Sean Parnell, Governor
State of Alaska

GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON DISABILITIES AND SPECIAL EDUCATION

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Alma Mc Pherson, Assoc. Div. Director
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US Dept of Education
400 Maryland Ave., S.W.
Washington, DC 20202-7100

Ms McPherson,

The Governor's Council on Disabilities and Special Education (Council) is the Interagency Coordinating Council on Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (ICC) as required under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The Council meets three times a year around the state. These face to face meetings last for three days. The Council delegates the day to day ICC responsibilities to the Early Intervention Committee (EIC). The EIC assists and advises the State EI/ILP office on priority issues and activities related to the operation of Alaska's Early Intervention and Infant Learning Programs. The EIC meets monthly by teleconference and once a year they have a face to face meeting. EIC members are parents of children with disabilities, infant learning providers, Headstart teachers, agency leaders and others involved in early intervention who want to make an impact on Alaska's Early Intervention and Infant Learning Programs.

For additional information on the Council and the EIC, please visit the Council's website at: http://health.hss.state.ak.us/gcdse/. Below is a list of the required membership of the ICC and the names of the individuals who fulfill those positions:

1. **Parents of children with disabilities under the age of 12 (20%)-** Julie Broyles (Council), Mary Dietz (EIC), Debbie Kitelinger (Council/EIC), Stacey Messerschmidt (Council), Chris Saddler (Council), Sarah Souders (Council/EIC), Donna Swihart (Council/EIC)
2. **Parent (at least one) of a child with a disability under the age of 6**-Michelle McCrea (EIC)
3. **Providers (public or private) of early intervention services (20%)-**Meghan Johnson (Council/EIC), Margaret Kavanaugh (EIC), Patrick Pillai (EIC), Amy Simpson (EIC)
4. **State legislator**-Wes Keller (Council)
5. **Rep from trainers of ILP providers**-Sheila Sellers (EIC)
6. **State rep responsible for ILP services**-Erin Kinavey (EIC)
7. **EED rep responsible for preschool services**-Sharon Fishel (EIC), Melora Gaber (EIC), Geri Benshoof (State Board of Education and Early Development liaison)
8. **State rep for health insurance**-Kate Campbell (Council)

9. **Headstart rep**-Maggie Ferry (EIC)
10. **State rep responsible for childcare**-Jerry Fuller (Council)
11. **Native Alaskan (BIA) rep**-Dorothy Erickson (EIC)

The Council works closely with the State EI/ILP office to identify sources of fiscal and other support for services for early intervention programs and promote interagency agreements. Last year the Council's top early childhood priority was to advocate for an increase in Infant Learning Program funding from the Alaska legislature. This was called the Alaska's Kids Can't Wait advocacy campaign. The EIC worked closely with the State EI/ILP staff to gather data, create talking points and to educate legislators regarding ILP funding issues. As a result, the Alaska legislature increased ILP state funding by $1,000,000 and $300,000 to increase the qualifications for ILP providers. This year, the Council's early childhood priorities include working with the lead agency to change the system to allow Medicaid and private insurance billing for ILP services as well as researching the possibility for an Alaska student loan forgiveness program to increase the early childhood workforce. The Council meets with the Health and Social Service Commissioner to keep him informed on Council activities and Infant Learning Program issues. The Council and EIC have worked with the State EI/ILP office to increase general funds from the Alaska legislature to support the Alaska Transition Training Initiative (ATTI). This program works at the local community level to improve transition from ILP to preschool including functional interagency agreements. The Council is a member of Alaska's Interagency Early Childhood Coordinating Council (IECCC) which works to coordinate all early childhood systems in Alaska including services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. This year, the EIC will play an integral role in the analysis and review of the Cost Study in order to determine future strategies for funding.

The Council works collaboratively with the State EI/ILP office regarding the transition of toddlers with disabilities to preschool and other appropriate services. The Council helped to start the Alaska Transition Training Initiative (ATTI) and successfully advocated for an increment from the State's general funds from the Alaska legislature. The EIC includes staff from the Department of Education and Early Development (EED) as well as staff from the State EI/ILP office which helps to create a system for transitioning toddlers from ILP to preschool. The State EI/ILP office recently began providing automatic notification to EED on transitioning toddlers. This information is then provided to the local preschool programs in an effort to provide smoother transitions. There is currently a memorandum of agreement between EED and the State ILP.

The Council works with the State EI/ILP office in reviewing the IDEA application and in developing or revising ILP policies and procedures. Each spring, members of the EIC review the Part C application to make comments and suggestions. The Council provides comments on federal and state regulations as needed. EIC members participate on the State ILP regulation committee. The Council would like to see the federal Part C regulations passed this year. The EIC has a great relationship with the State EI/LP office and works with them on policy changes for the ILP system in Alaska. For example, EIC members participate on the personnel development committee to create a registry of personnel as well as develop and implement training opportunities for Early Childhood

and Infant Learning providers. Council members also participate on workforce development initiatives through the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority.

