



# MASSACHUSETTS EARLY INTERVENTION CONSORTIUM

## Infant/Toddler Advocates

Tom Miller, President

Martha Levine, President-Elect

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### FY 08 ANNUAL REPORT

#### Primary goals:

- Insure adequate funding for the Massachusetts Early Intervention system
- Collaborate with DPH to promote best practices in EI
- Enhance communication among EI Program Directors in an effort to improve services for children and families served
- Monitor the impact of the Annual Family Participation Fee
- Improve recruitment and retention of qualified EI professionals
- Identify and address systemic issues impacting the Massachusetts EI system

#### Consortium/ITA activities

- Ongoing advocacy and education with the Massachusetts legislators regarding difficulties with recruitment and retention of qualified staff and the need for improved reimbursement rates throughout the system.
- Meetings with legislators, EOHSS, Division of Health Care Policy and Finance regarding EI funding issues and strategies
- Ongoing meetings with Ron Benham, Director of the Division of Perinatal and Early Childhood Health and other DPH staff to address fiscal and clinical issues that impact the EI system
- Participated on the EI Training Center's Advisory Board
- Participated in the Federal Focus Monitoring Group
- Participated on the Interagency Coordination Council
- Presented testimony at Part C Hearings
- Held EI Directors' Forums
- Sponsored Annual MEIC Conference
- Sponsored regional trainings
- Monthly Board of Directors' meetings
- Monthly Regional Directors' meetings
- Maintenance of the MEIC/ITA website [www.maeic.org](http://www.maeic.org)

We would like to express our appreciation to all members of the Board of Directors for their ongoing dedication to improving the Massachusetts Early Intervention system. We also thank the entire EI community for its continued support of MEIC/ITA initiatives.

Finally, as we continue on our recruitment and retention campaign, we ask that all programs support this most important effort by responding to MEIC/ITA alerts requesting contact with key legislators and other leaders in the field of early intervention and early childhood education to discuss the urgent need to improve compensation for those dedicated to working with infants, toddlers and their families.

Tom Miller  
President

Martha Levine  
President Elect

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## LEGISLATIVE

The state's Fiscal Year 2009 budget is still pending and will not be approved by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor until the new fiscal year begins on or near July 1, 2008.

But thanks to the Consortium's tireless advocacy efforts, funding for Early Intervention programs and services are likely to increase by \$3.7 million or \$ 4.7 million in FY'09 (we are advocating to ensure that the higher \$4.7 million appropriation will prevail in Conference). This is a tremendous achievement given the state's economic uncertainty and it truly demonstrates the Legislature's commitment to Early Intervention services. Thanks to the Consortium's efforts to inform and engage the Legislature in the current proposal to change EI eligibility via the federal Part C application process, the Massachusetts Senate has included new language in the Main EI Line item which requires DPH to notify the House and Senate Ways and Means Committees 90 days before implementing any change in EI eligibility criteria. This language gives the Legislature, the Administration and DPH and the Consortium time to exhaust all options and ensure that any change in eligibility criteria is truly a last resort as stated in the Part C application. In tandem with the Legislative efforts to secure adequate funding for Early Intervention, the Consortium is meeting with the Division of Health Care Finance and Policy and Governor Patrick's Administration advocating to increase the woefully inadequate and historically low EI rates for Early Intervention programs and staff salaries. Early Intervention rates are up for review and adjustment this fall with new rates set to take effect November 1, 2008.

The Consortium's advocacy efforts will continue unabated through the fall in order to preserve Early Intervention eligibility and services and to secure a more fair and reasonable rate increase for the dedicated, professional EI staff who are the heart of the Early Intervention system in Massachusetts.

Respectfully Submitted

Mary Ann Mulligan  
Governmental Strategies, Inc.

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## MEMBERSHIP

Membership had another excellent year with all Massachusetts Early Intervention Programs joining the Consortium and ITA. This successful membership drive was achieved by the combined efforts of the Treasurer, Secretary and the Board. These dues have supported the work of the Consortium and through ITA, the legislative work of Governmental Strategies

This year, membership entitled all the staff at each program to attend the Annual Consortium Conference at the reduced rate.

