



Alliance for the Betterment of  
Citizens with Disabilities

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## Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

### EARLY INTERVENTION PROVIDER ASSOCIATION

Position Paper

Improvements to the Early Intervention System

Reversing the Negative Trajectory

November 3, 2019

New Jersey's Early Intervention System (EIS) was founded decades ago and is considered quite robust, with hundreds of millions of state and federal dollars that pay for state oversight, provider contracts and agreements with scores of regional, county and local organizations that help screen, diagnose and treat children for a range of developmental disabilities. The goal of Early Intervention is to identify an issue early so children can be treated as soon as possible – while their brain is still developing- and before problems become more severe and harder to address. Nearly 14,000 youngsters are receiving treatment at any given time and 27,000 New Jersey families benefitted from the system last year.

In early 2017 the state hired Public Consulting Group (PCG) to develop and implement a centralized web-based system for agency billing and management and family portals, designed to provide real-time payment to providers. When the system went live on December 1, 2017, problems arose immediately. Children and families already receiving services didn't show up in the new database, recent claims couldn't be entered properly and both the billing a payment process stalled. By March of 2018, EIPA members were getting properly paid for about half of their claims. Many of the problems stemmed from the fact that the data from the old system was not integrated into PCG's model.

The current administration, with support from the New Jersey Legislature helped ease the burden, starting in early 2018 by fronting more than \$44 million to help pay salaries and other costs while the state addressed glitches in the new system. In the past two years, the Department of Health (NJDOH) has made significant progress to reverse the negative trajectory of a once imploding system. NJDOH's transparency and willingness to dialogue has helped create a positive working relationship with the Early Intervention Provider Association (EIPA) to help solve the many challenges moving forward.

To this end, EIPA recommends to NJDOH the following:

- The Department extend the 30-day billing requirement to 90 days in recognition of concerns related to provider organizations needing more time to perform the billing reconciliation process and to implement a quality insurance process.

- The Department and PCG continue to accept recommendations to EIS that will enhance the software moving forward. This includes but is not limited to additions to the report functions, use of electronic signature, and uploading documents. In addition, the establishment of committees/work groups around specific topics that would be populated by individuals representing provider organizations to gain their insight as a system user.
- That the 12/31/19 backlogging deadline be a potentially flexible date depending upon the billing status of a number of organizations that anticipate not being able to fully reimburse the Department advance payments during the last quarter of the year.
- The Department solicit and advocate for additional appointments to the State Interagency Coordinating Council.
- The Department remain receptive to receiving correspondence from our member organizations regarding any “damages” realized during the implementation of EIMS since December 1, 2017.
- The Department conduct a rate study to determine appropriate rates of reimbursement that take into account the competitive environment and differential factors related to in-home therapeutic supports vs. center-based services; travel for interventionists; and geographic disparities across New Jersey.
- The Department look carefully at the entire Early Intervention structure and to redesign the system to better meet the needs of its constituency.
- The Department supported the use of “virtual therapy” and on expanding upon this innovative approach of service delivery in the future.
- The Department immediately reinstate the 5% reduction in rates levied against the EIS providers back in 2002.

The ABCD EIPA offers ourselves as a resource to NJDOH and to members of the Legislature in the advocacy, resolution, data collection and piloting of any of the above topics and debates that attempt to improve the Early Intervention model in the State of New Jersey.

The ABCD EIPA has been in existence since 2006 and has been a tireless advocate for improving the EIS and making recommendations to NJDOH that foster provider sustainability in a competitive and changing environment. The thirteen member organizations of ABCD EIPA operate independent of one another and collectively provide services to more than 60% of the total number of children served in the State of New Jersey.

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