

Ways and Means Committee Public Testimony-March 12, 2013

Good morning. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. My name is Nancy Ford and I am the early intervention/early childhood special education contractor for the Oregon Department of Education at the Northwest Regional Education Service District (Region 8). I am here to talk about how the EI/ECSE budget has been impacted and the result it has had on children and families.

The EI/ECSE program is mandated by both Federal and State statutes. Every child found eligible receives services. There is no wait list. The number of children continues to grow at a significant rate yearly. As of February 1, 2013 there were 11,113 children being served. These are children age birth to five years old with conditions such as genetic disorders, cerebral palsy, autism, communication disorders, hearing or vision impairments, and other health or medical issues. As the caseload has increased, the funding has not kept up with the number of children being served. As a result, services continue to be watered down.

A study of EI and ECSE services statewide documents the serious reductions. Since 2004 there has been a 57% reduction in services to children birth to three. Children receive an average of 2.8 hours per month of services. This is such a critical loss since 90% of the brain cells develop in the first three years of life.

For children three to five, there has been a 34% reduction in service. Children receive an average of 16 hours per month. And, children with Autism have seen even greater reductions. There has been a 66.7% reduction in services for children birth to three and a 43.4% reduction in services to children three to five. Recommended hours of service is much higher than the actual service levels we are providing today because of the budget constraints.

The service level reductions mean that children are receiving BELOW recommended and assessed service level for that particular child. This means the children and families may not receive the tools they need to be ready for kindergarten.

We have also have seen current trends and growing needs in the EI/ECSE program. Approximately 50% of the children are in poverty; approximately 10-13% of the children are in foster care; there has been an increase in children with multiple disabilities and medical needs; there has been an increase in children with behavior and social emotional needs; and the number of children with English as a second language has increased. In Region 8, translation is provided for 53 different dialects.

I want to emphasize the EI/ECSE works collaboratively with Head Start to support children with disabilities in the Head Start classrooms. As Head Start receives expansion money to provide additional preschool slots, the number of children needing ECSE services also increases. Currently, in Washington County 19% are ECSE and 10% are Early Head Start. This is a valuable partnership that supports early learning of low income children with disabilities.

EI/ECSE plays a critical role for Oregon to meet the 40/40/20 goal. By providing adequate funding for EI/ECSE to provide the recommended service levels, this will allow ECSE children to enter kindergarten ready to learn. The Minnesota Federal Reserve Bank researchers report that investments in the early childhood years result in a cost benefit ratio of \$1 invested and a savings of \$4 to \$17 over the child's life span. Money spent earlier results in less money spent later. The Governor's budget increased funding, however, will only go to paying for the increased caseload, not increasing services to the recommended level.

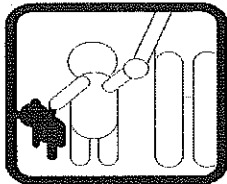
Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today.

Good morning. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I have also provided written testimony. I would like to highlight some key points in regards to the early intervention/early childhood special education program and the need for increased funding. They are as follows:

- EI/ECSE is a mandated program for children birth to five years of age with disabilities
- The program cannot hold a wait list
- All children eligible receive services
- The program provides services to 11,000 to 14,000 children in a given year
- These are specialized services that are provided by licensed staff
- Children in early intervention, the birth to three year old program, are provided services in their natural environment per Federal and State statute
- The natural environments are places where typical children are such as home or child care
- Children in early childhood special education, the three to five year old program, are provided at Head Start, community preschools, child care, and specialized programs run by the education service districts
- When the program started in 1992, children in ECSE were receiving 15 hours per week on average
- Children in EI were receiving weekly home visits and had more than one service provider
- Since 2004, there has been a 57% reduction in services for EI and a 34% reduction for ECSE
- For children with Autism, there has been a significant reduction of services
- We are currently providing services significantly below recommended evidenced based practices
- The State's key performance measures indicate the State lags way behind in meeting the following:
 - 27% of infants and toddler with disabilities receive the EI service level standard
 - 70% of preschoolers with low needs receive the ECSE service level standard
 - 1% of preschoolers with moderate needs receive the ECSE service level standard, and
 - 3.5% of preschoolers with high needs receive the ECSE service level standard
- The Governor's budget increased funding, however, will only go to paying for the increased caseload, not increasing services to the recommended level.

EI/ECSE plays a critical role for Oregon to meet the 40/40/20 goal. However, if the EI/ECSE program is going to insure children enter kindergarten ready to learn and meeting benchmarks at third grade funding must increase to evidenced best practices for young children with disabilities.

Again, I appreciate the opportunity to speak with you today.



EI / ECSE Services

Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education

Oregon Alliance for EI / ECSE

FAST FACTS

- ← Over 11,876 Oregon children receive Early Childhood Special Education services with a 3.7% expected annual increase.
- ← Funding has not kept pace with growth in numbers of eligible children resulting service levels below evidence based recommendations.
- ← EI/ECSE services are mandated by state and federal law. Every eligible child can access services; without wait lists.
- ← EI/ECSE provides special education support to Headstart, Early Headstart, and Oregon PreK

Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education is a seamless system (for birth to 5 year olds) that provides special education services for babies, toddlers and preschoolers with developmental delays and disabilities.

Who receives EI/ECSE services?

- Eligible children age birth to 5 years old with conditions such as genetic disorders, cerebral palsy, autism, communication disorders, hearing or vision impairments, and other health or medical issues.

What kind of services are provided?

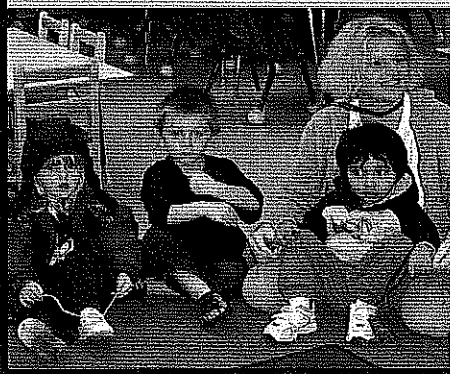
- parent education, consultation and support
- speech & language therapy, occupational therapy, physical therapy
- behavior and social skills training
- specialized instruction in preschool settings
- specialized equipment and materials
- linkages to other services and supports

How are EI/ECSE services funded?

- 78% State General Funds
- 21% Federal IDEA Funds
- 1% Medicaid fee for service reimbursements

EI/ ECSE services to children have declined since 2004

- 57% reduction in services to children birth to three
Children receive an average 2.8 hours per month
- 34% reduction in services to children three to five
Children receive an average 16 hours per month
- Children with Autism have seen even greater reductions:
66.7% reduction in services to children birth to three
43.4% reduction in services to children three to five



Data: Oregon Department of Education

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