



# Introduction

**Welcome!** You have received this orientation manual because you have expressed interest in becoming a member of the New Hampshire Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). The ICC is federally mandated under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and it serves as an advisory group to the NH Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Developmental Services. This state agency oversees Family-Centered Early Supports and Services for children birth to age three who have or are at risk of having developmental delays and their families.

Members of the ICC are interested in improving supports and services to New Hampshire's youngest children and their families through collaboration with other key players. It is hoped that the contents of this manual will answer many of the questions that you may have about the ICC, IDEA, and New Hampshire's Family-Centered Early Supports and Services system.

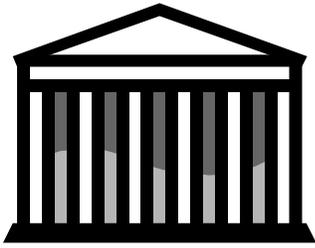
**Collaboration** is the main function of the ICC, and this can be difficult to do in a meaningful way. Members of the ICC are all busy in their personal and professional lives; however, they have all made the commitment to work together to benefit families of young children with disabilities. Families and professionals must work together to ensure quality services that will meet the needs of New Hampshire's families. Through sharing knowledge, resources, and new ideas, the ICC seeks to encourage collaboration.

Positive outcomes that have occurred because of collaboration include:

- increased efficiency in using scarce resources,
- avoidance of duplication in services,
- identification of gaps and barriers to service delivery,
- reduction of frustration for families searching for services,
- increased communication between agencies,
- encouragement of community systems to identify eligible children and improve supports and services,
- improvement in personnel development through innovative training initiatives, information sharing, coordination across disciplines, and curriculum review,
- development of transition agreements, and
- empowerment of families.

The current members of the ICC, and the staff of the Bureau of Developmental Services extend their appreciation for your interests and efforts on behalf of New Hampshire families. They are available to answer any questions you may have. It is anticipated that the leadership and individual perspective that you bring to the meetings will encourage thoughtful discussions and serve to improve the supports and services that currently exist for young children and their families. Thank you in advance for your time and energy!





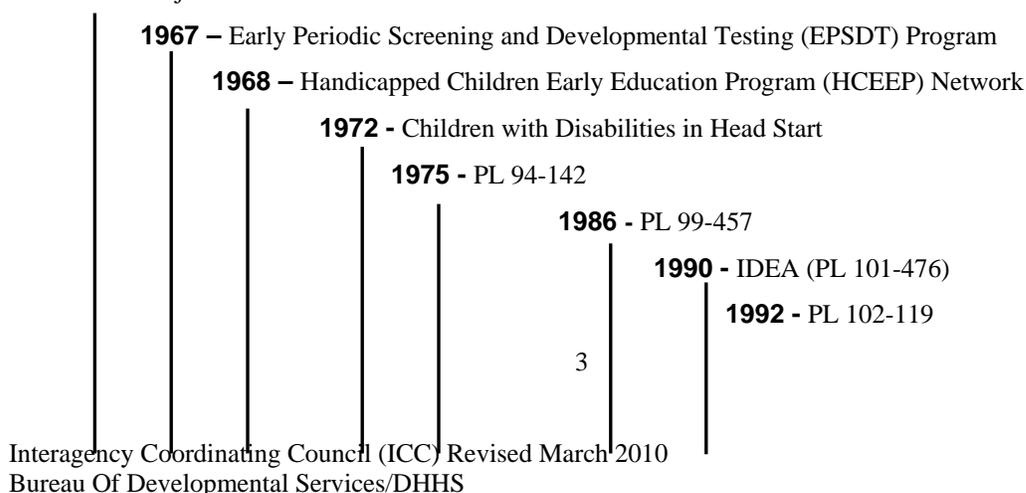
# The Federal Law

## History

Federal legislation supporting the education of children with disabilities has been enacted since 1965, beginning with Project Head Start. Head Start initially provided supports and services to low income preschool children to assist them in attaining positive outcomes when they entered school. This was followed by laws ensuring early and periodic screening and developmental testing of children who qualified, a network of innovative programs to benefit young “handicapped” children, and the admission of children with disabilities into Head Start. The most famous legislation came in 1975, PL 94-142, which mandated all states provide free and appropriate education to all school aged children, including those with disabilities. In 1986, Part H of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provided, for the states opting to participate, a statewide system of coordinated, comprehensive, multidisciplinary, interagency programs providing appropriate early intervention services to all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. This law has been re-authorized several times, meaning that some changes have occurred and a new public law number was assigned. The early supports and services portion is now referred to as Part C of IDEA.

