

SICC MEETING MINUTES

Truman Building, Room 400

September 15, 2006

Members Present

Elizabeth Spaugh
Lisa Robbins
Melodie Friedebach
Ron Berg

Stacey Owsley
Wendy Witcig
Leslie Elpers
Carissa Mattern

Melinda Sanders
Kathy Fuger
Kathryn Sapp
Valeri Lane

Members Not Present

Michael Dittmore
Doug Ommen

Kim Oligschlaeger
Ronald Roberts

Margaret Franklin

DESE Staff Present

Joyce Jackman
Theresa Villmer

Bill Connelly
Dale Carlson

Amanda Wogan

To review copies of handouts referenced in the minutes below, go to the following website:
<http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/SICCpage.html>.

Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions - Lisa Robbins called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of SICC Minutes – Leslie Elpers suggested a change under the New Business Section. The sentence beginning “A recommendation was to survey...” should read “A recommendation was to survey providers regarding transportation issues.” She also suggested that the sentence beginning “Also questions to include...” be replaced with the following sentence “Mary Beth wanted information about the travel issues to share with the General Assembly.”

Val Lane also submitted a change to the minutes via email. Under the Data Reports Section, she suggested that the following be added to the end of that section “Valeri Lane raised a concern that the activities carried out to prepare the report for OSEP did not include a random sampling, and cannot therefore be viewed as representative data for the state on the indicators in question. The primary concern is that when future monitorings take place, comparison of these data to an actual monitoring will likely raise questions about differences in outcome. These questions may be difficult to answer at a later date.”

Kathy Fuger made a motion to adopt the minutes with the above corrections. Wendy Witcig seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Budget – Dale Carlson (2 handouts) - The “A” report, shows a receipt of \$110,363 for August. This receipt includes late payments from private insurance carriers who have elected (for calendar year 2006) to pay a percentage of direct written premiums (as opposed to direct claims billing) to satisfy their early intervention insurance requirement relating to SB 500 (2005). This is a residual of the one time payment that is due each year by January 31. Insurance carriers appear to be very slow to pay which means the revenue may be spread out over an extended period of time.

The “B” report indicates higher than normal costs for July. We typically see higher costs in June and July before costs settle to a more normal level. August direct service expenditures of \$1.5 million appear to be moving back toward what has become our typical monthly direct service cost on an annual basis of \$1.4 million. First Steps funding appears to be very solid for the current year.

Breakdown of Data regarding Inactivation Reasons – Bill Connelly (3 handouts)

Bill presented a breakout of inactivation reasons by SPOE for the last 12 months (9/1/2005-9/1/2006, webSPOE children only). Children in SPOE software are either aging out or are kids that were never removed from the system (already aged out, or moved out of state, etc – were just never inactivated). It was suggested to Bill - Could we correct in the new system so that the option “Part C ineligible” not be given for children with IFSPs (it will be filtered out of future reports).

Kathy Fuger indicated that she was concerned that the “Unable to Contact/Locate” (children with IFSP) category could represent minority families, homeless, high risk, Medicaid families, etc. There could be a logical explanation such as moving out of state but she felt that concerning. When looking at the actual numbers, small numbers. There are more children that meet eligibility criteria but in the process we can’t locate them – may not want to participate in program or for other reasons. Issues to keep in mind include will the kids that are ineligible or inactivated – will they show up again later in the system. Melodie said that in five years it will be much better when we have an ID system and that this is a voluntary program. She said we need to do the best we can and to let families know about the value of the program.

Bill said that two more inactivation reasons have been added - Withdrawn by Parent due to "Family Cost Participation" and "Inquiry Only." It was introduced in September by the CFO. It was mentioned that some people in the field may not know it is available. Joyce will check to see if it is on the list for Sept 15 and let Karen Jacobi know.

Bill also presented information regarding further ineligibility information. Four SPOEs had volunteered to take lists of kids that were inactivated and provide more detailed information. (see handout). Bill/Joyce indicated that this information was collected through a sampling but would be difficult to automate. Wendy Witcig had said at a previous SICC meeting that she thought it would be interesting to know if this information could be collected (why was the child found ineligible). It could take some time if a SPOE had very many kids to go back and pull files to see the reason why. It was suggested that this might have to be tied back to the reason the child was referred. How many children are we finding ineligible because of combined delay (maybe just a yes/no question). Could we include an inactive reason “due to combined delay.”

