



**child
development
services**

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March 19, 2008

Will Burrow
Androscoggin County Child Development Services
Board of Directors Interim Chairperson
School Union #44
971 Gardiner Road
Sabattus, ME 04280

Dear Mr. Burrow:

The Androscoggin County Child Development Services has recently undergone an on-site monitoring process including an internal record audit and an on-site record audit.

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, and answering our 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 service provision to children in your service area.

1. The Process:

During the month of January 2008, program monitoring was conducted through an on-site visit to assess the Androscoggin County 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 Androscoggin County CDS site was based on the following activities:

- Review of State Entitlement plan
- Review of interviews received from staff, related service providers and the board of directors
- Review of last corrective action plan on file at the DOE
- Review of parent questionnaires
- Review of:
 - 14 Part C files
 - 19 Part B files

- Review of Androscoggin County CDS self-review plan
- Review of Internal Audit of:
 - 13 part C files
 - 32 Part B files

It is important to note that during the course of the monitoring process at the Androscoggin County CDS site, a change in site director leadership occurred as a result of actions taken by the Board of Directors. The Interview process took place after the site director had left and an interim site director was put in place.

2. Interviews:

Board of Directors:

The Board of Directors indicated they have concerns with the difficulty in recruiting new members to be on the Board, especially parents. They feel training needs to occur once new members are brought on board to understand the role of the board and provide some guidance as to the expectation of board members.

Staff:

The staff indicated during the interview process there were common concerns amongst them in the following areas:

- Lack of providers to provide services in the homes for children B-2 as well as in Least Restrictive Environments for children 3-5
 - The staff consistently reported concern with the direct impact this has on the large wait list children are placed on until an appropriate service provider can be found. *
 - The Part C staff indicated that since the site has been moving towards the Primary Service Provider Model, the availability of providers has improved.
- Lack of appropriate community settings and preschool programs within their area
- Training needs for providers to understand the requirements under Chapter 101, Maine Unified Special Education regulations
- High caseloads for case-managers impacting their ability to meet timelines and compliance
 - The caseloads indicated on the interview forms were 36-45, 50, 52, 68, 80, 95
- The ability to reimburse for travel for the providers impacts the service delivery for children
 - *Administrative Letter #4 addresses this concern. The letter is available on the internet at www.maine.gov/education/speced/cds*
- The staff also indicated they have concerns with the new job descriptions developed by the State IEU and the impact on continued employment with the site based on qualification requirements.

- They hope to see resources made available for course reimbursement in order to meet the job description requirements.
- The staff indicated concerns with their salary and the outcomes of current negotiations being conducted with their union and the state.

The staff indicated concerns that did not feel they could comment on the leadership of the site director given the current situation of an interim site director. Initial response to the leadership was noted to be positive.

** 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 Androscoggin CDS site from January 2007 through September of 2007:*

	01/07	02/07	03/07	04/07	05/07	06/07	07/07	08/07	09/07	Percent of Services Met in 9/07
B-2	0	0	14	16	16	23	27	14	17	90.08%
3-5	0	0	23	19	19	32	46	29	30	93.8%

For compliance, the site must meet 100% of the services needed for children identified in need of early intervention and special education. This area should be addressed in the site's corrective action as a finding of Non-Compliance.

Contracted Related Service Providers:

The contracted providers indicated concern with the inconsistency between case managers at IEP meetings. They reported differing levels of understanding of eligibility requirements and service delivery models between the case managers they attend meetings with for children.

They also felt concerned with the site's trust in the providers billing and evaluation methods. They feel there should be a stronger trust factor between them and the site when dealing with billing, evaluation findings and determination of level of services recommended. They would like stronger collaboration.

Lastly, they recognize the wait lists for children but need to find a way to financially balance, travel to the natural environments or least restrictive environments with direct services time with children they are able to provide within a clinic or office setting.

4. Record Audit:

An integral part of this process involved the participation of the Androscoggin County 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 Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP Meetings);
- Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) and Individual Education Plans (IEP);
- 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 not meeting compliance is identified as an area of concern and in Need of Corrective Action. 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 14 files on-site (a minimum of 10% of the part C files based on child-count) and 13 files internally, the following areas in Part C met compliance

In reviewing the compiled data, the following areas in Part C met compliance:

- Initial referral forms completed and on-file in each child's record
- Input from the IFSP team to determine evaluation needs
- Documentation of appropriate referrals for evaluations
- Use of a State approved evaluation tool as part of the initial evaluation process
- Development of the initial IFSP/IEP at the Early Childhood meeting and attaining parental voluntary consent for initial placement and provision of services.
- Documentation of copies of the minutes and IFSP / IEP provided to the parent within 21 days of the meeting
- The use of a variety of assessment tools and strategies during the evaluation and eligibility process
- Documentation of required members of the IFSP team present at Meetings.
- The use of the State Required IFSP as of 9/1/07
- The following areas of the IFSP met compliance:
 - Supports and services needed to achieve Outcomes including:
 - Specific supports and services
 - Setting
 - Method
 - Frequency
 - Intensity
 - Funding Source
 - Start and end dates
 - Other services(other services needed by the child but not entitled under Part C)
 - IFSP signature page with consent from parents for Early Intervention Services
 - Documentation of periodic review of the IFSP
 - Financial Resources listed on the IFSP
 - Primary Health Care Provider Approval

