



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

EARLY INTERVENTION PROVIDER ASSOCIATION

POSITION PAPER INCREASING REIMBURSEMENT RATES

October 31, 2019

The ABCD Early Intervention Provider Association (EIPA) has been in existence since 2006 and has been a tireless advocate for improving the Early Intervention System (EIS) and making recommendations to the New Jersey Department of Health (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.

The provider agencies are reimbursed by NJDOH on a fee-for-service basis for the face-to-face direct services provided to children and their families. The rates of reimbursement were established as a result of a rate study funded by the NJDOH back in 2002. **During the past 17 years, the rates have increased a cumulative total of 1.78%, whereas the Medicare Economic Index has increased more than 21% for the same period of time.**

As a result of this disparity, all provider organizations across the State are struggling with attracting qualified personnel to serve those children deemed eligible for services. These organizations are competing with the hospital industry, nursing home and assisted living industries, as well as the 573 public school districts throughout NJ (2018-19 School Year) that hire or retain related service disciplines in a clinic or congregate setting.

The home-based pediatric assignment in Early Intervention is not considered a coveted position with regards to those related services disciplines (physical therapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy). The center-based service locations represent the preferred employment locations which is in direct competition with the EIS and its model of serving and evaluating children in their “natural environments.” This limits the pool of interested applicants to serve in the EIS which has resulted in a significant increase in children waiting to be served (No Provider Available List).

It should also be noted that other Departments in the State of New Jersey have rolled out programs in the past 5 years that also fund community based intervention services for children

and adults whereby contributing to the depletion of therapeutic staff (New Jersey Department of Human Services, Division of Developmental Disabilities and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families). Again, their rates of reimbursement are often higher than what is offered by the NJDOH for Early Intervention.

Therefore, in order to create a more sustainable Early Intervention system, the providers of ABCD EIPA respectfully request the following:

1. The NJDOH should immediately reinstate that 5% reduction in rates levied against the EIS providers back in 2010.
2. The NJDOH should 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.
3. The NJDOH should advocate on an annual basis to financially support the EIS and give consideration to indexing the fee structure as a permeant solution to addressing the annual cost of living changes.

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.

Please contact us at (609) 581-8375.

Patricia Carlesimo, Chair, ABCD EIPA