



The Update:

News and Information for MA Early Intervention Providers

September 2010

Welcome to Fall Edition of "The Update." This is a periodic newsletter focusing specifically on issues and information in MA Early Intervention. This issue will highlight important information about Verification Visits, CEIS Process and Massachusetts Annual Family Fee System

Onsite Eligibility Verification Visits



The Department of Public Health (DPH) Regional staff will begin conducting data verification activities via record review at Early Intervention Programs to verify that eligibility is being appropriately determined.

The Regional EI Specialist will review a minimum of ten files at each EIP and will prioritize those records identified on the Error Report where the eligibility status is considered missing, ineligible or undetermined. If a program has no eligibility errors identified on the error report, staff will

randomly select records from each of the 4 eligibility categories; Established Condition, Established Delay, At Risk and Clinical Judgment.

The Department staff will share feedback on the data verification process with programs and be available to provide technical assistance at the program, region or statewide level to ensure that current eligibility criteria are being interpreted and applied universally. Please contact your Regional EI Specialist if you have specific questions regarding the upcoming onsite eligibility verification process.

FY 2011 Transition Survey Systems—Tips

The DPH would like to thank providers who provided data for the Massachusetts State Performance Plan (SPP), Indicator 8 Timely Transition Planning by completing the Transition Survey of the FY10 Annual Report.

The following provides some additional clarification and tips regarding completing the Transition Survey:

- Non IFSP children should not be included in the Transition Survey;
- Non LEA referred children should not be included in the survey;
- Children referred into the program after 2.9 should not be included in the Transition Survey;
- Please check **Yes** for the LEA Notification if the child's date of initial eligibility is 2.6 years or older. In this case, the LEA referral becomes the notification;
- Please check **Yes** for the LEA Notification if the date of the EIP's periodic notification had already occurred. In this case, the LEA referral becomes the notification;
- Review the drop down options for reason Notification was not sent or Transition Planning Conference did not occur as appropriate before checking the "other" category;
- The Transition Planning Conference should occur within 90 days and up to 9 months before the child's third birthday. If the LEA is unable to attend the TPC before the child turns 2.9, the EI program should hold the TPC within the timeline without the LEA. The EI program may schedule another TPC at a later date when the LEA can be present but it is the first TPC that should be reported in the Transition Survey. "Family request to delay TPC" should be utilized only when a last minute circumstance occurs and/or the parent chooses to postpone or cancel the meeting.

Questions regarding the completion of the Transition Survey should be addressed to the DPH contact person, Katee Duffy at 508-984-0625 or kr.duffy@state.ma.us. Remember that EI programs will be required to submit a copy of the Transition Survey System to their EI Regional Specialist on a quarterly basis. The Department will send out periodic reminders.



Shishmanian Application Process Now Open



The Early Intervention Training Center (EITC) at DPH is now accepting applications for the 2010—2011 Shishmanian Fellowships. The due date for Fellowships for **Senior Practitioners and Students** is **October 15, 2010**. EITC would like to encourage students and senior practitioners in

MA Early Intervention to apply for these Fellowships.

Up to eight fellowships per year are awarded to honor Eunice Shishmanian, whose vision and dedication to the needs of very young children and their families serve as a model for all of us. The Shishmanian Fellowships are funded by Early Intervention Services, Division for Perinatal, Early Childhood and Special Health Needs at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

Senior Practitioner Fellowships provide experienced early interventionists time and resources to enhance their professional development. Fellowships of \$2,000 each will be granted for

use from November 2010 through May 2011. Senior Practitioner Projects funded in previous years include: assisted communication applications; infant massage training; training in the SCERTS model for assisting children with ASD and their families; training in feeding and swallowing; and many other topics.

Student Fellowships are available to individuals enrolled in an accredited college program that will lead to a degree in Early Intervention, early childhood development, special education, nursing, speech and language pathology, social work, physical therapy, occupational therapy or psychology. Fellowships of up to \$2,000 each will be granted for use during the 2010-2011 academic year, and must support a practicum in Early Intervention.

Application forms are available at www.eitrainingcenter.org/professionaldevelopment/Shishmanian. **Again, please note that the application deadline is October 15, 2010.**

Certification for Early Intervention Specialist (CEIS) Stakeholders Update



A group of CEIS Stakeholders has been meeting monthly since September 2009 and has nearly completed the task of developing a new framework for how EI competency indicators will be demonstrated in the portfolio submission for EI Specialist certification. Some highlights of the Stakeholder recommendations for the new process include:

Entry 1 – Formal Knowledge Source – recommending 16 competency indicators which will require a formal knowledge source (current process requires a formal knowledge source for 35 competency indicators).

Entry 2 – Professionalism – revision of the Self-Evaluation tool to be more useful for the applicant; and creation of a new Supervisor Inventory, to be completed by the applicants, in collaboration with their supervisors.

Entry 3 – Depth of Practice – Revision of narrative questions to focus on applicant's use of the IFSP to engage family in ongoing

dialogue regarding services and supports. Work samples to include one or more IFSPs, with relevant pages to be highlighted in narrative, and two Progress Notes.

Entry 4 – Breadth of Practice – eight Work Samples and Cover Sheets, including Transition; Biological Risk Factors; Cultural Diversity in Assessment; Facilitating Independence and Engagement with Others; Negotiation and Problem Solving; Sensory Development; Support for Family Self-advocacy; and Use of Current Infant/Toddler Research.

The revised portfolio process is based on 53 new competency indicators in 8 areas which were developed during a 2009 community-wide review process. Previously, there had been 69 competency indicators in 9 areas.

