

The Role of Family Organizations in Developing & Implementing an Effective Early Intervention Dispute Resolution System

- Presented by:
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*Statewide Parent
Advocacy Network*

NJ's EI System

- NJ EIS housed within Family Health Services' Special Child Health & Early Intervention Services-NJ Department of Health
- 4 Regional Early Intervention Collaboratives
- 21 county Service Coordination Units
- Contracted EI Targeted Evaluation teams
- Contracted Service provider agencies





Statewide Parent
Advocacy Network

NJ's PTI

- Statewide Parent Advocacy Network

- Projects

- PTI
- F2F HIC & Family Voices
- Parent to Parent
- Military Family 360
- Transition to Adult Life
- 20 projects overall

- Locations

- Main office in Newark
- Offices in Paterson, Trenton, Joint Military Base
- FRS in 21 county SCHS CMUs

- Empowered Parents:
Educated, Engaged,
Effective!



Developing NJ's EI Procedural Safeguards System

- NJ Department of Health contracted with:
 - UCEDD (Boggs Center)
 - PTI (SPAN)
 - Director = Attorney
- Other partners
 - Part C Coordinator
 - Directors & Family Support Coordinators of REICs
- Process
 - Reviewed IDEA & federal regulations re: EI dispute resolution
 - Prepared summary of requirements & options
 - Met with Family Support Coordinators of REICs & PTI staff to discuss
 - Parents of children with special needs
 - Provide support to families in the EI system



Considerations

- Adopt Part B approach? NO!
- What should the EI procedural safeguards system look like?
 - Components
 - Parents rights in the EI system
 - Informal complaints
 - Requests for complaint investigation
 - Mediation
 - Due process
 - Infrastructure
 - Procedural Safeguards Office & Coordinator
- How to ensure families & professional know about the system & how to use it?
 - Parent & professional development/training
 - Informational Materials
 - Forms to request procedural safeguards dispute resolution



Building the EI PS System

- Finalized components
- Developed intensive training
- Developed Job descriptions for EI PS roles
- Recruited, hired, trained PS Coordinator
 - Attorney
 - Originally housed at an REIC, now at NJ DOH



Building the EI PS System

- Mediators & hearing panelists
 - Recruited trained mediators
 - Recruited hearing panel members
 - Parent who went thru EI system
 - Early childhood expert
 - Attorney
 - Intensive training
 - 3 days for mediators & hearing panelists
 - Additional 2 days for hearing panelists



Contents of Training

- Overview of Part C of IDEA & EI regulations
- Targeted training in:
 - Natural Environments
 - Family Support
 - Child development
 - NJ's EI system including procedural safeguards & dispute resolution system
 - Team-building (for Impartial Hearing Panelists)
- Role-plays



Next Steps

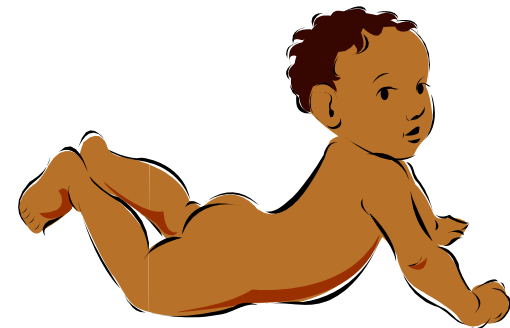
- Developed training for parents & professionals
 - Target audiences
 - REIC Staff
 - EI Service Coordinators
 - EI Service Providers
 - Tailored
 - 1 day for parents
 - 2 day for service coordinators & providers



Resource Materials



- Overview of Dispute Resolution Options
- Fact sheets on & flow charts for each option
- Dispute resolution request forms
- Issue-spotting guides for Parents & Professionals
- Family Rights Handbook
- Procedural Safeguards Regulations
- Procedural Safeguards at Each Step of the Process
- Explaining procedural safeguards to families
- Scenarios of current issues
- How to analyze a case
- Tips to prepare for a hearing
- Components & conduct of a hearing
- Structure of a hearing decision
- Sample hearing decision
- Pre & Post Training Quiz



Parent & Professional Development

- Training Team
 - PTI/SPAN, UCEDD/Boggs Center, REIC
- Regional training series
 - Annual training in each of 4 regions
 - Families (evenings, Saturdays)
 - Professionals
- On-line training
 - Teleconference on SPAN website for parents
 - On-line training for professionals



NJ EI Procedural Safeguards

- Informal resolution **System**

- REICs

- Family Support staff

- Most were trained by SPAN as SRPs

- 2 PT Procedural safeguards TA staff (parents; former PTI staff/SRPs)

- Procedural Safeguards office & Coordinator

- Trained mediators

- Hearing officers

- Now at Office of Administrative Law



Ongoing Roles for PTI

- Information & Technical Assistance
 - EI Section on SPAN website with written resources & guides
 - Telephone & in-person technical assistance
- Training
 - Collaborative workshops with REICs on Welcome to EI & Transition to Preschool
 - Collaboratively developed & presented
 - Creating Agreement workshop
 - Recorded teleconference with resource materials





Why involve Parent Centers?



- Parent centers are staffed by parents of children with special needs who have direct experience with systems “on the ground” as well as knowledge of EI under IDEA



Parent centers know the barriers families experience & what it takes to help overcome those barriers

- Families know how to create & sustain systems that are easy to navigate, family-friendly, & “work” for families



Ways to involve Family Organizations

- Co-facilitate workshops for families & EI professionals
 - Creating Agreement
 - Procedural Safeguards
 - Dispute resolution mechanisms
- Co-create resources & tools for families & EI professionals
- Contract with parent centers to provide early dispute resolution assistance
- Co-develop procedural safeguards & dispute resolution regulations/guidelines

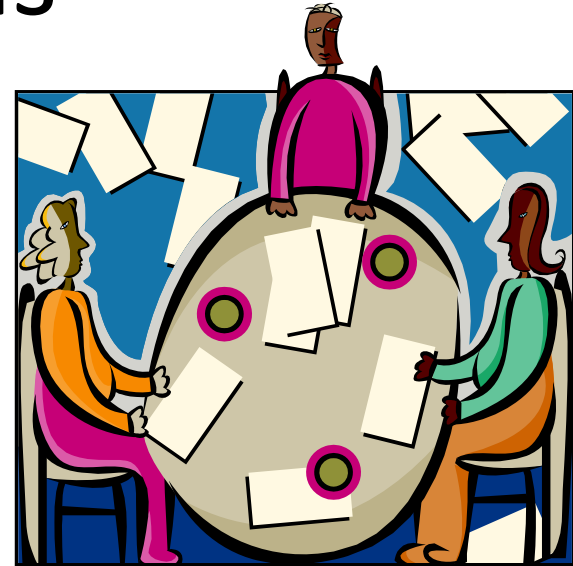
Parent Information



Member of the Parent to Parent USA Alliance

Other roles for family organizations

- Explain procedural safeguards & dispute resolution options to families
- Assist families to file requests for complaint investigation, mediation, due process
- Accompany families to dispute resolution meetings
- Share data with EI system about EI-related concerns they hear from families & work with EI system to develop solutions to systemic concerns



How do we know it's working?

- We know families understand that there are dispute resolution options (complaints, mediation, hearing) because they use them!
 - Last year, 4 complaints, 5 mediation requests, 7 hearing requests
- SPP/APR data: Around 70% of families report that the EI System helps them understand their rights on NCSEAM survey

