



An Overview for Council Members

Revised June, 2021

Welcome

Welcome to the West Virginia Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). Your participation as a member is valued and the expertise you bring to the Council is important to the success of the West Virginia Birth to Three System. The Council provides an opportunity for parents, professionals, legislators, advocates and state interagency partners to work together to advise and assist the lead agency, the Department of Health and Human Resources, in the development and implementation of a statewide system of services and supports for young children with special needs and their families.

Mission and Key Principles

The has adopted the mission and key principles of the WV Birth to Three system. The Council believes that the services and supports provided through the WV Birth to Three system should:

Mission

WV Birth to Three partners with families and caregivers to build upon their strengths by offering coordination, supports, and resources to enhance children's learning and development.

Key Principles

1. Infants and toddlers learn best within trusting relationships and through participation in every day experiences.
2. All families, with responsive and individualized supports and resources, can enhance their children's learning and development.
3. The primary role of practitioners and service coordinators is to partner with and coach family members and caregivers in meeting children's needs.
4. The early intervention process reflects the preferences, learning styles, cultural beliefs, and changing needs of each child and family.
5. The needs and priorities of children and families are the basis of functional and measurable Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) outcomes.
6. Teams communicate and collaborate effectively to meet the changing needs of the child and family.
7. Approaches to support children and families are founded on evidence based practices, best available research, and relevant laws and regulations.

The mission and key principles of West Virginia Birth to Three support the following national outcomes for children and families.

Family Outcomes As a result of individualized supports and services families will:

- Know their rights
- Effectively communicate their child's needs
- Help their child develop and learn

Child Outcomes Children will demonstrate improved:

- Positive social emotional skills and social relationships
- Acquisition of knowledge of skills including language and communication
- Use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs

Adapted by the WV Early Intervention Interagency Coordinating Council from original work of the National OSEP TA Community of Practice – Part C Settings – Workgroup on Principles and Practices in Natural Environments, 2008.

Legal Foundations

The ICC was established in 1987 in compliance with federal regulations governing state early intervention systems that address the needs of infants and toddlers ages' birth to three, eligible under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA 2004). These regulations

require each state to establish a state interagency coordinating council to advise and assist the lead agency in the development and implementation of the WV Birth to Three statewide system, particularly the identification of the sources of fiscal and other support for services for early intervention programs, assignment of financial responsibility to the appropriate agency, and the promotion of the interagency agreements; advise and assist the lead agency in the preparation of applications and amendments thereto; advise and assist the State educational agency regarding the transition of toddlers with disabilities to preschool and other appropriate services; prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and to the Secretary on the status of early intervention programs for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families operated within the State; and, may advise and assist the lead agency and the State educational agency regarding the provision of appropriate services for children from birth through age 5. The Council may advise appropriate agencies in the State with respect to the integration of services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and at-risk infants and toddlers and their families, regardless of whether at-risk infants and toddlers are eligible for early intervention services in the State.

In West Virginia, the lead agency for the Part C early intervention system is the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR). The system is administered through the Bureau for Public Health, Office of Maternal, Child and Family Health. The Department of Health and Human Resources, in conjunction with the ICC, have designated the name "WV Birth to Three" as the name for the statewide early intervention system under Part C of IDEA. While the ICC provides advice and assistance to the lead agency with planning, implementation and evaluation of the WV Birth to Three System, the lead agency has final authority in the administration of the state system. In 2012, WV celebrated 20 years of implementation of WV Birth to Three.

Council Structure

The ICC is comprised of at least 15 members who represent federally required stakeholder groups. These stakeholders include family members, private and public providers of early intervention services, a state legislator, a member of personnel preparation, a representative of preschool special education, Insurance commission, child care and Head Start. The ICC also recognizes the importance of having representation from advocacy groups and parent support organizations.

ICC members are appointed by the Governor to represent required categories of membership, as well as, the broad diversity of the State of West Virginia. Council members are appointed to an initial term of three years and may be reappointed. Twice a year, or as needed, the ICC, through the Membership Committee, will review the membership needs of the Council. The Committee will then solicit and interview new nominees for recommendation to the Council. All nominees are sent to the Governor for consideration for appointment. Following the recommendation of the ICC, the Governor also appoints the Council Chairperson who oversees the work of the Council. Council members then elect a Vice Chairperson. Both the Chair and Vice Chairpersons serve a two year term.

Council meetings, including an annual retreat, have traditionally been held every other month. At the annual retreat, the ICC prioritizes the work of the Council for the upcoming year and assigns committees to accomplish this work. Council meetings are open to the public and a Public Comment time is provided at each meeting to hear concerns, issues and questions from the public across the state.

The Role of Committees and/or Task Groups

The ICC, at the annual retreat, may establish topical committees and/or task groups as required to achieve goals for the upcoming year. These committees/task groups play a major role in helping the Council realize its mission. The number of standing committees may vary according to the needs of the Council. Currently the only standing committee is the Membership Committee. In order to maximize the face to face time during Council meetings, committees usually meet between scheduled ICC meetings and report to the Council their progress during the afternoon session.

Council by-laws call for each committee to be chaired and/or co-chaired by a parent, and at least one chairperson of each committee should be a Council member. Council members may at time call upon non-council members for assistance with task groups. Council members are expected to participate on at least one committee/task group.

