

Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) on Early Intervention Meeting Minutes

February 7, 2025

Zoom Conference Call

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Link to Zoom Recording:

[February 7, 2025 Zoom Recording](#)



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Opening

Maricris Acon from DDS and acting interim ICC Chair on behalf of DDS Director Pete Cervinka, called the meeting to order at 9:08 a.m. She announced that ICC is looking for additional council members. Contact DJ Tomko at dennis.tomko@dds.ca.gov for more information.

Housekeeping Items

Zoom instructions, ASL/Spanish interpreter instructions, and meeting etiquette were reviewed by Jasmine Suo.

Roll Call

Roll call was conducted by DJ Tomko. There was no quorum at today's meeting. Voting items for today cannot proceed, including review of previous meeting minutes or proposing committee projects for approval.

Review Agenda

No changes were made to the agenda.

Review of ICC Mission, Purpose, and Theme

Ms. Acon reviewed the ICC mission and purpose. This quarter's theme is Updates to Early Intervention.

Review of Previous Day's Agenda

Ms. Acon reviewed yesterday's agenda and announced that all presentation materials will be posted on the [DDS ICC website](#).

Committee Reports and Approval for Projects

Improving State Systems Committee – Fran Chasen

Committee has been identifying the current issues that are impacting the delivery of services in Early Start. Committee reviewed the suggestions identified over the last year to determine what needs action. Began a conversation to identify current and future-looking issues, and priorities will be identified with a survey in the coming months.

Communications and Outreach Committee – Robert Rochin

Committee is working on identifying issues with ICC representation identified through results of a survey. Early analysis shows that for ICC members:

- Overwhelmingly the language spoken is English;
- Rural and agricultural communities are underrepresented;
- Black, Latino, Indigenous, Asian, and Pacific Islander families are underrepresented;
- Families with children with low-incidence disabilities are missing from the group;
- Immigrant and mixed-status families, LGBTQ families, self-advocates and service providers in all disciplines are not represented; and
- Regional Center catchment area representation is rather mixed, with several areas not being represented.

In March, the Committee will refine results to share recommendations with ICC and offer solutions, such as mentorship programs.

****BREAK****

Master Plan Roundtable Discussion – Melissa Drake and Catherine Blakemore, Master Plan for Developmental Services

Dr. Yvette Baptiste serves as the co-chair of Workgroup 2 (Service Systems), with Kecia Weller, to develop recommendations for Early Start.

Ms. Drake shared the vision and commitment to equity for the Master Plan. The goal is for the Workgroup to submit recommendations to the Master Plan in March 2025.

The Master Plan for Developmental Services Committee (“the Committee”) has met 10 times to discuss shared values and vision and how to center equity; identify and create five workgroups to develop specific recommendations; and review possible priorities. More than 900 individuals applied to be on the Committee; participants were selected for their expertise and roles. Ms. Drake explained the focus of each of the five workgroups: 1) person-centered services systems that individuals and families trust; 2) timely, inclusive, and seamless services across all systems; 3) services from a high-quality, stable, and person-centered workforce; 4) consistent, transparent, accountable, and data-driven systems that focus on outcomes; and 5) life-long services with adequate resources.

Today's focus is on Workgroup 2. This workgroup has been working on making sure that individuals receive timely, inclusive, and seamless services across all service systems. Ms. Blakemore identified the three priorities of the Workgroup: 1) make it easier for people to get the health and human services (generic services) they need, as appropriate; 2) make life transitions easier, better, and more on time; and 3) help individuals and their families use community resources.

Ms. Blakemore shared recommendations for Priority 2 (transitions): Every person facing a life transition should have 1) information about the life transition and what happens next, 2) RCs offer the option of a person-centered plan and planning services the individual chooses as part of each transition; and 3) the option of navigation supports provided by someone they choose. Ms. Blakemore then outlined recommendations specifically for Early Start transition at age three, which focused on timely transition support and collaboration guidelines.