Melodie suggested that a group get together to see what really is a delay. What is that difference. What researchers show what are developmental norms. How much a child could catch up without intervention. Maybe experts from other states. Stacey Ismail said that this had been done to some degree. A Communication guidance document with information on expressive/receptive delay has been written but has not been released yet. We are working on what constitutes a communication delay. The report is currently at DESE. Joyce said it is also a provider training issue. Need to develop an evaluation format so that the evaluations are being done correctly. The quality of evaluations varies greatly. Melodie said that we will see what we can do to get these guidance documents out to the field. There is one on every area. The documents will be posted and notices/emails will go to the providers. It is a provider training issue--what we need to do with the information, where to take it, what should providers be doing and how to look at EI services under Part C. Stacey suggested that the training could be mandated (Evaluation and Assessment teams). There are a number of technical assistance documents that are in the review process; DESE will be releasing some soon and others on an on-going basis. We can discuss at the November meeting with a timeline and may have some of the tech asst documents released (Joyce).

Compliance Monitoring – Amanda Wogan – Amanda indicated that compliance monitoring involves monitoring all entities that provide early intervention with the system (SPOEs, DMH, Independent SCs (in the past) and providers to ensure that regulatory requirements that apply to each group are being followed.

Reviews have been conducted through on-sites. When findings of non-compliance are identified, DESE follows up to make sure that non-compliance is corrected. OSEP requires non-compliance to be corrected within 12 months of the date of the letter reporting the findings.

At this time all Phase I SPOEs and all of the old Phase II SPOEs have been monitored and follow-up reviews have been conducted. There are no findings of non-compliance that have not been corrected at this point for SPOEs.

DESE has monitored all DMH regional centers specifically looking at compliance requirements for ongoing services coordinators (see handout). DESE will be conducting a follow-up probably in October.

DESE is working on developing plans for how to move forward with compliance monitoring and all general supervision activities within the ten SPOE regions that now exist. We intend to conduct cyclical monitoring of all SPOEs but have not finalized decisions about how often that will occur or what exactly DESE will look at as part of that process. Plans to focus compliance reviews on priority indicators that are most related to the SPP performance indicators.

General supervision is an ongoing process that involves some of the following components: SPOEs completing quarterly reports, DESE reviewing the reports along with current data reports to identify areas that may require technical assistance or corrective action, parent surveys, QIRS, and SPOE contracts. DESE is trying to finalize the plans/procedures. DESE will be working with Leader Services (company from Pennsylvania) to develop a data system for tracking activities and results of general supervision activities, including compliance monitoring.

Transportation Survey - Joyce Jackman (see handout) - Following the July SICC meeting a survey was developed to obtain feedback from First Steps providers related to the lack of travel incentives within the program. The survey was available on line for a two week period in August with 499 responses received. This represented approximately 42% of the estimated 1,200 providers enrolled in the system. The handout included a copy of the actual survey, a summary of responses to each question, and a list of common narrative responses, where appropriate. The two most common themes from the respondents were the need to pay providers for time spent traveling to the natural environment for delivery of services and payment of a mileage reimbursement.

Update on Training Activities - Joyce Jackman - During the months of September and October the First Steps consultants will conduct 20 regional trainings across the state regarding new federal data reporting requirements related to early childhood outcomes (ECO). First Steps SPOE and DMH staff and district Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) staff have been invited to attend the training in their area. ECO entry and exit data will be collected in both programs beginning in October 2006 and reported to DESE in July 2007. This will be an on-going data collection and reporting requirement. Material will be posted on the website following the completion of the regional trainings.

The Division has identified money from the federal State Improvement Grant that will be used during this fiscal year to provide training for First Steps providers on services in the natural environment that embed interventions across regular routines for the child and family. The Division has had preliminary talks with Dr. Robin McWilliam from Vanderbilt University to determine his interest in assisting the state with these trainings. At this time, two-day workshops are being considered for three locations within the state and follow-up training to the original workshops would occur regionally with state level trainers. These individuals would be trained by Dr. McWilliam's staff to conduct on-going support to the field in order to institutionalize the methodology.