The chart below cites key legislation related to special education and early supports and services:

1965 - Project Head Start



## Purpose

Part H of IDEA was created for multiple purposes. The Congress found there was an urgent and substantial need to:

- enhance the development of infants and toddlers with disabilities and to minimize their potential for developmental delay,
- reduce the educational costs to our society by minimizing the need for special education and related services after infants and toddlers with disabilities reach school age,
- minimize the likelihood of institutionalization of individuals with disabilities and maximize the potential for their independent living in society,
- enhance the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers with disabilities, and
- enhance the capacity of State and local agencies and service providers to identify, evaluate, and meet the needs of historically underrepresented populations, particularly minority, low-income, inner-city, and rural populations (IDEA 1997, 20 USC 1471).

## Themes

The major themes in Part H of IDEA (now Part C of IDEA) for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families were:

- **Family-Centered**
  - Supports and services for family (not just child)
  - Families are experts on their child
  - Planning through an Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) process
  - Family members are decision-makers
- **Individualized**
  - Based on family's uniqueness (strengths/priorities/needs/resources)
  - Flexibility in programs and supports and services
  - Culturally sensitive
- **Coordinated**
  - Interagency coordination (documented in IFSP)
  - Coordination of professionals based on family preferences
  - Configuration of services based on needs

- **Community-Based**

- Supports and services provided in “natural” settings, typical for a family
- Families’ daily routines are taken into consideration

## Components

Part C of IDEA has many components that provide families with access to free and appropriate supports and services. Some of the major components found in the federal law, and therefore in the New Hampshire law, include:

- referral process,
- eligibility definition and identification,
- initial and subsequent evaluations,
- service coordination,
- individual family support plans,
- parental consent,
- supports and services available,
- transition planning,
- payment for supports and services,
- record keeping, and
- complaint resolution procedures.

In the ICC Resource Notebook, there is a copy of the most recent federal and State laws for your review. Please also refer to the ICC’s annual report for this past year and the “Know Your Rights” handbook, both from the NH Bureau of Developmental Services, for more specific information on these components for New Hampshire. By reviewing these documents, you will acquire a better understanding of New Hampshire’s system of supports and services.







## New Hampshire's ICC

### History

Part H of IDEA (now Part C of IDEA) required the establishment of an Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) and required that the composition include key individuals, including parents of children with disabilities. The Governor of New Hampshire established the ICC through an executive order in 1988, naming the NH Department of Education as the lead agency for services to infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. In 1992, the lead agency changed to the NH Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Developmental Services.

Prior to 1988, services to infants and toddlers with disabilities in one form or another had been occurring in New Hampshire for 20 years. These services were not statewide nor were they consistent. Many programs that did serve infants and toddlers maintained waiting lists.

In 1984, the New Hampshire Early Intervention Standards were written to include the support of parent and family involvement, as well as community involvement, in its services to children with disabilities. New Hampshire has been providing supports and services that have gone beyond the federal requirements, such as requiring that services be provided in natural environments many years before Part C of IDEA required this.

For more specific information on New Hampshire's ICC, please ask Bureau of Developmental Services staff for "The History of the ICC" document and the past minutes.

## Membership

New Hampshire ICC members are nominated by members and appointed by the Governor and have included over the years:

- parents of children with disabilities (from one year of age to twelve years of age),
- representatives of state agencies that serve young children and their families (including education, health, child care, and social services),
- direct providers of early supports and services,
- advocates for children with disabilities,
- liaisons from the Governor's office,
- representatives from institutions of higher education who prepare professionals to work with children with disabilities and their families,
- state legislators,
- people with knowledge and expertise in health insurance (including Medicaid),
- child care program administrators,
- medical professionals, and
- coordinators from Head Start (state and regional).

This diverse membership is critical to assisting the Bureau of Developmental Services in overseeing the Family-Centered Early Supports and Services system. Every effort is made to have members from as many different regions of the state as possible. The “culture” of different communities needs to be represented to provide different perspectives.

The ICC is pleased to welcome new members. Please refer to the current membership list and member background information, and ask for the name of a “seasoned” member whom you can contact with questions. The ICC chair or staff from the Bureau of Developmental Services can assist with this. You will be asked to fill out a member background form that will be shared with other members.



## Activities

The ICC has assisted the lead agency in identifying areas in the New Hampshire early supports and services system that needed attention and providing valuable feedback. Members have engaged in activities designed to enhance the system, which have included:

- suggesting and attending educational speakers, workshops, and conferences,
- publishing documents,
- influencing federal and state legislation,
- forming of subcommittees (see below),
- developing and reviewing pilot projects,
- collecting data,
- reviewing fiscal information,
- forming task forces,
- facilitating regional and statewide meetings,
- establishing a clearinghouse of information,
- conducting surveys, and
- holding retreats.

