

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) on Early Intervention

Thursday, April 18, 2024

Zoom Conference Call

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Link to Zoom Recording: [Thursday, April 18 Zoom Recording](#)

Opening

Dr. Marie Kanne Poulsen, ICC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. Dr. Poulsen expressed gratitude for all council members, WestEd, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS), and community members for their attendance.

Housekeeping Items

DJ Tomko reviewed housekeeping procedures for Zoom and in-person participants. Zoom instructions, ASL/Spanish interpreter instructions, and meeting etiquette were reviewed.

Roll Call

The roll call of appointed members was conducted by DJ Tomko.

Review Agenda

Dr. Poulsen reviewed the agenda. No changes were made to the agenda.

Approval of the Minutes

Motion to approve by Maricris Acon. Seconded by Suzanne Sherinian.

Review of ICC Mission, Purpose, and Theme of Meeting

Dr. Poulsen reviewed the mission and vision of the ICC; the theme of this month's meeting is All About Language.

Dr. Poulsen announced that Rep. Wendy Carillo's [Assembly Bill 2383](#) to address needs of medically fragile infants and young children, which cited *Darby's Legacy* has passed its first committee.

She also announced California's \$200 million investment in the Inclusive Early Education Expansion Program. The program increases access to inclusive early care and education programs for young children with disabilities.

Part C Literacy

[Preverbal Skills: The Skills Your Baby Develops BEFORE Talking](#) by Sholeh Shahinfar, MC, CCC-SLP, RYT

This article discusses the importance of preverbal skills in supporting later language acquisition. The author explains why these skills are important, what preverbal skills are, warning signs and other challenges to developing these skills, and which professionals may be able to support a baby's development of preverbal skills.

DDS Updates and Information – Maricris Acon and Reyna Ambriz

DDS Updates

Ms. Acon presented data on Early Start caseloads and referrals. Referrals have decreased 26.5% since last year, but data is still being reviewed as there have been some system issues that may have compromised the data. Caseloads of children served per month have increased 9% compared to last year. Active cases in regional centers increased 38% compared to pre-COVID months.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) recently provided [guidance on assistive technology](#) which aims to increase understanding of the requirements, dispel common misconceptions, and provide examples of the use of assistive technology devices and services for children with disabilities and to highlight the different requirements under Part C and Part B of IDEA.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Updates

Ms. Ambriz shared that ARPA-funded pilot end dates have been extended until November 2024. DDS is working with an evaluation company to conduct an analysis on the outcomes of ARPA-funded projects. For the Provider Training Initiative, the list of permissible training topics available for reimbursement was expanded to include assistant training programs and trainings on family engagement.

California's Part C Grant Application was posted on March 21 and is accepting public comment until May 20, 2024.

The Early Start Partners Symposium will be held on July 17-18, 2024 in Berkeley, California. A practicum for service coordinators will be provided the day before on July 16.

The Department will host a webinar on the Quality Improvement Program on May 1 to provide updates on the measure as well as information about the provider eligibility payment process.

Questions:

- Pablo Velez asked about the approval for the use of ARPA funds to support professional development/training for service providers. Could out of state schools be considered for funding?
 - Ms. Ambriz will follow-up separately.

Family Testimonial – Samantha Hebermehl

Ms. Hebermehl is the parent of two Deaf children. She shared her family's experiences with hearing tests and assessments and with the audiologists who diagnosed her child. After initial shock and grief, Ms. Hebermehl and her husband began to re-frame their understanding of Deafness as a language acquisition challenge and to learn American Sign Language (ASL). Language begets language: the more you have, the more

dynamic your understanding of language becomes. She concluded by saying that the most important part of parenting Deaf children is to provide as much access to language as possible.

Questions:

- Michelle Oliver asked if Ms. Hebermehl has found a shift in the medical field about the kind of feedback parents receive during a hearing assessment?
 - Ms. Herbermehl's understanding is that more work is being done to see that referrals are more collaborative and Deaf folks are better represented in individualized family service plan (IFSP) processes. Parents do need to be prepared to advocate.

****BREAK****

Presentation: What is California Doing to Improve Outcomes for Early Language Opportunities for Deaf Infants and Young Children? – Dr. Nancy Hilbok Ammann and Dr. Julie Rems-Smario

The presenters reviewed the history of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C, adopted in 1986. They defined difference between “language acquisition” and “language learning.” Deaf babies are often not exposed to natural language and miss critical periods of acquisition. As of 2016, only 18% of Deaf children met reading and writing milestones; this is not because they are Deaf, but because they are denied opportunities for acquisition. Deaf children need Deaf peers for social opportunities.

The presenters showed an infographic video which highlighted the importance of language building and language acquisition with deaf children from age 0 to 5.

In 1998, the Deaf community advocated to pass AB 2780, California Universal Newborn Hearing Screening legislation, to initiate hearing screenings before infants leave hospitals as well as follow-up referrals to audiologists for those infants who do not pass the hearing screening. If the baby is determined to be Deaf or Hard of Hearing, families are referred to [LEAD-K Family Services](#).

Once implementation of AB 2780 began, the Deaf community was left out as stakeholders or decisionmakers. As a result, the Deaf community founded a coalition to continue advocacy on language acquisition. In 2010, advocates opposed AB 2072, sponsored by the California Academy of Audiology and the Coalition of Option Schools. This bill did not address ASL as an equivalent to spoken language and contained other inequity issues. The bill was successfully amended to accept ASL as a viable option for families. Ultimately, the bill was vetoed.