In preparation of the submission of the annual report to the Governor and the Annual Performance Report (APR) on the status of early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families, the EIC reviews the APR indicators in depth at each committee meeting. The EIC reviews ILP data and improvement activities. The EIC also provides written suggestions to the State EI/ILP staff on an annual basis regarding improvement activities that could improve data for each indicator. The EIC reviews the completed annual performance report (APR) each January and provides comment to the State ILP staff prior to its submission to OSEP. The EIC is looking forward to reviewing reports from the new online data system. This will help the EIC provide comments on systems change and state improvement activities. The EIC and the State EI/ILP office often prepare a joint report to the Governor.

The Council works with many partners including the State EI/ILP staff to create a system of appropriate services for children birth through age five. The Council participates on Alaska's Interagency Early Childhood Coordinating Council (IECCC) to coordinate all early childhood systems in Alaska including services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. The IECCC includes members from all State agencies that provide services to children under the age of five and from many private agencies. The goal is to create a comprehensive early childhood system. One of the Council's early childhood priorities this year is to work with the State EI/ILP office, Headstart and the 619 coordinator to plan an Early Childhood Networking Forum to provide training to local teams and the opportunity to discuss improvements to Alaska's Early Childhood system. Last year, Council members and staff were on the planning committee for the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference and helped plan an early childhood/ILP strand in order to provide specific training to early childhood providers. Several Council and EIC members are trainers for the Alaska Transition Training Initiative and work with local communities to create smooth transition plans.

The Council advises appropriate agencies in the State with respect to the integration of services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and at-risk infants and toddlers and their families, regardless of whether at-risk infants and toddlers are eligible for early intervention services in the State. The Council participates on Alaska's Interagency Early Childhood Coordinating Council (IECCC) to create a comprehensive early childhood system for children (up to age 5) in Alaska including services for infants and toddlers with disabilities. The Council is also working with the State EI/ILP staff on a long term goal to change the eligibility for ILP services in Alaska so that it will be the same as the eligibility for preschool services. The EIC membership includes representatives from Headstart (at the State and local level), Alaska Infant Learning Providers Association, and the Alaska State Board of Education and Early Development creating the ability to look at issues from a systems level and work toward creating a seamless early childhood system. For example, the Council recently supported a bill to expand the Parents As Teachers program in Alaska even though the program does not focus solely on infants and toddlers with disabilities.

GENERAL SUPERVISION-

GS1: Identification of Noncompliance

- **Considering the various parts of the State's general supervision (monitoring) system (e.g.; dispute resolution, self assessments, on-site visits, etc.), does the State utilize these components timely and effectively in identifying noncompliance in the State?**
- **If not, how does the State identify noncompliance at the local program level?**
- **What are the strengths and challenges of the State's system of identifying noncompliance?**
- **What activities are in place to address the challenges/barriers?**

Alaska's lead agency recently switched from a three year onsite monitoring system to an online data system that can be accessed at any time. This new data system allows lead agency staff of continually respond to each program and immediately provide technical assistance. It allows for data to be compared across Alaska and to look for data trends at the local and statewide levels. One strength of the system is that staff at the EI/ILP office make themselves available to talk with parents regarding any concerns they have with the ILP services they are receiving and then work with the family to immediately resolve their issues. The EI/ILP office is currently developing protocol for onsite verification visits.

GS2: Correction of Non compliance

- **What systems are in place to ensure timely correction of noncompliance?**
- **Does the State implement technical assistance, training, enforcement sanctions, or other specific actions to ensure correction of noncompliance?**
- **What are the strengths and challenges of the State's system in ensuring correction of noncompliance?**
- **What activities are in place to address the challenges/barriers?**

With the new online data system, State EI/ILP staff review local agency data on a monthly basis to ensure data accuracy. This allows them to provide immediate technical assistance to the local agency on data issues. In the past, if a local agency was not being monitored during a particular year when a policy change was implemented, the State EI/ILP staff might have been unaware that the local agency was not implementing the change correctly. Before the online data system was implemented this practice could have continued for three years until they were monitored again. Now data is reviewed within 30 days of the 4th quarter in order to make appropriate and timely correction. The new data system also provides a way to track local agency data on an annual basis instead of only every three years. Programs verify data annually through their annual report.

GS3: Dispute Resolution

- **Does the State have practices and procedures in place that are reasonably designed to ensure the implementation of dispute resolution procedures (complaints, due process hearings, and mediation) in the State?**
- **What are the strengths and challenges in implementing the State's dispute resolution system?**
- **What activities are in place to address the challenges/barriers?**

Our state does not typically have disputes that are not immediately solved at the local level before more formal processes are required. In the rare instances where they are not resolved at the local level, the State EI/ILP staff have stepped in and resolved the issues immediately. The State EI/ILP office has its own policies with regard to dispute resolution but also has a memorandum of agreement with EED to utilize Part B hearing officers and mediation contractors. The EIC will review proposed revised policies including any clarifications to dispute resolutions in FY 10. The Council does not receive dispute resolution complaints regarding Part C but the Council does receive complaints regarding Part B.

