



Family Health Committee Meeting Notes

January 20th, 2026 – 11:00am to 12:00pm

Committee Chairs – Lidiya Lednyak

Staff Liaison – Grace Dawson

Agenda Item	Discussion
Welcome/Introductions	
Regional EI/Preschool Coalitions Report Out	<p>Northeast Coalition Update</p> <p>Renee Johnson reported that the Northeast Coalition submitted a formal letter to the Bureau of Early Intervention (BEI), PCG, NYSACHO leadership, and DOH officials outlining ongoing operational challenges with the EI Hub system. Major concerns included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inability to edit closed IFSPs (Individualized Family Service Plans), which prevents correction of errors after closure.• Continued editing limitations even on open IFSP records.• Lack of a designated PCG contact person for counties to escalate and resolve system issues. <p>The coalition emphasized that both counties and PCG staff lack sufficient ability to correct system errors, resulting in administrative burdens and potential compliance risks. As of the meeting date, no response had been received from BEI or PCG. The committee requested that the letter be shared with all members to support coordinated advocacy.</p> <p>EIP West Coalition Update</p> <p>An update shared via chat noted that the Western coalition recently met and discussed several operational issues, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medicaid consent processes for preschool special education (PSE)• Provider training needs• Attendance compliance challenges• EI auto-qualification criteria• Timelines for re-evaluations• Billing system challenges <p>These topics reflect ongoing statewide operational and system management issues affecting EI and preschool programs.</p>
Advocacy Updates	<p>Pre-K Special Education Transportation Advocacy</p> <p>NYSACHO reported on a productive meeting held earlier that day with Senator Shelley Mayer, Chair of the Senate Transportation Committee, regarding preschool special education (4410) transportation funding challenges.</p> <p>Key outcomes included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Senator Mayer expressed interest in supporting efforts to address transportation funding inequities.• NYSACHO will collaborate with organizations representing school business officials and superintendents to strengthen advocacy efforts.• Legislators requested detailed county-level data documenting transportation costs.



- NYSACHO will compile and submit county-specific financial data to support legislative solutions.

This meeting was viewed as an important step toward potential legislative reforms.

State Budget Monitoring and EI Covered Lives Sunset

NYSACHO also reported that the Governor’s Executive Budget was being released that day. NYSACHO is closely monitoring for provisions affecting Early Intervention, particularly whether the sunset provision for EI covered lives will be extended.

NYSACHO will conduct a detailed budget analysis and notify members of any urgent or impactful changes.

ABA SPA

The committee discussed an EI State Plan Amendment submitted on December 31, 2025, proposing changes to Medicaid reimbursement for Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) services.

Key components include:

- Estimated Medicaid savings of approximately \$1.3 million in FY 2025–26 due to retroactive implementation.
- Proposal to reduce reimbursement rates for ABA services provided by unlicensed personnel.
- Shift from hourly billing to 15-minute billing increments.
- Alignment with reimbursement practices used in other Medicaid programs nationwide.

Currently, unlicensed personnel providing ABA services under supervision may receive reimbursement rates equivalent to licensed providers. The proposed SPA would reduce those rates.

Workforce and Quality Concerns

Committee members expressed significant concern about expanding reliance on unlicensed or minimally trained personnel, particularly Registered Behavioral Technicians (RBTs).

Major concerns included:

- RBT certification requires only 40 hours of training, which members viewed as insufficient preparation.
- Lack of licensure and clinical rigor compared to licensed therapists such as PTs, OTs, and speech therapists.
- Increased risk of inadequate service quality for vulnerable children and families.
- Lack of clarity regarding supervision requirements.
- Potential negative long-term impacts on preschool special education programs if lower standards expand into preschool services.

Members of the State Workforce Capacity Task Force reported that they have already raised concerns about insufficient training standards and has recommended requiring additional training hours beyond the minimum.

Workforce Capacity vs. Quality Tradeoffs



Some members acknowledged that workforce shortages—particularly for autism services—create pressure to expand the workforce pool.

Counties noted:

- Severe shortages of qualified providers.
- Children being removed from childcare settings due to lack of supports.
- Potential benefits of expanding workforce capacity if implemented carefully.

However, members also cautioned that lowering standards without ensuring provider participation or appropriate compensation could fail to address workforce shortages while lowering service quality.

Precedent and Financial Policy Concerns

Members expressed concern that creating lower reimbursement rates for unlicensed personnel could establish precedent for:

- Reduced reimbursement in other therapy disciplines.
- Broader Medicaid cost-saving efforts that negatively impact provider participation.

This raised concerns about long-term impacts on workforce recruitment and retention.

Committee Action

The committee reached consensus to:

- Develop formal questions for BEI regarding the SPA.
- Submit public comments during the federal CMS review process.
- Seek clarification on potential impacts on EI program structure and workforce standards.

NYSACHO staff will draft questions and advocacy materials for committee review.

Pre-K Virtual Services

Provider Shortages Driving Interest in Teletherapy

Members reported severe shortages of OT, PT, and other providers, particularly in rural counties. Several counties have providers willing to deliver services virtually but are restricted by current regulations.

One county reported that:

- Counties have providers ready to offer virtual services.
- Families remain on waiting lists due to lack of in-person providers.
- Teletherapy could significantly improve access.

Current Regulatory Restrictions

NYSED guidance currently restricts teletherapy for preschool special education services.

Key limitations include:

- Virtual services allowed primarily during emergency closures (e.g., snow days).
- Speech therapy may be reimbursable virtually.
- OT and PT services are generally restricted to in-person delivery.
- NYSED cites developmental appropriateness requirements for classroom-based service delivery.

These restrictions differ from Early Intervention, where telehealth services are allowed.



Potential Advocacy Strategies

Committee members discussed potential advocacy approaches, including:

- Expanding definition of “extraordinary circumstances” to include provider shortages and waitlists.
- Advocating for regulatory amendments or emergency rulemaking.
- Aligning preschool regulations with EI telehealth policies.
- Allowing teletherapy as a temporary workforce capacity solution.

Members emphasized that teletherapy should supplement—not replace—in-person services.

Committee Direction

The committee expressed broad support for NYSACHO advocacy efforts to:

- Expand teletherapy eligibility under specific circumstances.
- Develop proposed regulatory language.
- Pursue legislative or regulatory change.

Any formal advocacy position would require committee approval followed by full NYSACHO membership approval.

Closing

The next Family Health Committee will be held virtually on Tuesday, February 10th, 2026 at 11:00am.

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