



**child
development
services**

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* Ammended 3/11/08

March 7, 2008

Ellen Whitcomb
Project PEDS Board of Directors Chairperson
Waterville Public Schools
25 Messalonskee Avenue
Waterville, Maine 04901

Dear Mrs. Whitcomb:

First I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the site director, the staff and providers for the effort that was extended to accommodate this process. The involvement of staff in this process is beneficial to all. Please express my gratitude to all of the staff for helping with the review, taking part in the interview process and answering our paperwork questions.

As I shared with the site director and staff during the on-site visit, this process is designed to promote continuous improvement in compliance and in service provision to children in your service area.

1. The Process:

Over a two day period from December 13th – 14th 2007, program monitoring was conducted an on-site visit to assess the Project PEDS CDS site's current status in meeting regulatory requirements. This letter will outline the base line data gathered during this review.

The collection of base line data and information regarding the provision of special education services at the Project PEDS CDS site was based on the following activities:

- Interviews with staff, and providers
- Review of State Entitlement plan
- Review of last corrective action plan on file at the DOE
- Review of parent questionnaires
- Review of:
 - 6 Part C files
 - 12 Part B files
- Review of Project PEDS self-review plan and Internal Audit of
 - 12 Part C files
 - 20 Part B files

2. Themes from Interviews:

A. Staff:

Concerns:

The staff reported three major areas of concern in the provision of service for children.

The first area of concern is the limited number of preschools within the catchment area of the site. This makes it difficult to place children within the least restrictive environment with non-disabled peers. They reported that there has been an increase of 4 year old programs but the number of students able to attend is limited.

Secondly, transportation services for children and families are limited. This makes it difficult to arrange for services to be provided.

Lastly, the staff is concerned with the changes in job description requirements for the case managers at the site. They are concerned with the requirement of a 282 teaching certification. They expressed concern with the cost and time it will take to acquire this level of certification. They hope there will be funds available to pursue courses similar to many public school districts.

Leadership:

The staff shared they feel the leadership of the site director is exceptional. Some of the words used to describe her leadership were the following: approachable, knowledgeable, positive, innovative, creative, and trustworthy. They reported she has built great relationships with community providers and has strong collaboration skills.

To quote one of the staff members: "Liz Keach has been great. She really tries hard to keep up on all the ever present changes and challenges associated and pass on pertinent information. She is very conscientious of the quality of services not just the provision alone. Her enthusiasm is contagious and she makes it easy to work for her. We have faced lots of changes and she has tried her best to make those changes happen as quickly and effortlessly as possible all the while supporting her staff. She sees us more than employees and shows that she cares for us as individuals as well as a working group...I'll say it again, she makes it easy to work for her."

B. Board of Directors:

Leadership of Site Director:

The board members shared they feel the site director is doing a great job with the site and staff. She keeps the board regularly informed of the changes within CDS and the impact on the services Project PEDS provides. She is open and collaborative with her board members and has increased the amount of board meetings over the last couple of years to increase the communication of changes occurring at the state level.

Concerns:

The board expressed concerns with the site merging site responsibilities with two other sites may spread the site director too thin. They feel the performance of the Project PEDS site has been relatively problem free and there is a concern that the high level of performance may be impacted if she is away from the site too much.

The board also expressed a concern for further information about changing from a governing board to an advisory board. At their request the State CDS director attended one of their board meetings to clarify for them what their role would be if they were to become an advisory board. They are still weighing out the pros and the cons of both sides.

4. Record Audit:

An integral part of this process involved the participation of the Project PEDS site staff in the auditing of children's records. Thank you for the effort and time extended to allow for this participation.

During our on site visit, the program monitoring team examined the following areas of both Part C and Part B:

- Referral, screening procedures and timelines;
- Parent notices and consents;
- Procedures involving evaluations and Early Childhood Team (ECT) Meetings;
- Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individual Education Plans (IEP);
- Extended School Year Services
- Communication with Parents

These areas were reviewed in a comprehensive audit of the children's records.

Attached are the compiled results of the record audit. Any section receiving a "Needs Corrective Action" rate of compliance is identified as an area of concern. Identified areas of concern on the record audit are followed by comments as to why the item did not meet the regulation standard.

In reviewing 6 files on-site (a minimum of 10% of the part C files based on child-count) and 12 files internally, the following areas in Part C met compliance:

- **All areas monitored on the Child Record Audit Form for Part C Met Compliance Standards.**

In reviewing 12 files on-site (a minimum of 10% of the part B files based on child-count) and 20 files internally, the following areas in Part B did not meet compliance:

- Use of the written notice of initial referral consistently
 - Including a statement of how the child's parents will be regularly informed of their child's progress toward their annual goals
- **All remaining areas monitored on the Child Record Audit Form for Part B Met Compliance Standards.**

It is important to note the Project PEDS Child Development Services site was an integral part in the development of the new State required Individual Family Service Plan. They piloted the form, and the use of "baby teams" to complete the Part C evaluations within the natural environment. The site has a high level of employed staff responsible for evaluations and service delivery as compared to other CDS sites. Thus, the site director is able to provide close general supervision to the staff and their daily activities directly leading to the timeliness of evaluations and services provided by the site. It is also important to comment that the Project PEDS site has no unmet needs for children at the time of this report and is performing fiscally under budget.

5. Corrective Action Plan Development:

The Project PEDS Child Development Services Self-review plan has been reviewed and it is apparent that the director and staff have recognized through the internal audit the same concerns found by the on-site monitoring team. The Project PEDS site director, staff and board of directors should be commended on their performance in complying with the requirements of Maine Unified Special Education Regulations and the Individuals with Disabilities Act. They should be considered a model for all of the CDS sites across the state.

In summary:

- 1.) **The Site will have one year from the date of this report to correct the two areas of non-compliance found in Need of Corrective Action during the record audit which were noted in Section 4. A corrective action plan must be submitted to the Department of Education, Child Development Services Department within 45 days of the receipt of this report.**

The Site Director has submitted goals on the Site's self review plan that can be incorporated into the corrective action plan with additional goals for the concerns and deficiencies noted within this report. The information included is extremely helpful in increasing our awareness of concerns and issues within the site so we can provide necessary technical assistance to the site and staff.

The Department of Education conducted a survey of parents of children with disabilities within your region. The results of this survey are attached. As CDS sites continue to improve services for all children, parent input is critical. These results can serve as additional information to be used in the planning and evaluation of services and programs for children and are used during the annual State Performance Plan to the federal government.

In accordance with the Freedom of Access Act, all letters related to the Special Education Program Monitoring are public record and shall be made available to parents and other members of the public upon request.

On behalf of CDS, I would like to thank you, the site Director, the staff and all other persons that took part in this review, for the thoughtful courtesy extended to me and the flexibility and cooperation afforded me during the visit.

Sincerely,

Erica Thompson, Distinguished Educator
Child Development Services Program Monitoring and Technical Assistance

Copies sent to:

Susan A Gendron, Commissioner
David Noble Stockford, Policy and Team Leader
Liz Keach, Project PEDS County Child Development Services Director
Debra Hannigan, State Director Child Development Services

Enclosures:

Part C Child Record Audit Form Summary
Part B Child Record Audit Form Summary
CDS Project PEDS Part Survey Results

* The Project PEDS Child Development Services letter of findings was amended to reflect OSEP reporting requirements removing a threshold percentage in measuring compliance under the record audit section. The previous report dated March 7, 2007 used 95% accuracy as a measure of meeting compliance standards. We must now use 100%.