Work is also progressing in development of a provider training module related to Part C to Part B transition. This module is slated for dissemination in spring 2007.

First Steps Audit: Joyce Jackman

Bobby Showers from the Auditor's Office attended the SPOE director's meeting the previous day and updated the group on the progress of the audit. He indicated that they are expecting to release their findings sometime in November. He also plans to provide a draft copy of the audit report to the SPOE offices and to DESE for review prior to the release. They visited five SPOE offices during their investigation: Greater St. Louis, Kansas City, Northeast, Sedalia and Springfield.

SPOE Operations –

Val Lane indicated there are still some items regarding the webSPOE needing discussion (e.g. eligibility (speech/language), provider information about family participation capacity, QUIRS, etc.). SPOEs are unable to pull out some needed information which makes it difficult to do their jobs as managers of the program. Joyce Jackman indicated that these reports for the SPOEs are close to being released. She indicated that staff at DESE thought the SPOEs had the reports and that it was just found out last week that the SPOEs could not get to the reports. It was a miscommunication between DESE and the CFO. DESE staff shared with the SPOE directors at yesterday's meeting a prioritized list of items the CFO is currently working on.

Karen Jacobi indicated a concern is that the independent providers need to be able to make sure the level of service identified on IFSP is actually being delivered. There are situation where the providers are going to the family's home but the family is gone and the providers in some cases are not going back. In addition, some providers are having problems inputting progress notes.

RICC Regular Update –

St. Charles County Region I SPOE (see handout) – Carissa Mattern reported that their RICC decided to partner with the Child Day Care Association to act as a fiscal agent so that the RICC can generate funds from the community to support their activities. This arrangement allows those donating funds to receive a tax break on the donation. They are currently working on several informational brochures to use with their child find efforts. They include: collaboration between providers and parents, a developmental checking brochure for parents and for hospitals to give to parents, and a general informational brochure Firsts Steps. Carissa expressed concern about DESE's decision that the FS logo cannot be used by the RICC for the brochures. She indicated that the public associates the logo with the program and wanted to know if there is a process that they can go through submit to DESE and/or the SICC for approval to use the logo. Joyce suggested that the RICC indicate their role with the program on the documents as a way to link their materials to First Steps. The logo is restricted for only official documents prepared by DESE or official contractors as way to the material as an official document. Melodie asked Carissa to leave copies of the brochures for DESE to review. DESE does not want to act in an approval capacity for all RICC materials developed for each region. Lisa Robbins expressed concern about possible copyright restriction on some content in the brochures. Joyce indicated that the Division discussed similar concerns when arriving at the decision to restrict use of the logo. Elizabeth cautioned against each of the LICC/RICCs producing their own and different developmental checklists. A suggestion was made that DESE develop a standard developmental checklist for use by the RICCs statewide. Margaret Pickett pointed out that the first brochure addresses things that families and providers agree to do together and does not contain developmental information. The second brochure contains the developmental information and is intended for use in pediatrician offices and hospitals. Melodie said that DESE would look at the brochures and possibly do something statewide. Margaret commented that their SPOE contract included a responsibility to identify issues and ways to meet those needs and that these brochures were one of the identified needs. Lisa recommended putting further discussion on the agenda for the next SICC meeting under New business. Val Lane asked that DESE consider the reading level of the final product while keeping it close to what the RICC developed. The final product needs lots on white space. Joyce received two brochures for DESE to review and Carissa will email the other one to Joyce when it is completed.

St. Louis County Region II – Bylaws are in place and subcommittees are now meeting every other month. The subcommittees are setting goals for the RICC. Membership looks good but they need a few more medical representatives. They have a legislative representative.

