

VIRGINIA INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
Henrico Mental Health
12-10-03

Brenda Laws, VICC Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. She welcomed everyone and introduced the new members of the VICC: Mary Lou Hutton, Council Coordinator, and Kristin Morrison, Northern Virginia Parent. Brenda Laws also announced that Eva Thorp, who was unable to attend the meeting, was appointed as the personnel preparation representative.

Announcement of New Officers:

Shirley Ricks reported that the nominating committee presented a slate of officers to the VICC. An e-mail vote was taken and the following officers were nominated:

Brenda Laws-Chair
Bethany Cooke-Vice Chair
Sandra Binns Whitaker-Secretary

Shirley Ricks reviewed the duties of each officer. Officers begin terms and responsibilities with this VICC meeting.

Part C Update

Cost Study

Mary Ann Discenza reported that they had hoped to share data at this meeting but there has been difficulty collecting the data from some providers. Seven localities are still processing the data while other providers, who indicated that they were interested in participating in the study, have not responded. The cost study is intended to answer the question, "How much does early intervention in Virginia cost?" The next meetings are scheduled for 1/6/04 and 1/7/04 at Henrico Mental Health. Karleen Goldhammer will be present.

Infrastructure Task Force

Mary Ann Discenza provided a brief overview of the task force. She reported that a group of stakeholders was gathered to consider the infrastructure, lead agency, role of the LICCs (local interagency coordinating councils), contracts, etc. There are three subcommittees: 1) contracts, 2) infrastructure, and 3) services/natural environments. Members have been charged with exploring how other states are designed. A matrix is being developed that will chart five states, providing information on lead agencies, providers, challenges, etc. The outline will go out for the January meetings. A draft report will be prepared by April with a thirty or sixty day public comment period. The final report will be sent to the Commissioner in June 2004. VICC members will play an active role in this process.

House Joint Resolution (HJR 159)

Shirley Ricks reported that this was a bill that asked the General Assembly to review councils, boards, committees, etc to explore function, duplication of activities, etc. One of the committees in question is the EIAC (Early Intervention Agency Committee.) This committee is comprised of all of the commissioners of children's agencies. They meet twice per year to explore issues.

House Bill 15 (HB15) was brought forward to abolish the EIAC from the Code of Virginia and to conduct the work through other committees, possibly EIIMT (Early Intervention Interagency Management Team.) All agencies will have an opportunity to comment. There was a hearing scheduled but the date was changed. Shirley Ricks noted that the EIAC is not being singled out as other committees are also under scrutiny. She indicated that the focus is to streamline state policy.

Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)

Mary Ann Discenza reported that when Virginia did a self-assessment in 2000, there were numerous indicators and the state was in the midst of a budget crisis. The VICC asked the Part C office to do what was necessary to sustain. As a result, two priority areas were identified: 1) financing the system and 2) service delivery. Financing the system is being addressed through the cost study and the Finance Task Force.

Another subcommittee in several ways is addressing the priority of service delivery. The service delivery guidance document has been disseminated, including a one-page companion summary for those who will not read the entire document. Beth Tolley reported that the subcommittee is trying to ascertain how the transition in paradigm shift in service delivery is being explained, accepted, etc. She emphasized that this shift is not intended to cut costs but rather is a shift in early intervention service delivery. This information needs to be heard by all parents, providers, and physicians. She enlisted the assistance of all VICC members in reaching families and physicians. Beth Tolley noted that they would like to reach more physicians through websites, e-mail, etc. A question arose about the CFIT training as a method to reach more doctors. Beth Tolley responded that CFIT would need to be updated to reflect current trends. Dr. Blackman noted that it would take some time to make these shifts for physicians. He further explained that initially doctors were asked to make referrals to early intervention and they recommended services as part of that referral. Now, we are asking for referrals but no recommendations for services. Beth Tolley, Dr. Blackman, and Delly Greenberg agreed to work together to develop information for physicians.

