



State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP) Advisory Group

Meeting Notes

May 27, 2026



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ATTENDANCE

DDS AND FEDERAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROVIDER

- DDS: Reyna Ambriz, Latonya Harris, Shannen Cheng, Ryan Digman, Janelle Fong, Ben Graff, Paige Richmond, Cathy Schulze, Jasmine Suo
- SRI International: Ginger Elliott-Teague (Facilitator), Jenna Nguyen, Christen Park
- ASL Interpreter: Rick Haffner

ADVISORY GROUP MEMBERS

- Yvette Baptiste, Chair, Family Resource Centers Network of California; Executive Director, Eastern Los Angeles Family Resource Center
- Jennifer Castle, Regional Center of Orange County
- Silvia Costichi, Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center
- Andrea Davis, PhD, Greenhouse Therapy Center
- Sheri Farinha, Lead-K Family Services
- Sarah Franco, San Diego Regional Center
- Denise Godfrey-Pinn, Mental Health Consultant
- Samantha Hebermehl, Parent Representative
- Griselda Hernandez, Eastern Los Angeles Regional Center
- Katie Hynes, Disability Rights California
- Yuuko Johnson, PhD Student/Community Representative
- Laurie Jordan, Parent Representative
- Catarina Juan-Fishman, Alta California Regional Center/Warmline Family Resource Center Member
- Angela McGuire, WestEd
- Anna Nguyen, California Department of Social Services
- Christina Nigrelli, Zero to Three
- Michelle Oliver, Part C Consultant/Provider
- Gigi Ostrowsky, Education Programs Consultant, California Department of Education
- Maria Rivas, Harbor Regional Center
- Lisa Schoyer, Parent Representative
- Isela Solorzano, San Andreas Regional Center

MEETING NOTES

MEETING LOCATION

- Online via Zoom

AGENDA: WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

- Shannen Cheng welcomed the group and introduced the DDS Early Start team, including Ben Graff, SSIP Analyst, and Ginger Elliott-Teague, SRI International as presenters throughout the meeting.
- Jasmine Sou provided housekeeping information for participating via Zoom and after the meeting.
- Ginger Elliott-Teague reviewed the agenda for the meeting, including SSIP review, updates and recent activities, and a group discussion.

SSIP REVIEW

- Ginger reviewed the purpose of the Advisory Group to provide support to the DDS team pertaining to the Early Start SSIP process.
- Ginger walked through California's revised SSIP and State-identified Measurable Result (SiMR), reminding the group of the current SiMR's focus on family outcomes.
- Ginger presented the targets set for the SiMR for FFY 2024-2025, using family outcomes survey data.
 - Yvette Baptiste asked to review when the new targets will be set, and Ginger responded that new targets must be published in January 2028, and the process will start in early 2027. At that point the targets will be set for a full 6 years and can be changed at any point during the 6-year cycle.
- Ginger reviewed the SSIP Theory of Change developed as part of the updated SSIP and SiMR, highlighting the plan to implement uniformly conducted Family-Directed Assessments, develop high-quality IFSPs, implement family coaching, and monitor progress.
- Samantha Hebermehl asked to review how family outcomes surveys are disseminated.
 - Ginger and Shannen reviewed the process of dissemination of paper surveys through the mail to randomly selected families, which are mailed out once annually. The 2026 survey will be distributed in July. There is no additional sampling process.
 - The group discussed the process for survey distribution and sampling, including ways to increase survey engagement, and ensure all populations are being sampled.

- Michelle Oliver asked whether surveys are distributed to children served by LEAs, which Shannen confirmed.
- Shannen also clarified that the state's sampling plan is approved by the US Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs.
- Shannen explained that the Annual Performance Report that is publicly posted on the DDS website contains disaggregated data.
- Ginger clarified that the state does have a lot of child-level demographic data that isn't currently being reviewed due to team capacity.
- Lisa Schoyer mentioned the idea of surveying families as they begin the process of involvement in Early Start prior approval/denial.
- Samantha introduced the idea of giving every family a survey at their transition meeting from Part B to Part C services.
- There was additional discussion about the merits of distributing the survey via traditional mail vs. electronic versions such as a QR code.
 - Latonya Harris shared that DDS has been investigating the implications of sharing the survey electronically.
 - Shannen shared there is currently a QR code distributed with the mailed survey. Additionally, the survey is available on the DDS website. Families need to input the child's Unique Client Identifier and Date of Birth in order to access the survey. This process is not widely known.