Respectfully Submitted:

Lorraine X. Sanik  
Membership Chairperson

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LIAISON TO CONFERENCE COMMITTEE

The Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium's 29th annual conference was held May 7 and May 8, 2008 in Marlboro. Over 600 participants attended the 2 days of workshops. Topics included feeding, sign language, play, and a range of topics of interest to early childhood professionals and families. In addition to Early Intervention professionals and families, Early Headstart staff and day care providers were present and participating.

The earned income from the conference will be divided among the Early Intervention regions for training of staff. Over the past years, this money has been used to sponsor full day conferences and workshops, meeting the specific need of the regions.

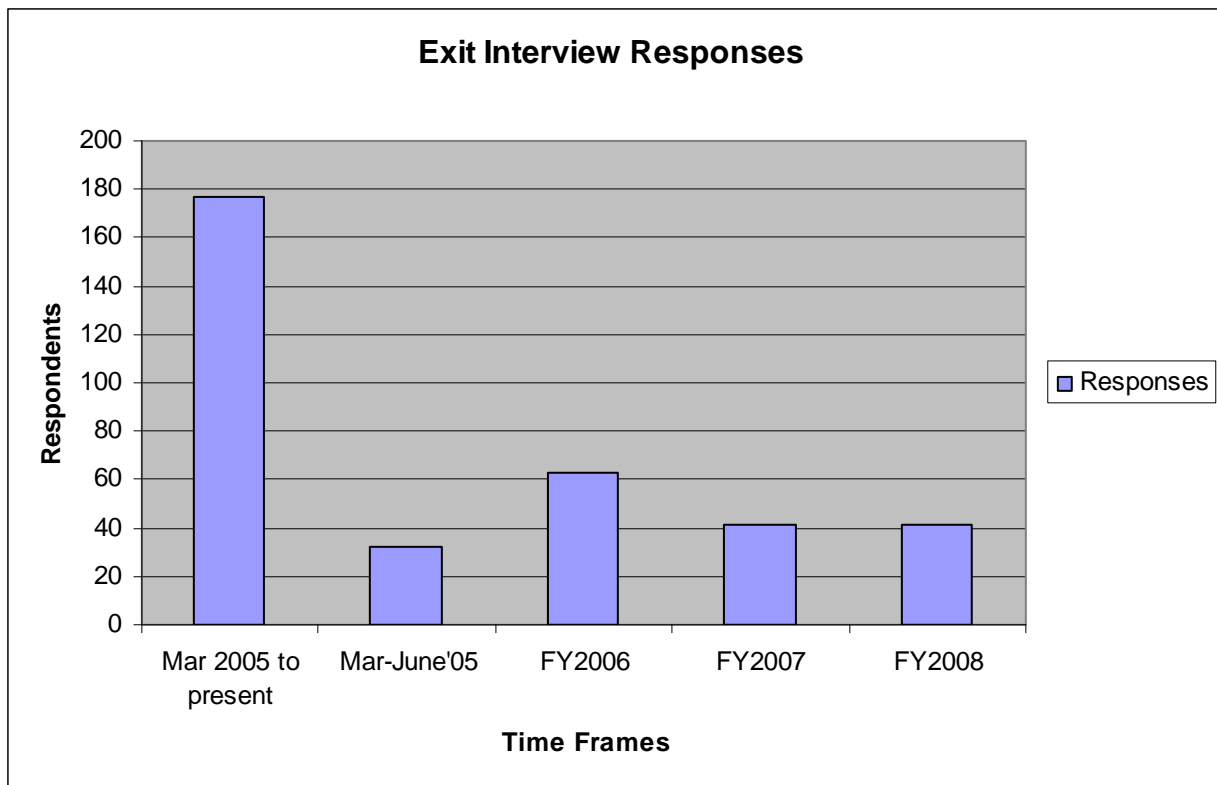
Respectfully Submitted:

Rhonda Meisel  
Conference Liaison

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

This past year saw a focus on gathering information regarding the recruitment and retention of staff in Early Intervention. The Consortium developed an exit survey to be distributed by programs to staff leaving their Early Intervention programs. This survey has allowed insight into difficulties retaining staff in the Early Intervention system. Survey results have been utilized with the DPH staff as well as with our legislative partners.