Many of the topics and issues that the ICC has decided to take action on have required that a subcommittee be established to review pertinent information and meet more frequently than the ICC. Members who join a subcommittee usually have an interest or investment in the identified topic. Through work on a subcommittee, members learn more about each other as well as the topic of interest. The following is a list of subcommittees that have been established since 1991:

- Data Policy,
- Screening and Assessment,
- Policy Development,
- Personnel Preparation,
- Data Management,
- Sliding Fee Scale,

- Interagency Regional Forums,
- EI Mission/Vision,
- Public Awareness,
- Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD),
- Insurance,
- Healthcare Indicators Document,
- Managed Care,
- Reorganization (of Lead Agency),
- Welfare Reform, and
- Self-Assessment.

It is not a requirement that you join a subcommittee, however, if you have a particular interest or perspective to offer, it is hoped that you will consider joining one. For a listing of current subcommittees and contact information, please refer to the ICC Resource Notebook.



## Structure

The ICC meets every other month throughout the year, on a regular day and time of the week. Meeting structures are decided based on the membership. Meetings are usually about two hours long. A calendar of meetings is available, and reminder notices are sent out before each meeting. Members are asked to RSVP to assure adequate seating.

In rare instances, members may need to be notified that a meeting is cancelled, such as when not enough members are planning to attend or inclement weather is predicted. Meetings are held in a centrally located, accessible, public space.

If a member misses a meeting, relevant handouts and minutes will be sent out to them. It is expected that members will make every effort to attend meetings regularly.

Meetings are facilitated by the ICC chair, or vice-chair if the chair is unavailable. An assigned person takes the minutes, however in his/her absence, a member may be called upon to fulfill this duty.

Staff from the Bureau of Developmental Services arrange meetings, receive RSVP's, provide information on a regular basis at the meetings, and are available to members at any time. These staff are not considered part of the ICC, but are invited to all meetings. There are times when an invited guest will make a brief presentation or answer questions from the ICC.

The public is always welcome to attend any ICC meeting, and time is made at the end of the meeting to accept any public comment.

Subcommittees typically meet between the scheduled ICC meetings at the convenience of their members. The frequency of these meetings are determined by the issue being addressed.

Occasionally, the Bureau of Developmental Services or other ICC members may need a response to an inquiry or feedback on a document between meetings. Members will be notified by mail, fax, and/or e-mail. Members' prompt responses in these situations are appreciated.

Periodically, the ICC decides that a retreat is necessary to address a number of important issues in a longer meeting format. The ICC will decide when this is necessary and will determine the logistics of the retreat. In the past, this has been a quality time for sharing, planning, and setting new directions. Usually, the mission and vision are revisited, and members examine their roles in great detail.

## **Parents**

Parents of children with disabilities represent an important perspective that needs to be heard at each meeting. Part C of IDEA requires that 20% of the ICC's membership be comprised of parents of children with disabilities. Parents are expected to fully participate in meetings. Each parent's voice is no less important than that of any other member of the ICC, and needs to be heard and encouraged. To facilitate attendance at meetings, the ICC is prepared to reimburse families for child care and

mileage expenses. Family members should see a representative from the Bureau of Developmental Services for the appropriate paperwork.

National surveys have revealed that parent members of ICCs need three things to function effectively:

- respect,
- information, and
- support.

It is expected that all members will provide these to all other members, but especially to parent members. Parents are encouraged to ask questions to gain clarification.

Family members have been vital in sharing what is working and what is not working in the Family-Centered Early Supports and Services system. They have served as an important link to information from other parents not represented on the ICC. They often see gaps in supports and services that are not apparent at a policy level. They are a constant reminder of the philosophy of “family-centered”. As their children have transitioned to the school system, they have provided invaluable information on transition and the preschool system some children will eventually experience, and feedback on all aspects of their experience.

There are some parent members who are also professionals in the field. The ICC is fortunate to have them participating, as they bring an integrated perspective that few people can have. They can often model for parents who have less experience with “agency representatives” to ask questions, disagree if a comment does not feel accurate, and educate others on subjects the parents know intimately.

All ICC members give of their time and energy, and although the Bureau of Developmental Services appreciates all participants, family members are appreciated even more so. The ability to speak about their personal situation, add another commitment to a full schedule, and work on behalf of all families in New Hampshire is admirable. The ICC chair or staff from the Bureau of Developmental Services can facilitate finding a parent mentor on the ICC.



