



**child
development
services**

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June 24, 2008

Paul Austin
Child Development Services Search
Board of Directors Chairperson
35 Union Street
Brunswick, ME 04011

Dear Mr. Austin:

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:

During the month of February 2008 program monitoring was conducted by an on-site visit to assess the Search 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 Search CDS site was based on the following activities:

- Interviews with staff and related service providers
- Review of State Entitlement plan
- Review of monthly Unmet Needs Data
- Review of parent questionnaires
- Review of:
 - 5 Part C files
 - 10 Part B files

It is important to note that no internal monitoring data was submitted as a part of the monitoring process. The site director was unavailable during the on-site monitoring process due to medical leave. Attempts to gather the internal monitoring data from the site and the site director have been unsuccessful.

2. Themes from Interviews

A. Staff and Related Service Providers:

The staff and related service providers reported that the following areas are barriers in providing services to students / children in the natural environment / least restrictive environment:

- Available therapists to travel and provide services within the natural and or least restrictive environment
- Reimbursement to parents and providers for travel*
- Limited amounts of programs in the Search CDS area that provide a continuum of services for the Least Restrictive Environment.

The staff and related service providers also indicated concerns with the following:

- Dynamic status quo of salaries due to state wide negotiations
- The changes in eligibility requirements in Chapter 101 in comparison to Chapter 180 – the staff feels they are more restrictive
- Certification requirements for case managers and how that will impact job responsibilities without financial incentive from the site and or state
- Consistency in abiding to the special education regulations in the determination of eligibility for both Part C and Part B amongst the case managers at the Search CDS site.
- The staff indicated a concern with the Part C evaluation process. They would like to improve their “Baby Team” process to include a consistent team of appropriately certified and qualified staff in addition to CDS staff to ensure quality evaluations and to meet required timelines.
- Lack of providers within the area, especially in the area of speech language therapists causing children to go without services for a period of time.

* In consultation with business manager at the CDS office, I determined the transportation costs of the Search CDS site are higher than sites of the same child count and catchment area. Their costs are commensurate with one of the largest CDS sites in the state. The site has explained this is due to the need to transport children to programs a long distance from the region due to the lack of programs on the LRE continuum in the catchment area. The site needs to meet with the CDS Business Manager, Mike Boucher and CDS State Director Debra Hannigan, to further review the reason behind the high transportation costs and to develop a plan to address how to reduce this fiscal area to come in line with site’s of equal size and demographic area.

Interviews of the Board of Directors were attempted through the Board Chair in March. No interview forms have been returned as of the date of this report.

3. Review of Unmet Needs:

In review of the unmet needs data reported to the Child Development Services Office at the Department of Education the following chart outlines the unmet needs of children B-5 at the Search CDS site from December 2007 to April 2008

Specific service	Total Number of Unmet Services					
	December 2007		January 2008		February 2008	
	B-2	3-5	B-2	3-5	B-2	3-5

Occupational Therapy	3	0	1	2	No data	No data
Physical Therapy	0	0	0	0		
Speech Language Therapy	1	0	7	8		
Development Therapy	0	0	0	2		
Other	0	0	0	0		
TOTAL percentage of Unmet needs	5%	0%	9%	7%		

Specific service	Total Number of Unmet Services					
	March 2008		April 2008			
	B-2	3-5	B-2	3-5		
Occupational Therapy	1	3	1	1		
Physical Therapy	0	0	0	0		
Speech Language Therapy	3	4	4	8		
Development Therapy	2	3	1	1		
Other	0	0	0	0		
TOTAL percentage of Unmet needs	7%	4%	14%	7%		

In order to meet compliance in this area, the Search CDS must submit a goal within the corrective action plan to meet 100% compliance in the timeliness of the provision of services for children ages Birth through 5 years of age. The goal must also include compliance with timely submission of required data to the Department.

3. Record Audit:

An integral part of this process involved the participation of the Search CDS 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 IFSP and IEP team 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 a finding of non-compliance. Identified areas of non-compliance on the record audit are followed by comments as to why the item did not meet the regulation standard.

In reviewing 5 files on-site (a minimum of 10% of the part C files based on child-count), the following areas in Part C did not meet compliance:

- Receipt of consent for initial and any subsequent evaluation
 - Parental notice of the IFSP meeting with appropriate documentation of dates and names of invited participants
 - Completion of evaluations and IFSP team meeting within 45 days from the receipt of referral.
 - Transition planning and a Transition conference for children transitioning from Part C to Part B services must be held no later than 90 days before the child's third birthday.
 - Documentation of the IFSP being sent to the parent within 21 days of the IFSP team meeting.
 - Documentation of the Child Outcome Summary forms in the files
 - Documentation of Transition planning and conference on the IFSP
 - Documenting specific area of specialty of the provider responsible to deliver services
- All 44 remaining areas monitored on the Child Record Audit Form for Part C Met Compliance Standards.**

In reviewing 10 files on-site (a minimum of 10% of the part B files based on child-count) and 28 files internally, the following areas in Part B did not meet compliance:

- Documentation of the Parents being provided with their procedural safeguards
- Written Notice of the initial referral, eligibility determinations, parental consent and proposed actions to be taken for the child's program.
- Receipt of Initial consent for evaluation and subsequent evaluations
- Completion of evaluations and IEP team meeting to determine eligibility within 60 days from the receipt of consent to evaluate.
- Parental written notice of the IEP team meeting
- Documentation that a copy of the evaluations report was provided to the parent in a reasonable time prior to the IEP team meeting
- Documentation of a copy of the IEP provided to the parent within 21 days of the meeting.
- Statement of the child's present level of functioning and performance including how the disability affects the child's participation in appropriate activities
- A statement of measurable, annual goals on the IEP
- Statement of how the child's parents will be regularly informed of their child's progress in meeting their annual goals.
- Dates of the initiation and duration of services to not exceed one year
- Supplemental aides and services section of the IEP
- Special Education Transportation services

Extended School Year Services were not reviewed as part of the on-site monitoring process. The site should establish a goal in their corrective action plan to establish procedures for the provision of ESY services in accordance with MUSER Chapter 101.

- **All 32 remaining areas monitored on the Child Record Audit Form for Part B Met Compliance Standards.**

4. Corrective Action Plan Development:

In summary:

- 1.) **The Site will have one year from the date of this report to correct the findings of non-compliance found in Need of Corrective Action during the record audit which were noted in Section 3. 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.**
- 2.) **The Site should include a goal in their Corrective Action Plan to address the finding of non-compliance in the provision of services in both Part C and Part B and the timely submission of required data to the Department.**
- 3.) **The site needs to contact the CDS Business manager/CDS State Director to schedule a meeting to discuss Transportation services provided by the Search CDS site within 30 days of receipt of this report.**

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
Id Goscinski, Search CDS 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 Search CDS Part Survey Results