

Nebraska's Results Driven Accountability (RDA) Part C/EDN Stakeholder Meeting

October 27, 2021

9:00a.m. CT

This meeting was held primarily via Zoom with presenters being in-person at the Jack J. Huck Continuing Education Center, 301 S 68th St. Pl., Lincoln, Nebraska

Present either in person or on the zoom: *Courtonie Albright*, Jean Anderson, Jessica Anthony, Sue Bainter, Sue Borchert, Lynne Brehm, *Raegan Brown*, *Brittany Brown*, Amy Bunnell, Jennifer Calahan, Barb Esch, Sommer Fousek, *Leticia Franco*, Jessica Guiterrez, Johanna Higgins, Becky Hoffman, Ginny Howard, Cole Johnson, *Sarah Kasaby*, *Shaistha Kiran Karipi*, Tina Kilgore, Lisa Knoche, *Derek Knoedler*, Stephanie Knust, Candi Koenig, *Jennie Kozal*, Miriam Kuhn, Janice Lee, *Shina Lemmer*, Karla Lester, Cara Lucas-Richt, Teri McGill, Anthony Miranda, *Mary Monahan*, Gwen Nugent, Heather Ottoson, Michelle Rayburn, Amy Rhone, Connie Shockley, Mark Smith, Vera Stroup-Rentier, Sarah Swanson, *Brittany Szydelko*, *Jessica Tenney*, *Aaron Thompson*, Liliana Vasquez, Karen Vontz, Kelly Wojcik, Annette Wragge
*parents in italics

Welcome & Introductions.

Nebraska Office of Special Education Director, Amy Rhone, gave a welcome to the group and thanked everyone for their time assisting in making some important decisions on behalf of Nebraska's children and families. Next, Amy Bunnell and Jessica Anthony, EDN Co-Leads introduced themselves. Jessica took the group through the agenda and Amy gave a brief background about the purpose and context for the Stakeholder meeting, before introducing Sue Bainter and Janice Lee, Routines Based Early Intervention (RBEI) State Coordinators.

RDA and State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)

Sue and Janice shared background and context regarding Result Driven Accountability, including the 2014 requirement of a State Systemic Improvement Plan to improve child and family outcomes for children/families in early intervention. Janice share Nebraska's hypothesis and mission statement that are at work in the state. Planning Region Teams were initially identified as Cohorts from which data would eventually be gathered. Technical Assistants were put into place to support these regions, and those present on the zoom introduced themselves. Strong leadership teams are essential, thus the addition of a new strategy. Mary Phillips was introduced and has joined the team to help Planning Region Teams strengthen their leadership teams and infrastructure.

Each of three Strategies were defined and updates given about how they are being implemented in the state, and expectations. Maps were shown comparing the number of trained PRT cohorts beginning in 2016 to the present.

1. Routines Based Interview – a semi-structured interview during which the family describes their day-to-day life in terms of their child and family's function, what's going well and what's not.
2. Functional IFSP Outcomes – based on child participation within everyday routines, and family perceived needs such as housing, education, medical resources, etc.
3. Routines-Based Home Visits – addresses the need for home visits; utilizes The Getting Ready (GR) Approach, which was developed at the University of Nebraska, and focuses on strengthening relationships in children's lives, including the parent-child relationship, and the parent-early intervention professional relationship.

The "Getting Ready" approach has worked well with the other two strategies and is a relationship and strength-based approach to improve child outcomes. Some "Lessons Learned" were shared

regarding how virtual trainings have worked well during the COVID Pandemic and included the points of being effective (according to approval ratings), fiscally responsible, allow a wider audience to be reached, and they are more convenient for families to participate. Families shared that, while there were occasional technical difficulties during the interview, convenience of being at home was a positive, and parents consistently reported they felt positive about their RBI Boot Camp experience. Evaluations from Face-to-Face and virtual Boot Camps showed no differences in participant satisfaction.