## Responsibilities of an ICC Member

The following are some of the responsibilities expected of an ICC member by the Bureau of Developmental Services and the ICC:

- supporting the ICC mission and vision,
- being familiar with the New Hampshire Family-Centered Early Supports and Services system and Part C of IDEA (refer to the ICC Notebook),
- attending meetings regularly, and calling in advance if not able to attend,
- serving on subcommittee(s), if interest and perspective is relevant,
- responding in a timely manner to requests for feedback on documents or other items,
- providing technical assistance to the other members from your role on the ICC,
- avoiding speaking in “jargon” or acronyms, so everyone will understand your information,
- presenting ideas, information, resources, and concerns to the ICC as appropriate,
- representing the ICC on committees, advisory boards, or other related groups, as appropriate,
- advising key personnel of any changes in your contact information or role,
- listening to others respectfully at meetings,

- contacting the ICC chair or Bureau of Developmental Services for clarification of any issues or concerns, and
- avoiding conflict of interest situations.





# New Hampshire's Family-Centered Early Supports and Services System

## History

New Hampshire has been a “maverick” in the field of early supports and services in the following ways:

- established programs to serve young children with disabilities 20 years before the federal government mandated these services,
- provided a model infant and toddler program using federal funds in Hanover in 1974,
- created and passed RSA-171A, a regulation that established a statewide service delivery system for citizens with developmental disabilities of all ages, including early intervention, in 1975,
- established area agency system in 1979 to provide all communities with a local contact for information and referral to services and customized programs,
- wrote Early Intervention Standards in 1984 to include enhancing parent and family involvement, as well as community involvement, to encourage serving children with disabilities in a variety of locations where they receive the major portion of daily care, and to support the families of these children, and
- wrote “natural settings” into Early Intervention Standards in 1993 as the required location for service delivery.

In addition to these facts, New Hampshire on a State and local level has been willing to work with individual families to resolve their issues, listen to their stories, and support their creative ideas. Families were assisted in translating information into other languages before there was a federal law requiring this. New Hampshire has chosen to provide supports and

services to a larger percentage of its population by defining eligibility for developmental delay broadly and including children at risk for substantial delay in their eligibility. Collaborations with other related agencies, such as Department of Education, had been in place for many years prior to Part H of IDEA requirements. Please refer to the Interagency Agreement in the ICC Resource Notebook.

What has improved in New Hampshire with the adoption of Part H of IDEA? Eligible children and families living anywhere in the State have equal access to supports and services and legal rights to protect these supports and services. There are no more “waiting lists”, and families do not have to move to access better services. Increased funding to support personnel development has improved skills and knowledge of service providers. The establishment of the ICC has improved relationships among State agencies on behalf of children and families and has resulted in better supports and services for all families in the system.

## **Child Find**

The Bureau of Developmental Services promotes awareness of its Family-Centered Early Supports and Services system through distribution of promotional materials on a statewide basis. General information and specific referral information are provided. Distribution of materials occurs in mailings to key players within each community and on the State level. The continued support of the Family Resource Connection at the State Library to provide resource and referral information to anyone who calls their toll free number is another method of providing appropriate information to potential families.

## **Referral**

The area agency system, which covers the entire State, is responsible for receiving referrals for Family-Centered Early Supports and Services. There is an identified person within each agency who is trained to provide accurate information to families and to receive information from them. The agency list and phone numbers is available in the “Important Contact Information” section of the ICC Resource Notebook.

## **Eligibility**

Federally, infants and toddlers are eligible for supports and services from birth through age two (up to their third birthday) if they are experiencing a developmental delay in one or more developmental areas or have a diagnosed condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay. States are to determine how they will define “developmental delay”, and they have the discretion to serve infants and toddlers and their families who are at risk of having substantial developmental delays if early supports and services are not provided. For New Hampshire’s eligibility information, please refer to the “Know Your Rights” handbook and the ICC’s latest annual report in the ICC Resource Notebook.

## **Family Rights to Supports and Services**

Eligible families are entitled to an ongoing evaluation process, development and periodic review of an IFSP, and supports and services outlined in federal law and New Hampshire standards. Families have many rights they need to be made aware of, and this is achieved through the “Know Your Rights” handbook written by the Bureau of Developmental Services. This is part of the ICC Resource Notebook.

## **Transition**

Transition from Family-Centered Early Supports and Services to the preschool special education system can be difficult for families and service providers from both systems. There have been many attempts to educate families, personnel, and interested others regarding the differences in the systems, the laws governing the services in each system, and the lessons learned from other states and communities. There is ongoing support on a local level to improve the transition process in all communities. There exists a document outlining the responsibilities of the Department of Education’s and the Bureau of Developmental Services’ regarding transition and their intent to collaborate. Please refer to the Interagency Agreement in the ICC Resource Notebook.