Presenters asked Committee and attendees to comment about the recommendations described.

- Swaranjit Gill, community member and psychiatric nurse practitioner, asked how often in-school speech services and regional center speech services are provided? Mr. Gill has observed that the frequency of speech services is often inadequate and recommends the majority of speech services should be provided at school and/or regional centers to alleviate the need for families to travel outside their communities.
 - Ms. Blakemore agreed that access to services should be as seamless as possible, and one way to do that is to offer them at schools and RCs. Ms. Blakemore highlighted the importance of IPP meetings where frequency of services is set and a navigator could help families identify their needs to be better advocates.
- Priscilla Solano with Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center asked what types of discussions the workgroups are having with medical providers? Ms. Solano observed that medical providers are often reluctant to submit referrals and do not have adequate understanding of the system.
 - Ms. Blakemore noted that there have been discussions about how to best train healthcare providers.
- Lilith Assadourian asked if the groups have talked about the roles and responsibilities of the different parties who play a role in transition?
 - Ms. Blakemore replied that this kind of “untangling” is a priority of the group and will recommend a common set of planning tools that can be used by everyone involved in the system.
- Stephanie Gomez asked about the best way for a family to access community navigator services? Who will provide this support?
 - Ms. Blakemore acknowledged that there are currently not enough navigators and the first place to start is with FRCs. California's Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has a good model for community navigators which could be adopted and adapted for Early Start. The recommendation is for a common set of knowledge and training that all navigators would have to ensure equity regardless of where the service is being accessed.
 - Yvette Baptiste reviewed the successes of the community navigator programs through FRCs.

- Fernando Gomez asked if community navigators will be certified, or if there is another way to determine if a navigator has received training?
 - Ms. Blakemore acknowledged that the workgroup has not identified a specific plan for this, but HHS is working currently on certification, and this could be a useful approach for Early Start.
- Pablo Velez asked what services should be available for provisional eligibility? Will therapy services be available in the home to remove barriers?
 - Ms. Blakemore acknowledged that provisional eligibility has only recently come up and the workgroup hasn't had a chance to really get into yet. Ms. Blakemore acknowledged there needs to be more guidance around provisional eligibility.
- Pablo Velez also asked if there will be scholarships at the local college level to build the capacity of qualified personnel?
 - Ms. Blakemore confirmed that Workgroup 3 is working on that question, as that group is related to workforce development. Workgroup priorities and recommendations are available [online](https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/master-plan-for-developmental-services/) on the California Health & Human Services Website: <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/master-plan-for-developmental-services/>.
- Mika Harris asked regarding the suggestion for the family chosen supports to begin at least six months before the child is referred to a school program, are you able to elaborate on the vision for this or what those supports are beyond the current ability to discuss supports at any time in the IFSP or refer to school sooner with agreement?
 - Ms. Blakemore gave some examples like plain-language information, roadmaps, person-centered planning processes, and navigators.
- Marty Omoto asked what is the timeline for the state to review and let everyone know what actions can be taken on recommendations made or not made?
 - Ms. Blakemore answered that the Master Plan draft is intended to come out on March 12th, and the committee will finalize it by March 19th. The plan will be delivered to legislature and administration by May 31st.
- Samantha Hebermehl asked if the Master Plan for all kids in Early Start or only for those kids who are managed by Regional Centers?
 - Ms. Blakemore clarified the Master Plan is for the entire developmental disabilities service system. Children with IFSPs managed by LEAs are children with solely low incidence disabilities; LEAs are not overseen by HHS or DDS, but rather CDE.
- Fran Chasen asked since there has been a recent reduction adjustment of caseload numbers for service coordinators, wouldn't the existing role of providing appropriate resources be in their scope of responsibility?
 - Dr. Baptiste answered that the workgroup has been focusing on having the ability for families to choose to use navigators and/or service coordinators.
- Thao Tran commented that FRCs should be independent, not located within schools or regional centers to maintain neutrality.
 - Dr. Baptiste replied that when FRCs were developed, the community members themselves identified where they wanted them to be located. Any issues with FRCs should be directed to that specific one.
- Marty Omoto asked if the Master Plan recommendations look at what already exists in terms of new initiatives at DDS?