Based on what has been shared at this point, the Stakeholder group was polled to answer this question: **Should EDN continue to offer virtual trainings as an option for professional development?** They were asked to enter their “why or why not” in the chat. (97% yes, 3% no) Some of the comments were also shared The group was thanked for their input.

Information was shared about a new training entitled “Using the RBI and Quality Home Visits to Develop a Quality IFSP.” The purpose of the training is to help participants integrate information into from RBIs, Quality Home Visits, and Ongoing Assessments to develop functional, family centered IFSPs.

Lastly, Sue and Janice discussed three ways the effectiveness of the three RDA strategies is being evaluated. All PRTs are doing annual Fidelity Checks so they can carry over training in to ongoing practice.. Data is collected from the pilots to share with the rest of the state regarding positive outcomes and challenges. They are always listening to the field and have heard feedback that there are a LOT of Fidelity Checks and that folks are feeling a bit overwhelmed. As a result, something they’re piloting is a Biennial fidelity process for RBI in pilot regions (since RBI has been done the longest).

Another poll was shared: **Should EDN offer the option of biennial RBI Fidelity checks for providers & SCs who meet eligible criteria?** Yes or no and enter comments into the chat. (94% yes, 6% no) Valuable input was given and the group was thanks once again.

IFSP Outcome Analysis was discussed next. This is another way that strategy effectiveness is measured with both family and child outcomes being sought. Cohort outcome charts were shared. This data goes into the annual SSIP (State Systemic Improvement Plan) that the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) requires. Sue also shared about additional data they’ve been collecting through partnerships with higher education (UNL, UNO, & Munroe-Meyer Institute) regarding quality data in terms of how it applies in the field in terms of implementation. During the first few years settings focused on RBI & outcomes. Later the same types of information were sought for the Getting Ready approach. Those studies and that data have been available, and the focus is now on refining the components of the RBEI efforts. A more detailed look was taken of a report of Key Findings from a 2019 Saturday of Getting Ready Approach in Home Visits. It was revealed that some SCs weren’t sure about how the GR Approach applied to their role. SC Supervisors and Administrator input is being sought by Dr. Miriam Kuhn, who is conducting a new study around Services Coordinators understanding their role and Dr. Johanna Higgins shared that the structure of the GR visit promotes partnership between the family and the SC to make the visit more predictable and successful. Developing a co-communication strategy between family and provider, and a check-in from provider, is key. Studies show that families tended to wait until a next visit to ask questions, so they are now in more frequent communication with their SC or Provider. Dr. Higgins is helping develop some guidance to

enhance this process that is contributing to progress between visits. Some new technology might also be tapped. A number of these findings have resulted from feedback that was given at last year's Stakeholder meeting.

Connie Shockley asked whether the Getting Ready strategy for home visits is also being implemented in a childcare center if the child is in one? It was explained that in terms of training and implementation, they are first focusing on the home. However, the University is also looking at taking this into childcare setting. It was acknowledged as being a need and it is being explored

Next, Lisa Knoche, University of Nebraska Academy for Early Childhood Research, Project Director, Getting Ready Project, shared an update about a project, "Coaching in Early Intervention (CEO): Promoting Outcomes for Infants/Toddlers with Disabilities through Evidence-Based Practices." The website, cei.unl.edu, was shared to provide informed consent since Lisa would be gathering input from the Stakeholder group.

Project Team member names and roles were shared for the model demonstration project that is funded by the US Dept of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The four project objectives and timeline were shared, including the two participating PRTs being 2 (Fremont) and 6 (Milford). The Year 1 Timeline has included both State and Site Coach trainings, recruitment of EI personnel and families, followed by implementation and ongoing feedback.

Lisa detailed what Coaching looks like and how it is defined. Six specific Evidence-Based coaching practices were listed and how coaching benefits families. Peer-to-Peer Coaching video examples were also shared.

