

*Early Intervention Providers Association (EIPA):  
Accomplishments for 2007-08*



**Current Focus:**

- Ensuring long-term, responsible funding of the New Jersey Early Intervention System.
- Issuing recommendations and analysis for improved communication and coordination within New Jersey Early Intervention System infrastructure.
- Ensuring that all children and families retain access the Early Intervention services in the State of New Jersey.
- Issuing recommendations and information for improved collaboration between providers, advocates, and the Lead Agency at New Jersey Department of Health and Senior Services.

- Collected information on current issues faced by providers through the EIPA Operational Issues Survey and compiled data for presentation to the State.
- Offered analysis, education, and recommendations for stakeholders and the Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) on behalf of providers on current issues within the New Jersey Early Intervention System (NJEIS), including billing system difficulties.
- Continued to build contacts and nurture relationships with Lead Agency officials at DHSS and the Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives (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.
- Provided public written and oral testimony on the proposed EI State regulations.
- Offered regular public comments throughout the year at the State Interagency Coordinating Council (SICC) meetings on provider concerns and issues, including program funding concerns.
- Continued to serve as an active member of the EI Advocates Work Group which is comprised of EI advocates from Legal Services of NJ, Rutgers University Law School Special Education Law Clinic, Arc of NJ, the Association for Children of New Jersey and other organizations.
- Continued to establish EIPA as the largest EI advocacy coalition in the State of New Jersey, with members that currently provide services collectively to over 50% of children and families in the NJEIS.

#### **Policy Areas**

*EIPA currently works on behalf of community-based agencies to improve services to children and families by performing advocacy and education activities and representing these agencies on the local and state levels in the following policy areas.*

#### **I. Legislation/State Policy**

*Continuously provides research and analysis of state and federal policies that impact children and families in the NJEIS and the community-based provider agencies that serve them:*

- Provided oral and written testimony during public comment period on recommendations for the proposed NJ State EI regulations.
- Worked side by side with the Office of the Child Advocate and other community stakeholders to review and make changes to the proposed EI regulations based upon sound policies that best serve New Jersey's children and families.
- Collaborated with the EI Advocates Work Group to issue a statement on conflict of interest issues within the service delivery of the NJEIS that reflected the concerns of providers, advocates, and families.
- Discussed Early Intervention funding issues with key Legislative leaders. In addition, developed questions for members of the Budget Committees to ask the Commissioner of Health and Senior Services at the Department's budget hearing.

#### **II. Data Collection and Education**

*Presented information to DHSS and REICs that was collected through the EIPA Operational Issues Survey to highlight current issues within NJEIS infrastructure:*

- Successfully administered 2007 Operational Issues Survey to EIPA membership.

- Compiled results and identified four major issue areas that were mutually significant to EIPA agencies, including 1) Service Coordination; 2) Billing; 3) Training; and 4) Monitoring.
- Issued findings and developed recommendations for improvements to NJEIS in these major areas, as well as in the sub-categorical areas of a) cost of providing care; b) communications; c) timelines; and d) planning.
- Presented findings and recommendations in EIPA's Operational Issues Survey Results Report and released Report to DHSS and the EI community.

### **III. Billing and Reimbursement Rates**

*Advocated on behalf of providers at the DHSS for improved billing practices:*

- Initiated and facilitated meeting with EI providers and DHSS Part C Coordinator Terry Harrison on billing issues identified in the EIPA Operational Issues Survey findings, including billing algorithm issues.
- Negotiated improvements to NJEIS Billing System with DHSS, including modifications to the billing algorithm which will allow providers to better utilize the system and to be reimbursed more accurately for services rendered to children and families.
- Also issued recommendations to DHSS on improvements to future NJEIS billing system.

### **IV. 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 mid-year with REIC Executive Directors to continue to work together on improving communications with REICs and providers and to discuss EIPA Operational Issues Survey results.
- Provided REICs with information on Early Childhood Education programs in New Jersey colleges and universities in order to enhance staff recruiting efforts at the college-level for the NJEIS.
- Met with DHSS Commissioner Heather Howard, DHSS Deputy Commissioner and State Epidemiologist Dr. Eddy Bresnitz, DHSS Chief of Staff Mary O'Dowd, and DHSS Assistant Commissioner for Family Health Services Celeste Andriot Wood to discuss the future of the NJEIS and its participation in the federal Part C Early Intervention program.

### **V. Funding for the NJEIS**

*Remains a strong advocate for current and long-term full funding of the NJEIS:*

- Met with the Governor's Policy and Counsel Staff to ensure current funding of the NJEIS for Fiscal Year 2009 and to discuss future funding issues. ABCD was asked to provide more information related to utilization review and participation in federal Part C for further discussions once the budget was enacted.
- Continues to provide analysis, leadership, and initiate dialogue within the EI community on the need for a long-term funding strategy for the NJEIS.

#### Next Steps, 2008-09

- Currently examining long-term funding strategies for the NIEHS and ways to remain as a state participant in the federal Part C Early Intervention program while maximizing federal funds and maintaining access to EI services for all children and families in New Jersey.
- Working to expand EIPA membership and hear from even more voices in the EI provider community by holding the First Annual EIPA Open House Event in September of 2008.