GS4: Educational Results/Improved Outcomes

- **What is the State doing to ensure improved outcomes for students with disabilities (e.g.; Early Childhood Outcomes)?**
- **Are these programs helping to improve outcomes in the State?**
- **What are the challenges in ensuring improved outcomes in the State? How are they being addressed?**

The State EI/ILP office has provided training to each local agency regarding the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) project. EIC members have talked to several local providers and they are able to adequately explain how the ECO system works. The State EI/ILP office maintains training videos in their website. EIC members recently worked with the State EI/ILP office and EED on a project to incorporate ECO content into an online training module. This will allow local agencies to train new staff in a timely manner.

GS5: Implementation of Grant Assurances

- **Determinations – What procedures does the State have in place for making local determinations and implementing enforcement activities?**
- **How does the State inform the public of its determination as determined by the Secretary of Education as well as local program determinations?**

Local EI/ILP agency contracts require specific provisions under the IDEA's Part C including those for fiscal management procedures. EI/ILP contracts assure and require specific provisions under IDEA Part C, including fiscal management procedures and payor of last resort. The State EI/ILP staff post local agency data at least annually on their website to inform the public on agency compliance with IDEA indicators. The State EI/ILP office is currently revising their website to make it easier to use. They have asked for input from the EIC members.

DATA

DS1: Data Collection

- **What mechanisms does the State have in place to ensure that the data collected is valid, reliable, timely and accurate?**
- **What are the strengths and challenges of collecting valid and reliable data?**
- **What activities have the State implemented to improve data collection**

The new online data collection system provides immediate access to local data for all indicators and additional quality measures. The State EI/ILP staff review data quarterly for data cleaning purposes and verify the data at the end of 4th quarter in order to make local determinations. The State EI/ILP staff are developing a new protocol for onsite verification visits.

DS2: Data Verification

- **What systems does the State have in place to ensure the data collected reflect actual practices in the State?**

The State EI/ILP staff use the online data system to make status determinations for each of the local grantees. These status determinations will help the State EI/ILP use the data to prioritize onsite visits for verification, technical assistance, as well as focused monitoring.

DS3: Data Integration

- **How does the State use and integrate its data across all systems to make informed decisions and to improve outcomes for children with disabilities?**
- **How might the State better utilize data? What are the barriers?**

The State EI/ILP staff use the web based system to monitor potential systematic problems such as data definitions or policies as well as make improvements at the appropriate level (local and state). For example, last year, the State EI/ILP staff identified and corrected discrepancies in the "timely services definition" due to unusual data trends in the local ILP agencies. The State EI/ILP office also requires local ILP agencies to complete data reviews and provide explanations for all children out of compliance. Quarterly narrative reporting also requires local ILP agencies to review data for accuracy and make corrections ongoing until their annual verification. One issue that the Council has received information on is the potential for under identification in rural areas versus urban areas. The EIC has requested the State EI/ILP use the new data system to look into the possibility of under identification.

FISCAL MANAGEMENT

FS1: Obligation and liquidation

- **Does the State have mechanisms in place to ensure IDEA funds are obligated and liquidated in a timely manner?**

The State EI/ILP staff and staff from the central fiscal office are continuously monitoring expenditures in the accounting system to ensure that funds are expended in a timely manner. State EI/ILP staff and fiscal staff provide follow up action as needed to ensure all valid obligations are liquidated within the established time requirements.

FS2: Distribution

- **What is your role, if any, in advising the State's procedures and practices to ensure appropriate distribution of IDEA funds within the State**?

The Council advises the State EI/ILP office on appropriate distribution of IDEA funds on an as needed basis but does not generally review the distribution process. The EIC sponsors and participates in the Alaska Infant Learning Providers Association meetings as a way to identify any fiscal or distribution issues of ILP funds at the local level.

FS3: Use of Funds

- **Does the State have procedures and practices in place to ensure appropriate management and use of IDEA funds?**
- **What are the strengths and challenges that affect the State's ability to manage its use of IDEA funds?**
- **What steps have the State implemented to improve the management of IDEA funds?**

The Council understands the State EI/ILP office has a grant agreement with each local ILP agency that requires each agency to track state and federal funding separately, bill third party payors including family fees, to provide backup documentation for all expenditures when making quarterly reports, and local agencies must ensure Part C is the payor of last resort. State EI/ILP staff track the usage of funds quarterly to ensure that Part C funds are being used only when other funds are not available.

Debbie Kitelinger, Chair of the Early Intervention Committee (EIC) for the Council will be available during your monitoring visit to answer any questions you might have regarding this information.

Respectfully,

Donna Swihart

Donna Swihart
Council Chair

Deborah D Kitelinger

Deborah Kitelinger
EIC Chair

Creating Change That Improves the Lives of People with Disabilities