion and inadequate reimbursement for services rendered by providers after the suspension of an authorization. (2007).
- Met with DOHSS, requested extension for provider notification and as a result, was granted six days for provider suspension notices to take effect (2007).

V. Funding and Reimbursement Rates

Achieved full funding of the EI system with a supplemental appropriation in FY' 07, full funding in the Governor's budget in FY'08, and a 3% increase for EI providers in the FY' 08 budget:

- Educated lawmakers and Lead Agency officials on the need to increase EI funding in the fiscal year budget resulting in full funding. (2007).
- Advocated at the DHSS and with the Legislature for fair provider increases and reimbursement rates that reflect market labor prices and the Medicare Economic Index in order for provider agencies to remain competitive employers and cope with rising costs of living in New Jersey, gasoline prices, insurance costs, and workers compensation. The final budget included a 3% increase for EI providers, not the 2% proposed in the Governor's budget.

VI. Coordination and Communication

Working towards improved communications and cooperation on all levels of the EI system in order to allow for smoother provider navigation and compliance within the system.

- Met with REIC Executive Directors to introduce EIPA and to begin to work together on improving communications with REICs and providers.

***Next Steps, 2007-08:** Currently administering survey and collecting data from EIPA agencies on strengths, weaknesses, and best practices within the EI System. We will compile this data and use it to develop a strategy for the coming year.