Stakeholders who either coach or have experienced working with a coach were asked - **How do the peer-to-peer coaching examples align with perceptions of coaching?**

Parent Mary Monahan shared that when goals were written, she didn't understand what a good goal was until she entered Preschool and saw how she could better measure it. Up until then it felt like their goals were vague or not measurable. Their initial goals five years ago weren't as robust, and she acknowledged needing help writing meaningful goals. Lisa shared that a key component of coaching is the modeling and affirmed that once Mary this it helped her better refine her ability to write meaningful goals. Goal setting is a skill that gets refined over time.

Parent Courtonie Allbright agreed with Mary about goal setting, saying her team does a good job of encouraging small, achievable goals, and determining the small steps to get there. She said this makes them less daunting. Lisa affirmed that, with peer-to-peer coaching and providers working with families, it is important to encourage this "breaking down" of things into smaller pieces.

Parent Sarah Kasaby commented in the chat that sometimes she doesn't know what her goals should be, especially being a first-time Mom.

Continuing with Stakeholder input:

The group was asked **Q: what supports do you see needed related to peer-to-peer coaching for EI Personnel (providers, SCs, systems) in your area?**

Answers included: Shifting between fidelity to enrichment – ongoing support for EI personnel; making sure there is support for all going forward. Plates are full, so how do we adjust/shift/make it a part of what is already happening; (Mark Smith) On the earlier point, we've been talking for some

time about strategies to implement EC developmental screening across the board for Nebraska infants. This is something we continue to pursue, and we need to work together as a system and as individuals to support implementation of practices like these.
How to have time and dedicated coaches; manage caseloads.
How do we compensate for these additional responsibilities?

Jen Calahan shared agreement with compensating coaches, saying their internal coaches are taking on extra duties with typically no change in caseload and expectations.
Parent Leticia Franco shared that while she is not an administrator, she thinks (providing compensation) would help prevent employee turnover.

Q: What skills are needed and are most helpful?

A: Mary Monahan – positive people; people who were organized; help write meaningful goals (small); when other people have resources for her – eg. private therapist. Someone who can look around the house and identify there are too many toys – make it a calmer space. “Decluttering” help. Lisa: someone was responsive to exactly what she needed. Mary shared it was challenging with having two older girls developing normally. Lisa affirmed that was a real partner.

A: Courtonie Allbright - having providers being intuitive to what the needs are.

A: Letisia Franco – listening, and they are aware of other resources.

Chat: communication, knowledge of referral navigation.

A: Jessica Tenney - their providers look at all that they’re already doing and then build on that. So families have things to work at between visits.

Lisa: families taking you where you are and going from there. Build on strengths and skills.

Tina Kilgore: noted chat comment about Peer to Peer support with help with turnover. Turnover is a hard thing.

Lisa moved on saying that data is an important part of the Coaching framework, and it is wanted as a base for conversations and discussions to make sure progress is being made. Lisa introduced the term Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS) as a way for families and providers to track progress. She shared a chart with scoring levels and definitions noted these are existing goals in the IFSP and are being launched in specific areas.

Lisa thanked the group for thoughtful feedback and turned it over to Cole Johnson, EDN Program Data Manager, to talk about Family Outcomes.

As a reminder from last year, as part of this discussion there was some analysis shared about the family survey. Families are to know their rights, be able to effectively communicate their child’s needs, and say whether they feel they can help their children develop and learn. Cole explained previously there were two versions of the survey, one longer than the other. A revised, shortened version was introduced last year that consisted of 8 questions with an added four questions to evaluate the effectiveness of Nebraska’s RDA strategies. There were not yet questions about the Getting Ready approach, since families had not all experienced it yet. Survey question responses can range from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In 2021 Nebraska had a 79.2% response rate, which is considered to be very strong.