Annual Performance Report

Mary Ann Discenza reported that the annual state application for IDEA is due 4/16/04. This year's application is an update to the application from last year. In 2005, Virginia will complete a full application. Shirley Ricks noted that as they begin to plan the budget, they are hearing that physician training is important and money will be put towards that activity. OSEP has not released the allocation amounts to date, but the Part C office anticipates at least ten million dollars.

Strategic Plan for Financing the System

(Note: Mary Ann Discenza reported that the power point was not available to due technology problems.)

Mary Ann Discenza indicated that the Part C office asked NECTAC to work with Virginia to develop a strategic plan to finance the early intervention system. We were one of three states that gave a presentation in Washington in October with similar fiscal issues. The information provided tied back to Virginia's self-assessment and monitoring. The conclusion is that Virginia is woefully under funded. The General Assembly appropriations for early intervention totals \$125,000 per year. We have relied on federal funding to fund the system, while localities have contributed local tax dollars. It was decided that there needed to be a long-range plan based on the VICC's priorities. It was further identified that there is inconsistent knowledge of use of public and private funding and there are continued barriers to accessing funding. The benchmark from the VICC is that we must ensure that all families have access to services and that the barriers to finances be reduced. Some of the questions include: 1) what support does staff need to provide appropriate technical assistance?, 2) what kind of information needs to be disseminated?, and 3) how can localities have increased access to funding? The goal is to redesign the financing of this system based on finite resources. Additionally, it is important to answer the question of what an interagency system of services means. What can we expect other agencies to do? Mary Ann Discenza noted that other states are also struggling with this question and have even discussed "pulling out" of Part C services. She further indicated that we cannot continue to rely on federal funds alone. VICC members were encouraged to go to the NECTAC website and review Sharon Walsh's plenary session PowerPoint presentation on IDEA re-authorization.

Mary Ann Discenza asked for VICC volunteers for a Strategic Planning Committee. Bethany Cooke and Sandra Binns Whitaker volunteered. Mary Ann Discenza requested that any other volunteers contact her via e-mail.

Support for Part C Funding

Shirley Ricks noted that we continue to talk about not having enough funding. The Part C office continues to pull funds from the one-time funding that currently has approximately \$500,000.00 remaining. Shirley Ricks reported that the Part C office has been told verbally that the Department of Social Services (DSS) plans to give back the one million dollars that they had withdrawn but no contract has been delivered to date. The field has been asked to begin documenting their spending to access these funds. Shirley Ricks further noted that the Part C office has received numerous letters from the Governor, Secretary, families, and friends requesting that the Commonwealth support legislation that will support Part C funding. The message is being stated clearly that Part C in Virginia is under funded. The Virginia Community Services Board (VACSB) and the Council Coordinators Association (CoCoA) worked together to submit a request for \$2.5 million for 2005 and \$3.5 million for 2006.

A question arose as to whom legislative supporters of EI might be. Members of the audience provided the following names: William Wampler, Harvey Morgan, and Mary Christian. Brenda Laws agreed to write a letter to Delegate Christian asking for her assistance and support. Members of the audience further encouraged parents and

providers to continue to educate their legislators about the need for EI funding. Finally, it was noted that if the Governor does NOT include EI funding in the budget, a sponsor would be required to bring a bill forward.

VICC Retreat Planning

Mary Ann Discenza and Cori Hill discussed the VICC Retreat. Originally scheduled for this past fall, it was cancelled due to lack of participation. The intent of the retreat is to identify what it means to “advise and assist” in Virginia. Additionally, there are many new VICC members who need a sound understanding of the Part C system. VICC priorities also need to be identified.

VICC members were asked if they were interested in rescheduling and, if so, could they commit to attending. Members agreed that they did want to reschedule. They requested that the retreat not be held during the General Assembly and also not be linked to a regularly scheduled VICC meeting. It was suggested that May might be good month to explore dates. Brenda Laws, Bethany Cooke, Delly Greenberg, and Sandra Binns Whitaker agreed to join Mary Ann Discenza and Cori Hill on the planning committee.

