

SICC MEETING MINUTES

Truman Building, Room 400

July 17, 2009

Members Present

Pam Thomas

Judith Muck

Melinda Sanders

Tec Chapman

Molly White

Kathy Quick

Donna Cash

Lisa Robbins

Wendy Witcig

Joyce Sims

Leslie Elpers

Stacey Owsley

Kathy Fuger

Melissa DeStefano

Becky Houf

Members Not Present

Judy Finnegan

Carissa Mattern

Cori Tharp

DESE Staff Present

CJ Hubbard

Michele Schall

Stacey Ismail

Tina Lawson

Charla Myers

Marcy Morrison

Dale Carlson

Judy Goans

To review copies of handouts in the minutes below, go to the follow website:

<http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/SICCpage.html> and click on “Handouts” for the July 17, 2009 meeting.

Call to Order, Welcome, and Introductions – Wendy Witcig brought the meeting to order at 8:30 and introductions were made.

Approval of the SICC Minutes – Wendy Witcig asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 2009 meeting. Melinda Sanders made a motion to approve the minutes and Donna Cash seconded the motion. Motion passed and the April 2009 meeting minutes were approved.

A recommendation was made by the policy subcommittee at the April 2009 SICC meeting that all state agency representatives give a brief description of how their agency touches the First Steps early intervention program. Molly White, Tec Chapman, Judith Muck, Kathy Fuger, Donna Cash, Melinda Sanders, Stacey Owsley, Kathy Fuger, Becky Houf, Kathy Quick, and Lisa Robbins each gave a brief description to the group. A suggestion was made that a column be added to the list of SICC member with bullet points referencing what area they provide support to for First Steps. It was also suggested that a

link to their program's website would be beneficial. Molly White will work on behalf of the policy committee to update the information.

First Steps Updates:

Financial Report – Dale Carlson reported on the “A” report and said that from a financial standpoint it has been a good year for First Steps. In terms of revenue DESE hit the budgeted amounts but saw increases in private insurance and Medicaid receipts. DESE drew down approximately \$33 million in total First Steps funding and expended \$32.7 million. Costs are trending upward as we expended 14.7% more for direct services in 2009 compared to 2008. The December 1 child count has increased 17.6% from FY07 to FY09, which means that higher direct service costs should be expected. Other items impacting program costs into FY 2010 are mileage reimbursement (which increased on July 1 from \$.30 to \$.47 per mile) and the SPOE contract rebid. The child find coordinator pilot program in the Greater St. Louis region is a cost that will run through the First Steps budget through 2011. Funds for the pilot program have been drawn down for this fiscal year. Dale stated that he was waiting on more information from the Central Finance Office (CFO) before calculating a cost per child for 2009. A question was asked if the council members needed to act proactively to defend the rising cost of the First Steps program. Dale stated that while DESE and First Steps advocates have done a better job of educating legislators in recent years so that they understand what First Steps does, it is always a good idea to keep legislators up-to-date and informed about the good things the program does for infants and toddlers in this state. A suggestion was made that the SICC look at ways to help support the efforts of DESE with public awareness events. DESE will request an increase to the First Steps core appropriation for 2011 of approximately \$5 million.

The “B” report reflects direct service expenditures by SPOE. DESE budgeted \$20.4 million in direct services and expended \$22.7 million. Direct service costs averaged \$1.9 million a month in 2009 compared to \$1.65 million in 2008. The 2010 direct service budget is \$23 million. A member of the SICC requested that the childcount and cost per child numbers for FY03 be added to the historical data shown on the bottom portion of the “B” Report. The state has received approximately \$7 million in ARRA/stimulus monies and will begin to expend these funds in 2010. All ARRA funding must be obligated by September 30, 2011 and liquidated by December 30, 2011. ARRA funds will primarily be used for program/system enhancements.

Compliance Update – CJ Hubbard stated that at the January SICC meeting the council discussed Indicator 8 involving transition of First Steps children to the Local Education Agency (LEA). Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has indicated DESE needs to have a mechanism in place to inform local LEAs that there is a possibility of a child entering their system. We discussed at that meeting whether there should be an “opt out” policy or should every child's name, birthdate, parent's name, address, and phone number be given to the LEA. After discussion the SICC indicated that an “opt out” policy would be best so parents could object to the information being given. DESE presented OSEP with a proposed change to our state plan and also a sample of how we would provide the information. OSEP approved both of these items yet after the SPOE meeting yesterday there may be a change to the form. Any changes that DESE makes would be minimal. CJ distributed a document that shows what the state plan will require the SPOE offices to do. Briefly, the service coordinator will present the transition DVD and the transition booklet to the family and explain the transition process. At that time the family will be

told that, unless they object, limited directory information will be shared with the LEA. Some families may “opt out” for a variety of reasons, and a question was asked as to whether it would be beneficial to collect information as to why a family opted out? Currently DESE does not have a way to obtain the information electronically but it will be collected online when the WebSPOE system is updated next year. Most states give the information to the LEAs automatically and FERPA does allow for the exception to provide this information.