Stakeholder poll **Q: should the survey continue to gather family feedback on the 4 added questions regarding the RDA strategies?** Cole noted there is currently a consideration for revising

the 4 questions since the answers are not used to formulate the Federal data. However, they are seen as an opportunity to gather additional feedback. (97% yes; 3% no)

Some chat comments included that feedback, especially about family services, is very important; getting feedback helps keep families engaged. A question was asked about whether families can give open-ended feedback. Cole answered this is a challenge given the number of surveys sent and received, and what it takes to compile answers. But families can and do add handwritten comments at the bottom of their surveys, and the tabulators share them back to the staff. Cole turned things over to Jessica and Amy to discuss the SSIP and additional funding.

The Federal Offices has provided feedback regarding Nebraska's SSIP. Amy shared that February 1, 2021, was the last submission date. After monitoring by OSEP, the feedback received was positive. Nebraska has the highest family survey return rate in the nation which Amy attributes to the SCs who hand-deliver surveys and then follow-up with their families. They have also made adjustments due to Covid-19, which has impacted training and service delivery, for continued implementation of the strategies.

Information was shared about the American Rescue Plan and the dollars that Nebraska received to address challenges posed by the pandemic and continue to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. An additional \$1.3 million is to be used between July 1, 2021, and September 30, 2023, and must be used within the same guidelines as regular Part C funding. Areas of focus for this funding include ChildFind public awareness efforts, family engagement activities, and social emotional supports. Examples of all three were shared. Nebraska's early intervention system will also address personnel preparation and technology supports for EDN providers. Overall, funds should respond to children and families who are disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and/or are members of chronically under-resourced communities/groups. They should, ideally, lead to sustainable benefits and outcomes.

EDN Rebranding

Jessica shared that the Nebraska EDN is working with Lincoln Marketing Agency, Firespring, to help rebrand EDN by revising its logos. Focus groups will be held to explore design options, and Jessica asked for those interested in taking part to enter names in the chat. (respondents: Brittany Szydelko, Cara Lucas-Richt, Mark Smith, Sarah Kasaby, Jen Calahan, Shaistha Karipi, Mary Monahan, Courtonie Allbright)

(Lunch break)

Annual Performance Review & Resetting Targets

Cole Johnson shared that states receiving IDEA funds must have a State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR). Identified targets need to be rigorous with changes from year to year to show that states are making substantial improvements on data. The states' Federal Fiscal Year 2025 target must reflect improvement over the baseline data.

Cole took the group through Indicators 2 through 6, with slides that defined each, the considerations, and data beginning with 2016-17 performance numbers. The proposed targets for 2020-21 were explained and input requested.

Some general comments and questions included when child count data is collected. Cole answered that it is a “one point in time” collection and Nebraska does this on October 1st of each year. Regarding Indicator 2 and environments, the Office of Special Education Programs has a rule where a natural environment is the expectation for a child to receive services. However, families get to make this decision in their Individualized Family Service Plan, so the state target doesn’t have to be more than 95%. The proposed 2021 target is to be 93% and will increase by .5% for each of the next five years, to end at 95.5% at end of cycle. Input was requested. A question was asked, when individual PRTs have higher numbers of non-natural environments, is there training for how to address and lower this? A: PRTs are broken down and receive their own individual trend data. Monitoring reveals information about PRT data and often reveals any concerns that arise about natural settings.

Q: Is the rationale for starting at a lower proposed target based on Covid? A: yes, want to give ourselves some flexibility to allow for possible future effects of Covid. OSEP has affirmed this. There were no concerns or questions about the targets for Indicator 2.

Indicator 3 – Percent of infants & toddlers w/IFSPs who demonstrate improvement in three areas: social-emotional skills, acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. In Nebraska, Teaching Strategies GOLD is how indicator 3 data is captured.

