



**Alliance for the Betterment of
Citizens with Disabilities**

Empowering People: Providers Shaping Policies

New Jersey Legislative Disability Caucus
Supporting Agency Perspective on Budget Uncertainty
April 22, 2025
ABCD Testimonial

Good day members of the NJ Legislature, NJ Disability Legislative Caucus, Ombudsperson Aronsohn, Director Witowsky, and the NJ Council on Developmental Disabilities. Thank you for this opportunity to provide you with an update on early intervention.

In addition to the provision of day and residential programs and services for adults, ABCD's member agencies provide early intervention services – physical, occupational and speech language therapies (PT/OT/ST) to infants and toddlers, birth to three, with developmental delays or disabilities. The goal of this intervention is simply to minimize and prevent permanent disability.

Though NJ's birthrate is stable, early intervention saw 5% fewer infants and toddlers last year than in 2023-2024. While analyzing the underlying causes, I am happy to report that in the FY'26 proposed budget, DOH has added additional resources to Child Find which is the process of locating, identifying, and evaluating children with disabilities and delays who may be eligible for Early Intervention (EI) services. To achieve this goal, DOH EI staff (which has increased 40%) will work with national and local partners to further innovate the program, work closely with both regional collaboratives (REIC) and the neonatal intensive care units (NICU), host community events, and expand the WIC/EI pilot in Newark to include Cumberland County. The pilot found that 70% of the families receiving WIC benefits in Newark had not heard of early intervention. Employing the WIC text communication system, DOH has made inroads locating eligible children.

In addition to their efforts to increase demand, DOH recommended an increase to provider rates to maintain and increase the supply of PT/OT/ST in EI. Regrettably, that did not make the proposed budget, but the department fully understands the necessity of increasing capacity to meet its goal of increasing the number of eligible children participating in this life altering program. To this end we are asking for an increase of 2.5% (\$4.5M) to the early intervention provider rate in the FY'26 Budget.

In addition to improving Child Find, the state will be focusing on improving child outcomes, the specifics of which are in process.

Thank you.