RECENT ACTIVITIES AND PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

- Shannen presented recent DDS activities related to Early Start including announcing the new SSIP, setting the SiMR measurement, updating the SSIP public engagement plan, and onboarding Ben Graff as the new SSIP Analyst.
- Shannen also shared ongoing activities including engagement based on the updated public engagement plan, updating data collection and evaluation plans, and identifying potential pilot sites for SSIP implementations.
- Shannen reviewed the public engagement plan in further detail, noting that the plan includes reconvening the advisory group; presenting regular updates at FRCNCA, ICC, and ARCA meetings; engaging a state SSIP Leadership Team; and a new meeting to encourage collaboration within SSIP activities between Regional Centers and Family Resource Centers, which will start in Summer 2026.
- The group discussed which other groups might be included in the SSIP Public Engagement Plan. Ideas included Early Head Start programs, LEAs, IDA, vendors/providers, First 5, and state schools.

FAMILY-DIRECTED ASSESSMENTS AND PILOT SITE SELECTION

- Ben highlighted the process for Family-Directed Assessment roll out as DDS reviews tools used by other states with similar SSIPs, and tools currently in use by Regional Centers.
- Ben reviewed DDS' expected timeline for updated guidance on Family-Directed Assessments, culminating in implementation at Regional Center pilot sites next year.
- Ben mentioned factors being considered when selecting Family-Directed Assessment tools including length of assessment, use of plain language, and incorporation of a guidance document to help provide context for implementation.
- The group discussed beneficial tools and considerations for implementation including Early Start State Performance Reports, Family Quality of Life standardized assessments, and the Strengthening Families Protective Factors Parent Survey.
 - Michelle Oliver shared a link to more survey options: <https://www.eifamilies.com/family-assessments>.
 - Yuuko Johnson asked how information would be added to the current IFSP form as there are typically costs associated with making changes. Ben answered that this will be taken into consideration by DDS.
- Ben shared the process for pilot site selection. DDS plans for 2-3 Regional Center pilot sites initially and will solicit interest as well as evaluate Regional Centers on a number of criteria including staffing and family outcomes survey data.
- The group discussed other criteria to keep in mind during pilot site selection including regional center size, location, and demographics.
 - Samantha mentioned the idea to include LEAs and state schools as pilot sites.
 - Samantha also introduced the idea to include pilot sites that service different service categories to be sure different needs and related services are being evaluated and supported.

COMMUNICATION AND WRAP UP

- The group discussed how they would like to be updated on SSIP progress between Advisory Group meetings, settling on monthly email updates.
- Ben opened the floor for questions.
 - Andrea Davis asked if there are any plans to coordinate within DDS on expanding early start services which inherently target supporting caregivers, such as Developmental Relationship-Based Interventions, and for SSIP to look at what more can be done to support families in Early Start.
 - Ginger explained that it is valuable to think of SSIP as a long-term project, that the focus of California's SSIP is building out foundation

- and infrastructure through family-directed assessments, then IFSP improvements, then moving onto family coaching.
- Andrea mentioned the value of exploring the different methodologies within family coaching.
- Samantha asked to clarify the Advisory Group's scope pertaining to the content of the family outcomes survey vs. increasing responses from families.
 - Shannen responded that although DDS is discussing the survey with Regional Centers and Family Resource Centers, the content of the survey itself is not necessarily the focus of SSIP. There are aspects of the survey that are connected to SSIP, but it is not the focus.
- Ben wrapped up the meeting with his contact and shared the next Advisory Group meeting is on **August 19th, 2026**.

Questions?

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