Recently DESE submitted our state application for federal funds. The application was approved on the condition that Missouri change our state regulation regarding the “opt out” policy. Within this next year the state plan will be distributed for public comment and review. After the period of public comment it will be submitted to OSEP.

DESE will be receiving a verification visit from OSEP the week of September 28. OSEP will be looking at a number of things including our CrEAG (Critical Elements Analysis Guide). Our NCRRC (North Central Regional Resource Center) has reviewed our CrEAG and has given it high marks, especially on the fiscal information being very thorough. A question was asked as to what is the NCRRC. CJ explained that the NCRRC is federally funded and assists several states with their state performance plans as well as reviewing a number of documents that the federal government requires.

On January 30, 2009 Missouri filed its Annual Performance Report (APR) with OSEP. Missouri received a letter recently from OSEP indicating that our state “meets requirements” for IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Act). DESE is also required to provide determinations for each of the local SPOE agencies and they received their letters on June 30, 2009. All SPOE offices in the state have met their requirements. DESE will begin compliance monitoring the last week of July and into August with 5 different SPOE offices being monitored.

Program Update – Pam Thomas provided an update on the new SPOE contracts that were implemented July 1. There were 4 counties that moved from one region to another and 4 regions have changed contractors. The SPOE offices reported at the SPOE meeting yesterday that for the most part things are going well with new staff hired and some staff that have transitioned from the previous contractor. The Kansas City area has the same contractor now for regions 4 and 5 and those offices have been combined into one office. The St. Louis area has the same contractor for regions 1 and 2 and those offices have been combined as well. This should help with consistency with there being one phone number for referrals for the St. Louis and Kansas City area.

The SPOE contractors attended training in Jefferson City for 4 days in June and DESE updated the First Steps practice manual. All the service coordinators and the SPOE directors received copies of the manual this week. The manual is posted on the First Steps web page at:

<http://dese.mo.gov/divspced/FirstSteps/PracticeManual.htm>

The Missouri Part C Stakeholder Meeting on Effective Teaming was held in Jefferson City on April 23, 2009. The minutes from the meeting were distributed to the SICC members. The first stakeholder meeting was held in 2007 and DESE asked the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) to facilitate that meeting regarding service delivery models. At the meeting held in April of this year DESE brought back everyone to discuss teaming. Challenges and strategies regarding teaming were identified.

At the previous SICC meeting there were several questions that were addressed to DESE and Pam gave a follow-up on those questions. The most recent memo from DESE regarding First Steps was a message

announcing the increase in provider mileage reimbursement from \$.30 to \$.47 effective July 1, 2009. At the last SICC meeting the group discussed providers are expected to write a quality report but aren't reimbursed for their time. Effective September 1, 2009, providers administering the DAYC will be authorized a flat payment of \$200.00 to do the initial evaluation and write a report. Hopefully this will assist the SPOEs in obtaining a rich description of the provider's observations and child's level of functioning at the time of the evaluation. Pam also reiterated that it is important to maintain communication between DESE and First Steps providers, and the provider message board is updated at least once a month.

The No Provider Available (NPA) report was distributed to the group. A question was asked if there was a concern that the council needs to address the NPA issue. Currently, there is no coordination statewide of providers in specific geographic areas and there are areas with many providers yet other areas with few providers; one way to get providers to travel to less populated areas is to reimburse them for time spent traveling. Travel authorizations are given to providers if they travel over 60 miles (one way) and only when traveling to the natural environment, not a clinic. Early Intervention Teams will organize providers throughout the SPOE regions. It was suggested that SPOEs could network with school districts or communities who are also facing the challenges of finding providers. The SPOEs have until next June, the first full year of their contract, to develop how the EI teams will function in their region. At this time the NPA report will continue to be posted.

The purpose of the First Steps program is to increase family and caregiver confidence in a natural setting. The group discussed the definition of natural environment and clinic setting. Public libraries, parks, and churches have been considered in the past as a natural environment. There is a Q & A document on the DESE web site regarding the natural environment and states that it is the purpose of the child's program that determines if it is a natural environment. It was suggested that the program committee discuss this issue during their working lunch. Though child files are monitored for progress and primary setting for services, the program committee could look at something else to measure that progress such as a parent survey.