Public Comment

Scottie Burnette introduced Debra Holloway as the new Statewide Family Representative. Debra lives in the Richmond area and has a daughter who received early intervention services in Hanover County.

Kathy Phillips representing CoCoA presented the following public comment (italicized information is provided verbatim from written comment provided)

I am speaking on behalf of the Steering Committee of CoCoA, the Virginia Council Coordinators' Association.

CoCoA would like to thank the VICC again for ensuring representation from a local Part C Council Coordinator. We welcome our colleague Mary Lou Hutton to the VICC and look forward to her presenting the perspective of council coordinators to this important advisory group.

We also want to thank Cori Hill and all who assisted her for the outstanding Early Intervention Conference last month. This event was very beneficial to the early intervention system in Virginia and provided a very high caliber of training, at the very time that new information, ideas, and resources are so greatly needed. Special appreciation goes to the Part C office for sponsoring this excellent conference for early intervention providers, supporters, and families.

The primary concern that CoCoA must continue to address is the current funding crisis that is facing early intervention services in Virginia. As taxpayers, we know the tremendous value of ensuring funding up front to ameliorate developmental problems and ensure that children can reach their potential. As early interventionists, we are able to see daily the many steps that children and families receiving services are taking toward a brighter future.

Unfortunately, as you are well aware, it has been shown conclusively that the ongoing funding for services for our infants and toddlers with special needs is not adequate, and time is running out. CoCoA urges all citizens of the Commonwealth to support the funding request to the General Assembly through VACSB, by contacting your

legislators. *Without this additional funding into the system, a significant number of infants and toddlers will be “left behind” and will go without services, at the very time that additional children are being referred and local physicians are seeing the many important benefits of early intervention services.*

CoCoA would like to thank those who have already participated in the effort to bring the status of early intervention services forward. This effort must continue and expand, during this critical budget time. We continue to believe that the voices of family members are the strongest and most important in the field of early intervention, and we hope that they will continue to work with us in sharing how critical the request for additional funding is.

Secondly, the CoCoA Steering Committee is awaiting the outcome of the Cost Study that has been commissioned. We are extremely hopeful that this Study will provide much needed answers about service delivery and funding and will give a solid basis for planning for both immediate and long-term needs. We are also hopeful that this Study, in conjunction with the findings of the Infrastructure work group, will provide critical guidance on setting up Virginia’s early intervention system in the most practical and efficient manner to meet the federal requirements as well as Virginia’s early intervention Service Guidelines. Much guidance continues to be needed across the many diverse communities in our state, and we look forward to these two studies being able to be a basis for that guidance.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express these views.

Update-Early Intervention Conference

Cori Hill reported that the second annual Virginia early intervention conference, “*Creating Connections: Celebrate the Journey*” was held on November 18 and 19, 2003 at the Hotel Roanoke and Conference Center. Approximately 340 providers and parents participated. There were 41 concurrent sessions and two keynote sessions. Preliminary review of the evaluations indicates that participants were very pleased with the quality of sessions and the facilities. The Hotel Roanoke was a tremendous asset offsetting many costs and donating facility space. During the conference, Carol Granger, Alison Standring, Jim Gillespie, and Debbie Burcham were recognized with Early Intervention awards for their contributions to the field.

Family Report

Scottie Burnette reiterated that she was pleased to welcome Debra Holloway as the new Statewide Family Representative. The Family Involvement Project (FIP) conducted one of the concurrent sessions at the conference. Scottie Burnette thanked the parents who sat on the parent panel for this session. She also noted that the FIP is working with families to contact legislators for funding for early intervention. The ARC of Virginia sponsored a call in day to the Governor on 12/4/03 to raise awareness of issues.

IDEA Reauthorization

Mary Ann Discenza provided an update on the IDEA reauthorization and Senate Bill #1248. She noted that the bill might be held over until January 2004. If that occurs, Mary Ann Discenza indicated that we might not see any action on the bill. She did

highlight some proposed changes noting new information about brain development, founded cases of child abuse and early intervention referrals, cued speech and sign language, personnel highest standard changes, natural environments regulation, statewide system and eligibility requirements.