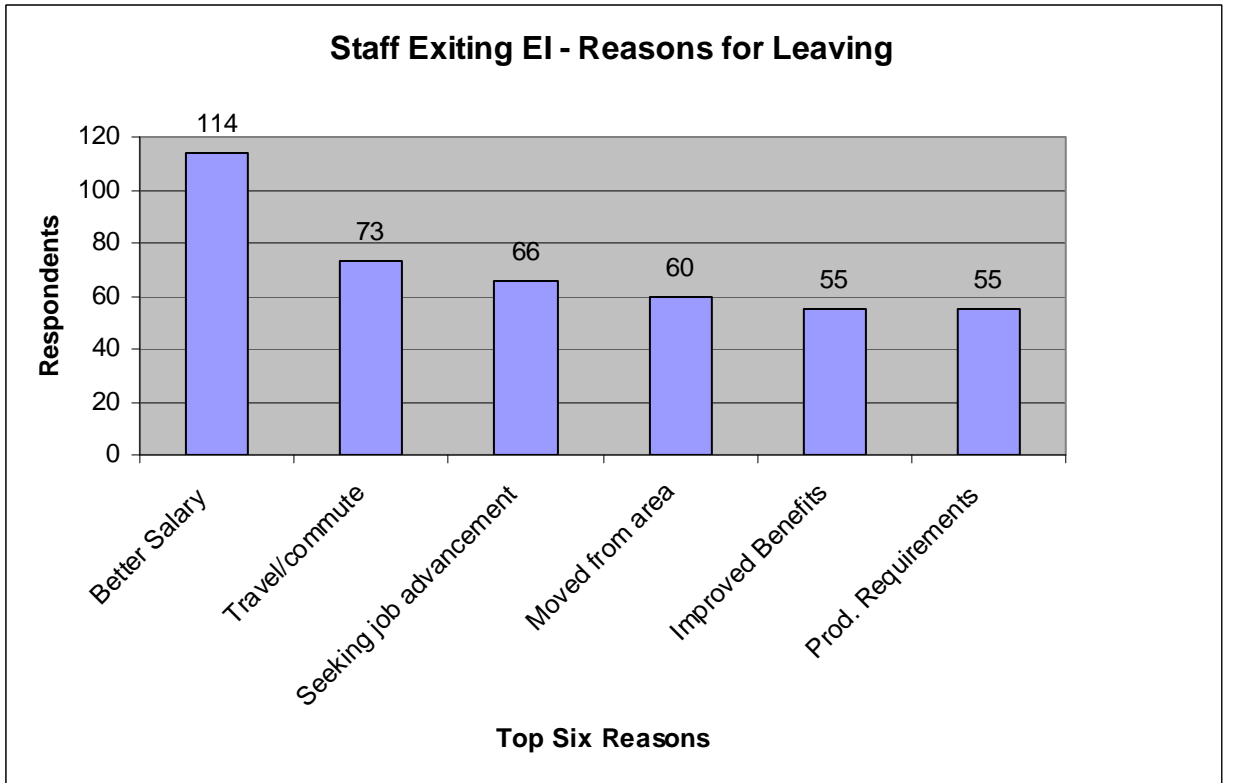
Please see below for a brief summary of survey results.