GOLD is the sole assessment tool for NDE, and needed work and collaboration has occurred over the years regarding cut scores that addressed some discrepancies in their method of calculation. The current system is more stable and accurate when addressing Nebraska’s six baselines. Due to the technical changes within the TS GOLD system, the six baselines were recalculated by using a .95 confidence interval over 5 years of simulated data. A slide was shared that showed revised baseline and methodology. Will use the lower bound confidence interval. Considerations for Indicator 3 were shared. Kerry Miller, from UNMC/MMI and who works with GOLD in Nebraska, added some context to the discussion. A question was asked about why the trend lines go up and down each year. Kerry shared a possible affect could be Covid, however it is not certain. Amy Bunnell noted that, when looking at trend data, every data point is a different set of children, therefore, the numbers will always look different. The number of children with significant disabilities also varies from year to year. A comment/question was shared asking how they impact the skill development for “littles” and get appropriate training for providers to assist parents. How do they support the staff, so they have better outcomes for these children?

Indicator 4 involves the Part C Family Survey and the three components of it. Considerations included the COVID 19 pandemic, with effects on both families and service providers. This will be year two of the condensed survey and Cole shared return rates from the last two years: 2021 - 79.2% and 2020 -68.1%.

Proposed targets for each of the three components were shown onscreen with the goal being to increase the return rate by 1% each of the next five years. The contractors Nebraska works with have noted a possible, future “ceiling affect” since Nebraska does so well. A question was asked about what was done to improve each year and what changed to make families know their rights better? A: in 2020 the surveys were distributed the first of February at the very beginning of Covid. In 2021, things had relaxed a bit and the thought is people had become used to the realities of the pandemic.

Indicator 5 – Percent of infants and toddlers birth to 1 with IFSPs. The data source count for this occurs on October 1 and Cole emphasized that COVID did clearly impact this. Nebraska has typically been in the bottom third as it is considered a strict eligibility state. Having more strict guidelines than in other states means it does not serve as many birth-1 kids.

Indicator 6 – Percent of infants and toddlers birth to 3 with IFSPs. Again, the data source count is on October 1. The earlier a child receives EI services, the greater impact it has into the future. The consideration for Indicator 6 consists of the question, what sort of continued impacts will COVID have? Cole shared for the last four years PRTs have done a great job in getting information out into the communities and have engaged more referrals. The recommendation is to start with the 2016 target and hold it for two years, then increase a bit each subsequent year, bringing Nebraska back to the 2020-21 level.

Finally, Cole talked about Compliance Indicators which don't have to set targets. OSEP has three Part C Indicators and sets them at all 100%:

Indicator 1 - the percent of infants and toddlers with IFSPs who receive IE services on their IFSP in a timely manner. In NE this is to be within 30 days of the IFSP being in place. This data is collected through monitoring.

Indicator 7 – the percent of eligible infants and toddlers with IFSPs for whom an initial evaluation and assessment and an initial IFSP meeting were conducted within Part C 's 45-day timeline.

Indicator 8 – involves transition activities and has three components:

8A – the percent of eligible infants and toddlers with IFSPs for whom an initial evaluation and assessment and an initial IFSP meeting had a transition plan within 90 days and no more than 9 months of third birthday (a 6-month window), either into community-based service or Preschool/

8B – notification of the state educational agency (SEA) and local education agency (LEA) where the toddler resides at least 90 days and no more than 9 months prior to the toddler's third birthday for toddlers potentially eligible for Part B preschool services;

8C – conducted the transition conference held with the approval of the family at least 90 days and no more than 9 months prior to the toddler's third birthday for toddlers potentially eligible for Part B preschool services.

Miriam Kuhn asked in the chat whether it is yet known if Nebraska is at 100% for last year? Cole said he would send out previous performance data to the group.

Wrap-Up & Next Steps

Amy Bunnell and Jessica Anthony shared a tentative agenda for the 2022 Annual Stakeholder meeting that will include the following updates:

- American Rescue Plan projects
- Dr. Kuhn's evaluation study
- Dr. Knoche's Coaching in Early Intervention (CEI)
- Results Driven Accountability progress

It was emphasized that feedback from today's meeting is vital and used when reporting to OSEP.

Amy thanked the group for its input both out loud and through the chat. The meeting adjourned at 1:41p.m. CT.