



EDUCATION CONNECTION

A Regional Educational Service Center

355 Goshen Road
P.O. Box 909
Litchfield, CT 06759-0909
Phone: 860.567.0863
Fax: 860.567.3381

345 Main Street
Danbury, CT 06810
Phone: 203.791.1904
Fax: 203.778.8076

www.educationconnection.org

March 6, 2015

Dear Appropriations Committee Members:

My name is Juleen Flanigan and I serve as the Director of Early Childhood Services at EDUCATION CONNECTION, the regional service center in western CT. We have been operating a Birth to Three program in our region since 1996 and very much want to continue this valuable work with families and their children who need early intervention services.

I am concerned about the recent significant changes that are being proposed for the Birth to Three System. As you know, Birth to Three has been slated to move from the Department of Developmental Services to the Office of Early Childhood. I have no opposition to this as I believe it is best housed in the OEC. However, the very recent changes in the financial basis of the Birth to Three program raises concerns about fiscal instability, additional operational costs and contractual changes that need immediate attention. Currently, DDS handles all Medicaid billing for Birth to Three; however, OPM intends to shift this burden onto private providers without conducting a feasibility study.

I strongly request that these issues be addressed immediately within DDS before the statewide program is moved.

OPM is requiring Birth to Three Providers to bill Husky directly and accept the reimbursement to cover costs of operations :

- Private providers do not have the infrastructure in place to bill Medicaid. A change in infrastructure would include: hiring additional staff to support billing, changes in staffing related to services to control costs, and an increase in provider A&G expenses.
- Birth to Three providers are not currently qualified to provide services under Medicaid. All professionals working in the system require credentialing to meet federal standards.
- Currently, Birth to Three Providers receive a bundled rate for services, direct Medicaid billing will not pay for all costs associated with service. All required IDEA services are not billable under Medicaid.
- Birth to Three requires multidisciplinary services; Medicaid typically prohibits this methodology.
- The Medicaid model is neither an educational model nor the family focused developmental model required under IDEA.
- Providers will see decreased revenues in ranging from 35% - 57% depending on the percentage of Medicaid eligible children served and an approximately 35% overall reduction based on current estimates.
- Providers cannot sustain these cuts and will be forced to withdraw from the system.
- A limited provider pool will disrupt services for families resulting in a waiting list.

Birth to Three has been the premier Results Based Accountability Program in Connecticut. Statistics reflect that 51% of children who received Birth to Three services and were enrolled in Kindergarten in 2011-2012 did not require special education services.

I implore you to provide us with your support to avoid a collapse of our Birth to Three System. We are greatly concerned that this procedural change will have a significant negative impact on our mission. Providers are vested in working with you to identify reasonable alternatives to foster the development of our most vulnerable children across the state.

Respectfully submitted,

Juleen P Flanigan, MSW
Director, Early Childhood Services