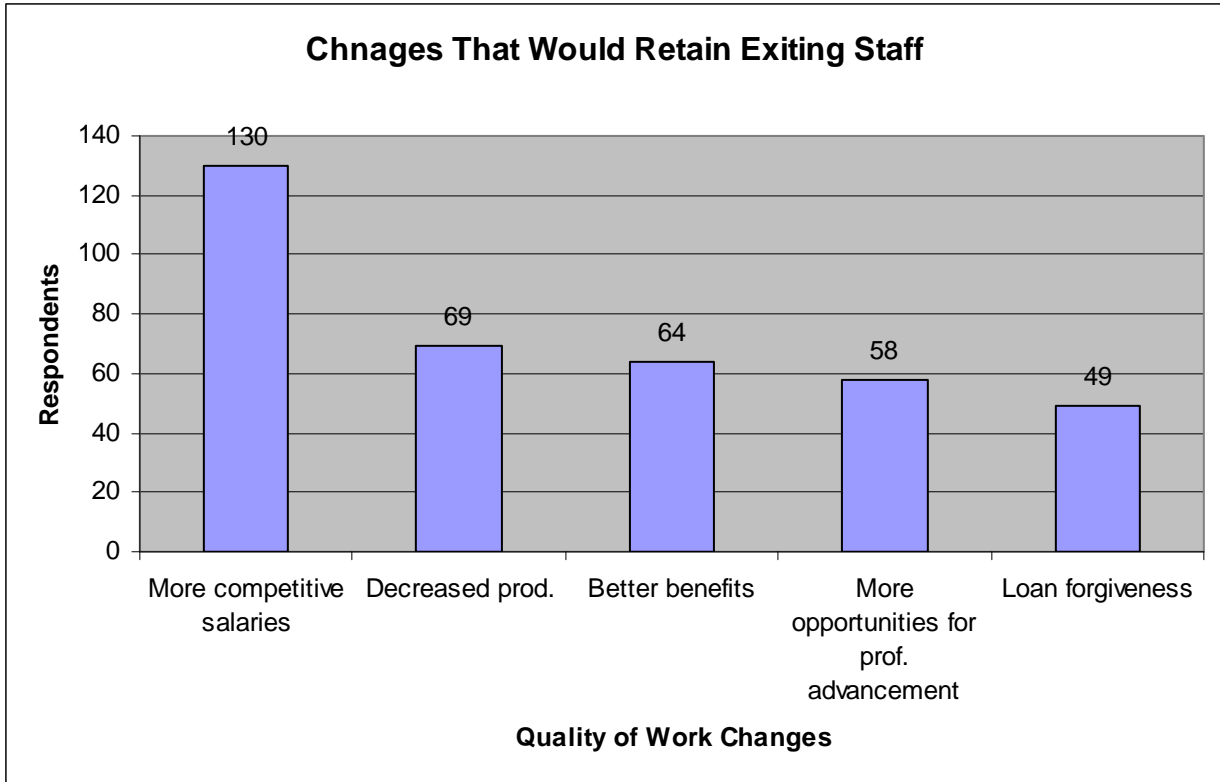


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Respectfully Submitted,

Dan Couet  
Special Projects

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## REGION I

Region I Program Directors meet the 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday of the month at the REACH Program in Northampton. We discuss issues raised at the monthly MEIC, ITA and ICC meetings. General regional issues such as fiscal issues (especially mileage), shortage of therapist and the challenges of maintaining clinical quality of programs under such fiscal constraints. We also discussed and shared ideas to help with the change to six-month eligibility evaluations. Meetings are well attended and a source of positive support, shared ideas and mentorship.

Region I also hosted one of the Part C Hearing held on the changed in eligibility. We were a strong voice of concern. We also continue to reach out to our local legislators for help with annual state budget needs.

Region I Annual Conference in collaboration with the Western Regional Consultation Program was held in October. Topic: The Challenging Child. Due to a great collaboration with our Regional Consultation Program, the region was able to offer staff and families a number of trainings through out the year.

Jean Graney, Criterion Heritage Program will serve as the Region I Representative to MEIC for another term (FY 2009 and 2010).

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Graney  
Region I Representative

## REGION II

Region II comprises of the following programs:

Pernet

UMASS Early Intervention

Criterion Valley

Criterion Wachusett

Kennedy Donovan Center-South Central

Lipton Early Intervention

Thom Marlboro

MSPCC Worcester

The Region II meeting is scheduled for the last Friday of the month. During the past year the Region has provided support, encouragement and technical assistance to program directors coping with a wide variety of challenges and system changes.

The Region II representative to the MEIC Board is Robin Weber. In addition, two other members of the Region are Board Members.

The Region utilizes the MEIC training grant money to provide individual scholarships to staff to attend trainings. This year the scholarships will be awarded in June.