SW Region VII – Jennifer Coleman - They have bylaws written and three committees. They have an Executive Committee that is responsible for marketing and public relations, including provider recruitment and Child Find activities. The RICC is sending out survey to providers who are no longer providing First Steps services in the area to see why they have left the program and the RICC hopes to use that information to determine what changes are needed to attract the providers back into the program. They plan to address issues related to providers who are not following the First Steps regulations and are not demonstrating an understanding of the First Steps model for provision of services by developing educational materials. They have concerns that there are not repercussions for provider who are not following Part C regulations. The region continues to use these providers because there are not enough providers in the region to serve all of the children and families. They believe that the program has missed the most important piece when we doing training – the families. If families understood what they are entitled to in First Steps then providers wouldn't be able to provide inappropriate services. Some of the issues include; providers not attending meetings and not completing progress reports. Stacey Ismail said that until there is a change in the way providers are affiliated with the system, this won't change. First Steps needs to have someone who is accountable for the providers and when situations like this occur there would be a mechanism for accountability. Joyce indicated that we know that the current system has a number of significant weaknesses but decisions about where we go and how we get there will require careful planning. Melodie thinks this will be a huge political issue for the provider community. Discussion included the potential impact of reducing the current provider pool, how to remove providers from the matrix while working to meet the issues of no providers available in certain regions of the state. Leslie Elpers offered that communication with families is very important. As an agency, they send out surveys to families and if don't get a response, they call them. They have a monthly newsletter that addresses the First Steps philosophy. Joyce indicated that in order to not have 1,225 OA contracts with providers, we agreed with OA to have an open enrollment based on meeting a set of requirements. The enrolled providers are not assured clients so service coordinators and families may not choose a provider who does not follow the First Steps requirements. If we can prove that a provider has violated the law, knowingly submitted a fraudulent claim, we can take money back and remove the provider for repeat occurrences; however, it is hard to prove that they knowingly did it. Joyce said that we are looking at how OA does MC+ and managed care contracts to see if we can duplicate that process. Joyce's goal is to have something to look at for FY 08 – she has started conversations with OA to see what our options are and how to proceed.

Val would like to hear from Part C coordinators from other states (Texas and Massachusetts). States that went from the same model we had to what we have now. Joyce will get the names of Part C coordinators from other states to review options for Missouri to consider. Connecticut, for example, bids for multiple agencies that can provide some amount of service by region – they bid until they get enough contractors to serve the region. Several members indicated that this situation is more involved than just getting a mileage reimbursement for providers. Val made a motion that we have representatives from different states come to the SICC to present on their state's system. The motion was seconded by Kathy. It was suggested to contact Texas and Massachusetts but need to do some checking to determine what states would have a similar model as Missouri. Motion passed.

Region 4 - Wendy Witcig They are having problems in their region with mileage reimbursement for parents because there are no instruction that come in the packet. Parents need very specific instruction. DESE was thinking that the SC would be able to give instruction to the parents the first time. Parent has too much information to absorb at the first meeting. Make sure that the service coordinators have the information also, as many of them haven't seen the forms.

Member Issues -

Wendy Witcig indicated that she is also concerned about the activities carried out to prepare the report for OSEP (concern also raised by Val Lane during the review of the minutes from the last meeting). Melodie Friedebach indicated that OSEP sent out letters to Part B and Part C indicating what was wrong with the SPPs and gave DESE a short timeline to respond (45 day timelines was an issue in Missouri). DESE had to respond by June so they could make a decision on the grant award for the next year. DESE will have to report data on 45 day timeline compliance to OSEP. DESE will be monitoring this with the SPOES. Val said that the reason she asked for the correction to the minutes was because she felt that the representative monitoring

was not actually a representative monitoring. She indicated that a monitoring is where you go in and say you are going to monitor the files and the files are supposed to be clean, then there is a random selection. Amanda Wogan indicated that DESE allowed SPOES to look at their files to determine what files they wanted DESE to review. Joyce Jackman stated that if SPOES know enough about their files to pick the cleanest ones, then they should know enough to be accountable for those files. Melodie said this was just on a follow-up for SPOES and not an initial monitoring. Melodie said that for a new monitoring of a SPOE it will be done with random file selection, SPOES will not have the luxury of file selection. A follow-up is just a check to see that the SPOE understands that the items found out of compliance at the monitoring are now corrected.

Melodie Friedebach indicated that there is no word yet from the Governor's office on the appointments to the council. Each of the agencies submitted who they wanted appointed and DESE submitted three parent appointments.

Leslie Elpers asked about issue with IDENTIX. She wanted to know if providers could go somewhere else. She feels that the locations, cost, and limited hours available are a barrier for providers. Joyce Jackman indicated that a decision was made to only go through IDENTIX but that First Steps providers are not required to have fingerprint checks. It was suggested that this be included on the agenda for next month for further discussion.

Val Lane made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ron Berg seconded the motion. Motion passed meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m.