Shirley Ricks noted that there is a new proposed subsection that gives states the option to serve children from three years to less than six years of age. She reported that due to the weak funding system in Virginia, this would be a problem fiscally.

It was also reported that another proposed change would be to expand VICC membership to add a representative from mental health and from an agency that provides services to homeless consumers. If this change occurs, DMHMRSAS and DOE could potentially fulfill this requirement.

The Senate bill also deletes the FICC (Federal Interagency Coordinating Council.) There is no language related to permanent reauthorization of IDEA or about fully funding the system.

Pat Dewey noted that there are proposed language changes about interagency responsibilities and the intent of IDEA. This language is much stronger and EIIMT will need to pay attention to this language.

Miriam Owens reported that if the age-eligibility requirement was extended, this would benefit those children who are not found eligible for Part B services but would still qualify under Part C. She noted that there are children who have a gap in services because they do not qualify for Part B services and age out of Part C under current regulations.

Committee Reports

Brenda Laws referred members to the reports from the LRDS and Family Support and Advocacy Committees in their folders (see attached). She reminded other committees that it is important to send updates to keep everyone informed.

It was noted that currently the Public Awareness Committee is meeting with the Family Support and Advocacy Committee. There is no separate Public Awareness report.

Bev Crouse reported on the Integrated Training Collaborative (ITC). She noted that many providers have pursued technical professional licenses through the Department of Education. This is for providers who have worked in early intervention but did not complete a practicum in their training. Bev Crouse acknowledged Patty Pitts and Marjorie Hayford at DOE who have assisted with this process. It was noted that most recently employed graduates complete a collegiate license with three hundred hours of practicum experience. The ITC is also developing modules for all Part C service providers to address Part C Orientation, Child Development, and Disability Awareness. These modules will eventually be web-based and may become required training components. Part C Policies and Procedures will be revised in 2005 and personnel standards will be reviewed during that process.

It was noted that the VICC by-laws need to be revised. The Personnel Training Committee is a standing committee of the VICC. If the ITC is conducting the function of this committee, we will need to look at committee structures and make revisions.

It was also recommended that perhaps licensure information could be posted on the I&TC website. If potential candidates were searching for early intervention positions in Virginia, this information could direct them to the appropriate contact person.

A discussion ensued regarding the update from the FS&A committee (see attached) which noted that a member had received “ a mountain of emails and phone calls from parents and providers expressing their concerns over the lack of early intervention conference opportunities for families.” It was recognized that there was regret that the Families Are Special, Too conference has been discontinued at this time. It was noted, however, that we are striving for partnership among providers and families. The E.I. conference this year featured more family-based concurrent sessions. Scottie Burnette also noted that the ARCFIP sponsored a parent social at the E.I. conference and there were approximately twenty-five parents in attendance. She noted that families indicated that they felt more welcomed and had more opportunities than last year’s E.I. conference.

2004 VICC Meeting Dates

March 10th
June 9th
September 8th
December 8th

The meeting was adjourned.

VICC Meeting Attendance-12/10/03

VICC Members

Dr. James Blackman	Bethany Cooke	Pat Dewey	Delly Greenberg
Mary Lou Hutton	Brenda Laws	Phyllis Mondak	Miriam Owens
Kristin Morrison	Shirley Ricks	Sharon Shuttle	Glen Slonneger
Deborah Sprang	Sandra Binns Whitaker		

Family Members

Scottie Burnette
Debra Holloway

Council Coordinators

Nancy Bailey
Debbie Billodeaux
Robin Crawley
Brenda Crockett
Linda Eggleston
Diane Evans
Heidi Graham
Carol Granger
Kathryn Kiser
Katy McCullough
Kathy Phillips
Molly Richardson
Alison Standing

Providers

Terry Izzo

Administration

Jeff Harlow

I&TC of Virginia Staff

Beverly Crouse
Mary Ann Discenza
Karen Durst
Cathy Fisher
Cori Hill
David Mills
Mary Anne White