Respectfully Submitted:

Robin Weber

Region II Representative

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### REGION III

Region III Program Directors met on the first Monday of the month at the North Shore Arc in Danvers. The Region III Representative Position to the Massachusetts Early Intervention Consortium was not assumed by any of the non-board members in the region, so President Elect, Martha Levine continued to act as the Regional Representative for this region.

Meetings were well attended and focused on sharing of information and provision of support to each other. Information from the MEIC, ITA, and ICC meetings were shared with the region and discussed. Input from the region was brought back to these committees as well as to DPH to allow all programs to have a voice.

Strategies on the implementation of DPH policy changes were shared with each other such as implementation of the prior written notification forms, transition planning meetings, LEA notification forms, six month eligibility evaluations, obtaining NPI numbers for all staff and managing the discontinuation of *Intake* visit/billing. Jean Nigro and Patti Fougere attended a meeting in February to allow an opportunity for questions and feedback from the policy and documentation changes that were implemented in January. Cost-saving ideas were shared such as where to find inexpensive items for the Michigan Evaluation Kits as well as programmatic issues such as how to meet the needs of families in a time of recruitment and retention difficulties were also discussed at the meetings.

Legislative advocacy was discussed and promoted throughout the state budget process with the region participating in these efforts. The region also advocated to maintain the 25% eligibility guideline within this process and to continue to inform DPH and the legislature about the workforce problem we have been facing. Many program directors from the region, as well as some staff, attended the IDEA Part C Hearing opposing the change in eligibility.

A representative from the region, Anne Dolan volunteered to participate on the DPH Early Childhood Outcomes Stakeholder's Meetings.

Presentations were provided by the Regional Consultation Program and the DPH Family Sign Language Program. Jen Greco and Sandy Levine have arranged a training for staff in the region on *Safety in EI* which is scheduled for June 16<sup>th</sup>.

Respectfully Submitted,

Martha Levine  
Region III Representative

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## REGION IV & VI

Regions IV and VI have continued to meet together, on the second Tuesday of each month at Bay Cove Early Intervention in Dorchester. The regions continue to be represented on the majority of ICC sub-committees, although there is currently no Region VI representative to the ICC. This year, our regions used the Consortium funds to sponsor a number of different trainings for staff. We have held a training on Autism earlier in the year. In April we offered a Motor training, which was led by a skilled OT who facilitated a hands-on workshop for non-motor therapists to learn basic handling skills. We are also currently enrolling for a workshop titled *Sing, Play and Grow: Using Music in Early Intervention*, which is planned for June 6, 2008. In addition, our regions have also held two offerings of the popular Infant and Toddler Development training facilitated by Jean Nigro, which offered 8 competencies for staff at no cost.

This past year, the regions' primary concerns have included:

- Staffing – recruiting, hiring and retaining a full early intervention team, has continued to be of particular concern this past year.
- EI Salaries and rate increase struggles
- The budgetary problems faced by most programs
- Implementing new policy changes by DPH, including 6-month eligibility determinations

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Sweeney  
Region IV Representative

Candace Chang  
Region VI Representative

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## REGION V

Region V meets the first Wednesday of the month from 9-11:00am at Associates for Human Services in Taunton. Barbara Hreczuck is the Regional Representative. There were several leadership changes in programs over the past year. Cassandra Murphy is the new Director of South Bay Early Intervention in Brockton. Robin Jones took over as Director of Greater Fall River Early Intervention and Tammy Wunschel is the new Director of Kennedy Donovan Center in New Bedford.

Regional Specialist, Katee Duffy, continues to join the first part of our monthly meetings to provide DPH updates and allow for collaboration and effective communication with the group. Other meeting topics addressed monthly were planning for the Southeast Conference, Consortium updates and ICC reviews. The Southeast also has a strong representation on various committees. Zulmira Allcock attends the Standards Committee. Barbara Prindle –Eaton will join Program planning committee, Arlene Tannebaum will attend Personnel Prep and Cassandra Murphy will join Specialty Services. Topics of discussion continue to focus on recruitment and retention, fiscal issues as well as the many DPH program changes.

Region V held a Southeast Region Networking Conference in October 2007. It was well attended by program staff. A Supporting Play Training was also held in December 2007.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Hreczuck, LICSW  
Region V Representative