



Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

“Accepting the Challenge of Transitioning to a New Department of Early Childhood” The Right Place for Early Intervention

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The designated Lead Agency for IDEA Part C resources has rested in the New Jersey Department of Health (NJDOH) since July 1, 1993. For the past 29 years Early Intervention Services have been operated by a department whose primary purpose and priorities often overshadowed the immediate needs of infants, children, and families who required daily Early Intervention Services. Over the last few years, NJDOH’s obligatory focus on hospitals and long-term care has expanded to include the State’s psychiatric hospitals, the opioid crisis, and the State-wide management of the COVID-19 epidemic. This state of affairs has understandably monopolized the resources and management talent of the Department resulting in a deteriorating and suboptimal Early Intervention System. What worked in 1993, no longer works in 2022.

We applaud the State of New Jersey, 220th Legislature (Senate and Assembly Bills S2475 and A4178) for recognizing the need for a focused effort on Early Childhood to be structurally instituted in state government. Their vision to establish a principal department in the Executive Branch supports the streamlining of related services, supports, best practices and staffing with a singular focus on early childhood.

Our eligible children and their families in the State of New Jersey deserve a coordinated system and continuum of care. They also should be provided the best cost-effective opportunity to reach their developmental milestones and transition through an educational system that leads to self-sufficiency and independence.

We believe that the new Department of Early Childhood could make a significant difference in supporting the following:

1. A more focused approach to contracting with provider organizations and an acknowledgement of best fiscal practices, accountability/governance, as well as flexibility to address current financial issues.
2. The identification and use of a data management system that is user friendly, transparent in design and flexibility, and allows families to note progress, sign documents and provide more input into their services.
3. Drive innovation, transition and supports by linking with IDEA Part B, the childcare community and other departments that provide services from pregnancy to age 8.

4. A sharing of recruitment and retention strategies for therapeutic practitioners that are needed to cross many industries which requires in-depth planning and analysis to ensure that all children receive adequate clinical support.

ABCD offers itself as a resource to the members of the Legislature in the advocacy, resolution, data collection and troubleshooting of any of the above topics that attempt to improve the Early Intervention model in the State of New Jersey and make the case for a new Department.

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 NJDOH that foster provider sustainability in a competitive and changing environment. The fourteen 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.