- Ms. Blakemore answered that in Workgroup 2, several recommendations are about topics that DDS is working on, and they are trying to provide DDS with ideas on how those initiatives might happen.

DDS Budget Updates – Jim Knight, DDS

Mr. Knight shared the following updates to the DDS budget:

- Governor Newsome released a proposed budget last month, with revisions to be submitted in May after public hearings, and a final budget that takes effect in July.
- DDS is budgeted for \$18.5 billion, an increase of over \$3 billion. The majority of those funds are allotted for purchase of services for individuals, due to anticipated increase of individuals receiving services. The increase is also due to rate reform.

As of the meeting date, nothing that's been implemented at the federal level would affect the DDS budget or initiatives.

Mr. Knight provided information about the rate reform that was legislated in 2021 and reached full implementation in January 2025. Mr. Knight acknowledged concerns that these new rates are creating barriers to access and encouraged everyone to send questions about the rate reform to ratesquestions@dds.ca.gov.

- Swaranjit Gill asked about the budgetary appropriation for high-impact interventions/services? Mr. Gill observed that many patients are not getting adequate supports.
 - Mr. Knight mentioned that rate reform includes a quality-incentive program which is in the law, to make sure services result in positive outcomes.

Public Input

DJ Tomko reviewed public input guidelines.

Dr. Yvonne Burinsma commented on the code changes and directives that were released. Dr. Burinsma noted that many providers are raising alarms about some inconsistent and arbitrary decisions by the regional centers in assigning new codes to the providers. Dr. Burinsma observed that communication between DDS and regional centers seems to be difficult, which puts service providers in a difficult spot. Definitions provided in those directives leave a lot open to interpretation, which brings concerns about hiring new staff. The quality-improvement program with the provider directory has been plagued by bureaucratic difficulties, and workbooks indicate some providers are no longer eligible for the Quality Incentive Program, which is an effective pay-cut for providers.

Jesse Gonzalez, parent representative, showed appreciation for Early Start, especially FRCs. Mr. Gonzalez appreciated the coordination and highlighted the excellent work of service providers to support his daughter's development at home outside of those service hours. Daughter Selena no longer needs some of those services because she is hitting her milestones.

Samantha Hebermehl, parent representative, shared a personal story. ICC members helped Ms. Hebermehl understand Medicare waivers, which she finally has received. Shared gratitude to ICC for all the support and knowledge that resulted in a huge success for her family.

Dr. Yvette Baptiste, director of FRNCA and ELAFRC, shared about an access and equity grant to build a community of practice in the Black and African American community through San Gabriel Pomona Regional Center and Valley Mountain Regional Center. Issues that are coming up for these families include:

- Lack of knowledge of the Early Start system,
- Lack of representation in service coordinators at those regional centers, and
- Black service providers often feel that regional centers are not friendly places for them.

Patty Moore asked if more statewide coordination in child find efforts would help address these issues?

- Dr. Baptiste replied that for Black families, their cultural beliefs and parenting behaviors delay entry into Early Start. There needs to be better understanding of how to do child find and outreach in the Black community, which requires time to build trust.

Swaranjit Gill, service provider, noted that early intervention services for speech therapy and occupational therapy are inadequate in the Central Valley.

Recap and Closing Remarks

Maricris Acon recapped the meeting and again encouraged attendees to become governor-appointed ICC members. Next ICC meeting is April 17 and 18th.

Meeting adjourned at 12:11 p.m.

QUESTIONS?