Role of Members

As a member of the ICC, you play a very important role within committees and the Council as a whole. You bring expertise, knowledge, skills and personal stories to be shared in assisting the lead agency in the development, implementation and evaluation of the West Virginia Birth to Three System. Members are expected to come to each meeting prepared and ready to participate to the fullest.

One of the most significant contributions that each council member makes is that of representing a constituency. The role of each member is advisory and assistance not advocacy. To advise means to give advice, inform, counsel, recommend, suggest or guide. To assist means to help, support, second, attend or aid. To advocate means to support something, plead your case or position, favor a position or argue. Each ICC member should try to reach out to get the perspective of their stakeholder group on critical issues discussed at ICC meetings. Your peers on the Council and Council leadership and staff can assist you in facilitating ongoing communication between yourself and the public.

Should you need to share information from your stakeholder group you may do this in different ways. To send information to the Council between meetings, provide the content to the Council Director and this information will be disseminated to the Council membership. You may also request time on the agenda for a Council meeting to present the information, please contact the Council Director at least 30 days prior to the scheduled meeting to be included on the agenda.

Conflict of Interest - Conflict of interest means that personal gain is not sought or achieved by ICC members while fulfilling the length of your term. Conflict of interest situations could include having a financial interest in recommendations provided by the Council, working for a competitor, accepting gifts or money, using Council resources, time or equipment for personal gain, using intellectual property or business practices for personal or competitive gain. ICC Members are requested to disclose any potential financial or personal interests/conflicts prior to deliberations or voting on recommendations. Members should also disclose any personal relationships that may impact the ability to remain impartial in any deliberations. You should contact the WVICC Director to disclose any conflict of interest.

As an ICC member, you are encouraged to:

- 1 – Represent the ICC in a positive and supportive manner;
- 2 – Share the work of the ICC with the constituency you represent, and get feedback as to the work that is being done;
- 3 – Bring forward priorities, issues and concerns your constituency has regarding the work that is being done;
- 4 – Ask for additional resources that you may need to feel prepared and to participate Fully; and,
- 5 – Ask for a Mentor who can guide you in your work.

Family Involvement

The lead agency and the ICC believe that families should play a major role in all aspects of the WV Birth to Three System including program development, implementation and evaluation. These roles should be "meaningful" to families. In order to assist families in becoming equal partners in the Council, the diverse cultures of families across the state should be represented and respected; individual family strengths should be recognized and honored; and Council supports should be flexible to meet individual family needs.

Consensus

Consensus building is a means to assure every member of the Council has had an opportunity to express their support or concerns with the topic being discussed prior to a vote. The Council will submit to a vote only those items on which there is modified consensus among the membership. The modified consensus rule is: Can we live with and publicly support the proposal? If not, what would we add to, delete from, or modify in the proposal that we can live with and publicly support? In the event that a modified consensus cannot be obtained, a vote may be requested by the Council Chairperson.

The Role of the Council Staff

Members of the WV Birth to Three staff attend ICC meetings regularly to provide updates on national and state policy changes, the newest research and best practice in the field, as well as, emerging issues in the field. Birth to Three staff members may assist committees/task groups by providing needed information.

The Council Director or designated staff person is assigned to the ICC to assist the Council with scheduling of meetings, communication between meetings, accessing additional information when needed, coordinating supports for meeting attendance, and answering questions that may arise.

Council Supports

The ICC provides a variety of supports for Council members. Appointed members who do not otherwise receive support for their travel, meals and lodging may be compensated at the current state reimbursement rates. Parent representatives will receive reimbursement for travel, meals, lodging and childcare as well as an honorarium of \$75.00 per meeting for their participation on the Council. Other supports may be provided to meet individual member needs such as special dietary requirements, information on local childcare opportunities and calling cards for parent members. Please arrange for supports prior to each ICC meeting by contacting the Council Director or designated council staff.

The ICC Mentorship Program

The ICC has established a mentorship program to help new Council members feel welcomed at meetings and to hasten their full participation in Council activities. The Council realizes there is much to learn as a new member and mentoring is one way to provide information and support to you. The Council encourages but does not require participation in the mentorship program.

The state Birth to Three office maintains a list of Council members for each region of the state. When a new member is invited to an ICC meeting, the new member is asked if they would like to have a mentor. The Council Director or designated staff person then assigns a mentor from their geographic area. When possible the mentor will be from the new member's geographical region.

Once the Council mentor accepts his/her new assignment, the Birth to Three office sends a letter of confirmation to the mentor. WV Birth to Three also mails a welcome packet along with information about the assigned mentor to the new member. Prior to the next meeting, the Council mentor will contact the new member to introduce themselves, summarize the organization of the Council, and to respond to any questions they may have.

At the meeting, the Council mentor welcomes the new member, introduces them to other members as well as Council staff and helps direct them to a committee of interest. At the end of the committee meetings, the mentor will meet with the new member and accompany them to lunch. In order to facilitate the mentorship process, the Council recommends that all Council participants sign in upon arrival.

Within a few days following the ICC meeting, the Council mentor will initiate a follow-up call with the new member(s) to discuss the meeting and respond to any additional questions. Mentors should remain available during the following months to assist new members and provide support as needed or requested.

Council Orientation

The ICC offers an orientation to the ICC on at least an annual basis or when new members are appointed. New members are encouraged to attend the orientation for more in depth information regarding the Council and how to effectively participate in your role as a member.