The new process will be piloted during winter 2010-2011 by a small group of pilots. If you have staff who may be interested in participating in the pilot process please contact Holly Newman at holly.newman@state.ma.us.

Enhanced Participation in Building a Community (BAC) Orientation

The EITC BAC Orientation facilitators will engage participants in sharing information about their backgrounds and experiences. The sharing of experiences allows for a richer educational process and helps participants learn not only from the workshop facilitators but from one another as well.

Facilitators will identify those participants who are most senior in terms of their EI experience to take on informal leadership roles during the day, e.g. leading discussion during small group activity, or acting as reporters for small groups, etc. We hope that this broadening of the participant role will enhance the learning experience for all participants.

Senior clinicians should not feel compelled to function in this role. It is simply an opportunity for a broader educational experience. However individuals should feel comfortable in declining

to participate in this way. Also, any participant may volunteer to take on the leadership responsibility.

In addition to enhancing the participant role during training, the EI Training Center is also expanding the learning activities of participants by inviting them to participate in a telephone focus group after the workshop has been completed. The purpose of the focus group is for participants to share thoughts and ideas on ways in which the training they received has been helpful to them in their work with other staff and with families. Additional information about focus group participation will be provided during the workshop.

Please encourage staff attending the BAC to consider enhancing their training experience by volunteering for one of these opportunities during the Building a Community Workshop.

State-wide Family Sign Language Program (FSLP)



The DPH recently awarded a three year contract to the Gallaudet University Regional Center (GURC) at Northern Essex Community College to operate a state-wide Family Sign Language Program (FSLP). The goal of the FSLP is to introduce family members to Sign Language, enabling them to communicate with their child who is deaf or hard of hearing at the earliest age possible. To participate, families must have a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and be currently enrolled in an EIP. Eligible families receive 20 weeks of child-centered instruction from qualified sign language instructors; 10 weeks in home with the remaining 10 weeks at home, online or in a group setting with other families.

Glenys Crane-Emerson recently joined the staff of the GURC as coordinator of the Family Sign Language Program. Glenys comes with a wealth of experience as a Family Sign Language instructor as well as an American Sign Language instructor.

This program is committed to meeting the needs of families throughout MA, so programs are encouraged to refer families who live in all parts of the state. GURC has strong connections with members of the Deaf community throughout the state and has been quite successful in attracting instructors to the program. If you would like additional information about the Family Sign Language Program please contact the Gallaudet University Regional Center at **978-556-3701** v/tty, or email at fslp@necc.mass.edu.

Massachusetts Annual Fee for Early Intervention Services



The Department of Public Health has implemented the following changes to the Early Intervention Annual Fee effective September 15, 2010: an increase in the fee amounts at all levels; families are now required to provide proof of income and complete the Income Attestation Form; families with an outstanding balance of 60 days or more past due may be subject to the suspension of services; and families may request an exemption from the fee by completing a [Family Fee Exemption Form](#).

The Parent Leadership Project hosted an information call for parent contacts and liaisons on the changes to the Annual Fee. The conference call and PowerPoint can be viewed on the PLP website at <http://www.eiplp.org/familyrights.html>. Please share this valuable resource with staff and families in your program. Additional information regarding the Annual fee may be found on both the PLP and Massachusetts DPH website at <http://www.mass.gov/dph/earlyintervention>.

The Department of Public Health has responded to the following questions regarding the Annual Fee that were received after the Updated FAQ:

If a family has received their first face-to-face visit before 9/15, will that family be assessed the old fee or the new fee?

If a family signs the IFSP after 9/15/10 the fee obligation would be based on the new fee structure. If they sign the IFSP prior to the new-fee-structure effective date of 9/15/10, they would be obligated to pay a fee based on the "old" fee structure.

A child may be deemed eligible, but the family may not decide to sign an IFSP (enroll in the program) for a variety of reasons. An eligibility evaluation/assessment is one of the services that are to be provided at no cost to families under IDEA.

When do we re-determine the annual fee?

The annual fee is determined at the time of the eligibility evaluation/determination and is assessed and pro-rated based on the length of time that the IFSP is in effect.

It appears that the EIIS IFSP form does not let us skip entering the family fee at the 6-month IFSP. It seems that the only option is to select "no fee"; however, this would mean that EIIS would show this family as not having a fee when they do. Is this correct?

Staff can enter either "Yes" or "No" to the fee question. If you answer "Yes" you are allowed to include \$0 with no collection date. EIIS does allow you to do this.

The fee information on the EIIS IFSP is used for the EIIS Service Fee Report. If the most recent IFSP states "No" under the "Fee required" question then this child will not appear on this report. However, if you are getting reports from your billing system regarding when the fees are due then you do not need to be concerned with this report.

DPH uses a child's age, insurance, eligibility type, income, family size and IFSP Signed Date to determine a child's family income, fee amount, etc. We do not use the "Fee required" or "Fee Amount" questions.

How should we handle child support payments and alimony payments? Are these already calculated into tax returns? Are we still considering them? Do we need to see proof of the amounts paid?

If the family provides a tax return as income documentation, they do not need to provide any information alimony/child support. For families where alimony/child support is their only income source, they should provide some form of documentation to that effect (e.g. copy of payment stubs/check) and have the staff person make a note on the form.

How do we calculate income for families in which a parent receives SSI checks?

Families receiving SSI are eligible for MassHealth so you do not need to complete the income attestation form.

Comments and questions to:

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