Contact DDS/Children, Adolescents and Young Adult Services Division

Email: earlystart@dds.ca.gov

Phone: (800) 515-2229

Mailing Address: 1215 O Street, MS 7-40
Sacramento, CA 95814

MEETING ATTENDEES
Friday, February 7, 2024

MEMBERS PRESENT

Heidi Brahms	Maricris Acon	Shanice Orum
Karen Chang	Michelle Dove	Suzanne Sherinian

MEMBERS ABSENT

Doug Erber	Pamela Riley	Susan Ducore
Marie Poulsen	Sarah Neville-Morgan	

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT

Ana Aragon	Julie Rems-Smario	Patricia Moore
Apple Sepulveda	June Ursini	Robert Rochin
Debbie Sarmento	Kathy Angkustsiri	Samantha Hebermehl
Edyth Gallardo	Lindsay Crain	Stephanie Gomez
Fran Chasen	Marty Omoto	Tara Hester
Jonathan Eckrich	Pablo Velez	Yvette Baptiste
Julie Maier		

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES ABSENT

Amy Hansen	Jim Frazier	Rosalyn Daggs
Christina Nigrelli	Laurie Jordan	Scott Turner
Diana Maffei	Lisa Schoyer	Season Goodpasture
Diane Williams	Lucero Irizarry	Shan Chan
Elena Bramble	Michelle Oliver	Sheri Farinha
Felicia Ford	Pam Chueh	Sheri Rosen
Felipe Garcia	Patricia Salcedo	Tamara Allen
Gayatri Mahajan	Penelope Knapp	Tony Anderson
Jazmine Blackman	Rachel Hagans	Wendy Morrison

DDS STAFF PRESENT

Angel Rodriguez	Jasmine Suo	Nancy Chen
Asami Saito	Jlm Knight	Paige Richmond
Ashley Lambert	Latonya Harris	Rachel Wilson
Cristina Tsuji	Lauren Libero	Ryan Digman
DJ Tomko	Marcy Okada	Sarah Yang
Erin Brady	Michi Gates	Shannen Cheng
Jane Lee	Mini Nandakumar	Stephanie Santamaria

INTERPRETERS PRESENT

Elizabeth Vega (ASL)	Richard Haffner (ASL)	Vicki Lundberg (Spanish)
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WEST ED STAFF PRESENT

Amy Kaiser	Rebecca Halpern	Ross Adams
Angela McGuire		

OTHERS PRESENT

Ana Barranco	Griselda Hernandez	Maria Talavera
Ana Coronado	Hannah Michaelson	Martha Ornelas-Cruz
Angela Ramirez	Hely Chan	Melissa Drake
Araceli Mendez	Hill Damon	Michelle Heid
Breanna Gatti	Irma Zepeda	Midori Perez
Brenda Lory	Jennifer Driver	Mika Harris
Caritina Vargas	Johana Caicedo	Mike Odeh
Catherine Blakemore	Jordin Anderson	Petra Gordian
Catherine Powell	Julie Lussier	Priscilla Solano
Cecilia Rideout	Karen Bohall	Rafael Hernandez-Perez
Christie Null	Karen Flores	Reyhanak Shafiiha-Taylor
Christina Renteria	Kecia Weller	Robin Millar
Crystal Perez	Kelly Lam	Rubi Saldana
David Bloch	Kimberly Reyes	Sarai Marcelin
Diane Storman	Liliana McDonough	Sid Gardner
Donte Williams	Lilith Assadourian	Silvia Costichi
Dulce Flores	Linda St. Angelo	Stephanie Edwards
Elizabeth Gomez	Linda Tran	Suada Sergio

Elizabeth Jimenez-Winslow	Lisa Flaherty	Swaranjit Gill
Elizabeth Villanueva	Lisa Villa-Gomez	Sylvia Yeh
Eun Kim	Lori Molhook	Thao Tran
Fernando Gomez	María Cano	Victoria Palacios
Francelia Mora	Maria De Jesus Rodriguez	Yvonne Bruinsma