A handout detailing the timeline to spend the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) monies was distributed. The ARRA monies appropriate additional funding for Part B and Part C programs. Monies come to the Part C program as a grant and go to the Lead Education Agency (LEA), which is DESE. Part C will receive \$7.6 million. Because it is a one-time payment, DESE cannot create something that can't be maintained long term. In general, the monies will be used for updating or creating materials, trainings, and the WebSPOE system enhancements. The state may also save back monies for direct services to children during the transitional period of teaming. The timeline distributed showed the timelines for the implementation of the EI Teams. Monies must be allocated and spent by December 31, 2011. Some of the money will be used to develop materials to distribute to hospitals, the medical field, and community partners to better define teaming. Team mentoring of some sort will be needed with intense technical assistance by the Area Directors. A question was asked as to how teams would have been funded if this money wasn't received. DESE responded that initially it was an option for the SPOEs to team or not to team and with these additional monies, extra support will be provided to the SPOEs and providers in teams. Other uses for the ARRA monies include the possibility of an EIT video. The money is not limited to the EI Teams though. DESE is working on proposals for deaf/hard of hearing workshops to train First Steps providers. DESE may also use the money to translate materials for families who do not speak English. DESE is asking for other suggestions for the ARRA monies.

The subcommittees met for a 45 minute working lunch.

Policy Subcommittee – The policy subcommittee suggested a report be produced showing the number of children in each county who are receiving First Step services and distributed to senatorial and representatives before January 1, 2010. This report could be used to talk to individual legislators, one for senators, and one for representatives. The SICC would need to start thinking about discussing Senate Bill 500 if they would like changes to be made in the upcoming legislative session and DESE would need to decide if they want to pursue it. A question was asked as to how much it is costing the department to get in the insurance money. The biggest expense is at the Central Finance Office (CFO). This is not shown as a specific expense on Dale's report. Pam will speak to Dale and investigate what additional items could be included on Dale's report. They also discussed how they could make information available to the SICC attendees and the board members regarding how each agency is involved with kids. Each agency person should send Judy Goans a link to their agency website or information on how their program touches the First Steps kids. Their group also discussed parent recruitment. Head Start discussed SICC involvement during their meeting this summer, but the Head Start parents wanted to know what are the expectations and criteria for becoming an SICC member. The group discussed the expectation piece and what does the SICC expect from the parent and what does the parent expect from the SICC. The parent members of the SICC are reimbursed for their meals, mileage, and hotel cost. The group suggested that it would be helpful to document what the parent expectations are for participation so they will know what the SICC wants from them and what they can expect from us. If you know of a parent who might be good you would have some concrete information to give to them. The governor's office has asked that we provide documentation to show that we are attempting to recruit minority parents to the SICC. In terms of outreach and advocacy, the group discussed what the SICC could to advocate for First Steps.

SPOEs - The SPOEs met and discussed daily operations and how they handle different situations. They also discussed the problem with educational decision maker and Children's Division with respect to what can be done if the foster parent won't sign the release of information. The SPOEs suggested that it would be helpful if the two agencies could discuss the issue. They stated that there needed to be some legal clarification at a higher level. Pam will speak to Cynthia Quetsch, DESE staff legal counsel, regarding this issue. Possibly a joint memo could be issued to service coordinators from DESE and the Children's division to clarify this issue.

Program Subcommittee – This group discussed natural environments and how we need to revisit this topic. The group discussed possibly developing a DVD for families, service coordinators, and providers because there are new persons in the First Steps program. The group also discussed working with Higher Education to help teach the First Steps philosophy to students. It was also suggested to provide training for new providers and maybe assigning a mentor to new providers. DESE would need to create a new authorization ability for mentors if they are to be paid for their time. They discussed the NPA form and about possibly breaking the special service center down into PT, OT, ST, and SI. This might help identify why a child is in a special purpose center. Some of their thoughts on using the ARRA money included: DVDs, mentoring, and working with Higher Education. The only problem with using the

ARRA monies for mentoring is that mentoring is an ongoing program. It was mentioned that other states, specifically Iowa, are using their ARRA monies to develop the capacity of the providers doing professional development around autism and children in foster care. They are also using their money for discharge planning with NICUs and using new technology to provide access to service coordination in remote areas with the utilization of webcams. It was mentioned that the county extension offices in Missouri have the webcam technology.

Pam Thomas stated that the state has a unique opportunity with the ARRA monies available to the First Steps program. If anyone is interested in being part of a subcommittee to discuss ideas for ARRA monies, please contact Pam.

A new Commissioner of Education, Dr. Chris Nicastro, was recently appointed to head the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The SICC members will be receiving a survey by e-mail from OSEP. They are asked to fill out the survey and return it to Wendy Witcig.

The following dates were selected for next year's SICC meetings: January 8, 2010; April 9, 2010; July 9, 2010; and October 8, 2010.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:00.