The Deaf community organized to form a national organization, Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K). In 2015, LEAD-K advocated for the passage of SB 210 in California. It is the first educational code recognizing ASL and/or English as a language of instruction for Deaf children. Since then, 22 states have passed similar laws. SB 210 establishes an ASL & English Language Milestone profile to allow parents

to track their child's language milestones and advocate for IFSPs or individualized education programs (IEPs).

In 2020, LEAD-K Family Services was established to provide support to parents, coaches, and increased collaborations with other statewide services.

The presenters encouraged parents of Deaf children to learn ASL and to use Deaf coaches so Deaf babies and children can have more regular acquisition.

Questions:

- Karmina Barrales asked, is it recommended that a child who is born Deaf and for whom English is not the first language at home to learn sign language?
 - Dr. Rems-Smario answered: The spoken language at home shouldn't preclude anyone from learning ASL or any sign language. Access to language is the most critical thing for language acquisition.
- Nancy Sager asked if the term "language deprivation" could be changed, as some parents dislike that term and don't see themselves as depriving their children?
 - Dr. Rems-Smario answered: Softening the blow won't be effective. It is a heartbreaking reality but must be confronted. It's not about accusation but accountability.
- Samantha Hebermehl emphasized that parents who do not speak English are not at a disadvantage when learning ASL, but language access supports to parents need to be in place.
- Pablo Velez asked presenters to explain variations in sign language.
 - Dr. Rems-Smario responded: Like spoken languages, sign language comes in a variety of dialects and regional differences. For example, British Sign Language is different from American Sign Language.

Voices from the Field

- ***Infant Development Association of California (IDA) – Robin Millar***
The Governor's budget, which will be finalized in May, has reduced DDS funding by \$1 billion based on the rate model. Ms. Millar encouraged everyone to comment on the impact this will have.

The Quality Incentive Program has made substantive changes to ensure families receive rapid delivery of services.

Ms. Millar also highlighted the Direct Support Professional Training Program, which has been around for a while, and wanted to spread awareness of it.

- ***California Disability Community Action Network – Marty Omoto***
The proposed budget deficit could be over \$73 billion. Governor Newsom put together early action reductions and delays, and the May revision will likely

contain a lot of changes. Mr. Omoto recommended that the ICC request that DDS provide an update on the budget so ICC members can all be aware of the anticipated impact to Early Start services.

Mr. Omoto is on the [Master Plan for Developmental Services](#) stakeholders committee. He recommended that an update on the Master Plan be provided to the ICC at every meeting. He also suggested that a subcommittee be formed on the Master Plan stakeholders committee to address needs specific to the Early Start community. He suggested that the ICC should request a community engagement session with the Master Plan project team to raise the issues that are specific to Early Start families and workforce.

- ***Family Resource Centers Network of California (FRCNCA) – Ana Seda***
FRCNCA is providing Support Group Facilitator Training for family resource center (FRC) staff, virtually with webinars, to enhance the advocacy skillset of Early Start FRC staff statewide.

Partnerships for Effective Practices in Transition and Inclusion (PEPTI) is a new State Personnel Development Grant project to address issues between early intervention programs and LEAs.

The Access to Care program distributed a survey to caregivers of children who had a specialty care appointment; over 600 surveys were returned. Findings will be shared with participating families and FRCs and results will be used in advocacy efforts. An upcoming webinar will also share the results.

FRCNCA is utilizing their ARPA-funded pilot initiative to provide support to family representatives to participate in the ICC.

****LUNCH BREAK****

Presentation: Best Practice in Involving Parents and Caregivers in the Child's Early Language Intervention – Elaine Weitzman, Hanen Programs

[The Hanen Centre](#) is a Canadian nonprofit to enable parents and professionals to support children in building lifelong social, language, and literacy skills. Ms Weitzman's presentation provided a description of Hanen programs and its approach. Hanen Center is comprised of four distinct divisions: SLP (speech-language pathologist) services, program and resource development, training for professionals, and membership services. Parent programs are for small groups of families with children with similar needs, such as parents of children with language delays or children with autism. Each program is caregiver-implemented, evidence-based, child-centered, and focuses on natural environments.

Review of Public Input Guidelines, Followed by Public Input

Pablo Velez shared concerns around the environments where intervention services are provided. In-person services at home prove to be a challenge for many working families. Before the pandemic, most providers had good relationships with childcare providers; but post-COVID, there has been some confusion around childcare providers' roles in supporting intervention services.

Parents and staff at Eastern Los Angeles Family Resource Center (ELAFRC) shared feedback that public input could happen between 9 a.m. and 12 p.m. when children are at school.

Dulce Flores shared a list of parent perspectives:

- professionals aren't using parent-friendly language,
- there are not enough providers in the language(s) necessary,
- parents have had bad experiences with regional centers and many families are not going through regional centers for services for lack of support, and
- there is a long waiting period for services for their children.

Michelle Oliver brought attention to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) project that connects families with services. Ms. Oliver shared an experience of a family who found a NICU reunion to be traumatic for the father. She recommended providing training to providers about trauma-informed practices.

Patty Salcedo brought attention to the PEPTI program about transition and inclusive classroom practices.

Announcement of Committee Composition and Goals

DJ Tomko provided a summary of committee composition and goals. He reminded everyone that only ICC members and community representatives are members of committees.

Subcommittee Meetings

Meeting of the whole was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.; committees met separately.

MEMBERS PRESENT

MEMBERS EXCUSED

MEMBERS ABSENT

COMMUNITY MEMBERS PRESENT

COMMUNITY MEMBERS ABSENT

DDS

WESTED

OTHERS PRESENT

*Parent