The following areas did not meet compliance:

- Prior written notice of the initial referral, initial placement and if the IFSP team proposes or refuses to initiate or change identification, evaluation, educational program and or placements was not documented
- Documentation of providing Parents with Procedural Rights and Safeguards
- Receipt of Consent for Initial Evaluation and any further evaluations determined necessary by the IFSP team. The forms were not dated by staff as well as the date of when the Parent signed was missing.
- Completion of evaluations and the Initial Early Childhood Team meeting held to determine eligibility for services within 45 days from the receipt of referral to the site.
- Documentation of IFSP meeting notices on file
- Team meeting notices sent out to parents at least seven days prior to the meeting.
- Documentation that copies of the evaluation reports were provided to the parent within reasonable time prior to the IFSP/ IEP meeting at which the evaluation was discussed.
- The use of the Child Outcome Summary form upon entry into services (within 30 days of identification) and upon exit from program if the child has been in services for 6 months or longer.
- The following areas of the IFSP did not meet compliance:
 - Documentation of:
 - Family Routines and Priorities
 - Present Abilities, strengths and needs:
 - Summary of relevant health status
 - Using Hand and Moving Body (gross and fine motor)
 - Playing, Thinking, Exploring (cognitive skills)
 - Expressing and Responding to feelings and interacting with others (Social and Emotional)
 - Eating, Dressing, and Toileting (Self-Help or Adaptive skills)
 - Evaluator's name, credentials, role/organization, signature and date
 - Team summary chart of five domains
 - Eligibility for Maine Part C Services with determination of eligibility (the staff was not checking off the box at the top of the form indicating eligibility on a consistent basis.)
 - Documentation of Child / Family Outcomes including:
 - Outcome statement
 - Short term objectives
 - Strategies
 - Progress
- Natural Environment Justification and documentation
- Early Intervention Services being provided in the child's natural environment
- All areas of the Transition Plan on the IFSP including:

- For children entering Part B at least 90 days before the child's third birthday
- Documenting steps to be taken to support transition to Part B or Kindergarten on the IFSP.
- Listing of Qualified Enrolled Provider or Licensed Contracted Provider on the services page instead of listing the specific discipline of the person responsible for the delivery of the service.

In reviewing 23 files on-site, the following areas in Part B met compliance:

- Documentation of Initial Referral
- Evidence of completion of screening
- Documentation of Appropriate Referrals for evaluations
- Development of the initial IEP within 30 days of the eligibility determination.
- Documentation of informed written consent to release information
- Use of a variety of assessment tools and strategies as part of the evaluation process
- The following areas of the IEP met compliance:
 - Consideration of the child's strengths
 - Consideration of the results of the most recent evaluations,
 - Consideration of assistive technology needs
 - Consideration of the academic, developmental and functional needs of the child.
 - Consideration of the communication needs of the child
 - Consideration of Special factors including behavioral needs, special instruction for the blind or visually impaired, and children with limited English Proficiency
 - Statement of the child's present level of performance
 - A statement of measurable annual goals
 - Statement of how the child's parents will be regularly informed of their child's progress toward their annual goals.
 - Specific special education services including frequency, and location of service delivery
 - Specific related services including frequency, person responsible for the delivery of services and location of service delivery
 - Date of initiation/ duration of services
 - Documentation of special education transportation needs

The following areas did not meet compliance:

- Documentation of providing Parents with Procedural Rights and Safeguards
- Prior Written notice of Initial referral for evaluations
- Evidence of input for the IFSP / IEP team to determine the evaluation needs of the child suspected of having a disability
- Receipt of Consent for Initial Evaluation and consent for any further evaluations determined by the IEP team. Documentation of form was found to be at 100% in the files but 30% of the forms did not document the date the parent signed the form nor when it was received by the site.

- Meeting the 60 day time line from the receipt of consent to evaluate to a meeting being held to determine eligibility for special education services.
- Prior Written Notice sent to the parents documenting the determinations of eligibility meeting with parental consent for placement into Special Education Services
- Parental Notice of the IEP meeting with at least seven days notice
- Documentation of providing copies of evaluation reports to the parent within a reasonable time prior to the meeting in which the evaluation is to be discussed.
- Documentation of copies of the minutes and IEP provided to the parent within 21 days of the meeting
- Written Notice if the IEU proposes or refuses to initiate or change identification, evaluation, educational program or placement.
- Required Members present at the IEP team meetings

- The following areas of the IEP did not meet compliance:
 - Consideration of the concerns of the parents for enhancing their child's education
 - How progress toward the annual goals will be measured
 - Specific discipline of the person responsible for the delivery of special education services
 - An explanation of the extent, if any, to which the child will not participate with non-disabled children in a educational program
 - Documentation of the need for supplemental aids and services and modifications or supports to the educational environment

Since September 1, 2007, the Androscoggin site has adopted the new state required special education forms and has undergone training on the appropriate use of the forms. In some areas, compliance has been increased dramatically through the implementation of the new forms and corrective action has already been demonstrated by the site director and staff in correcting areas of non-compliance. These areas are highlighted on the Child Record Audit forms.

5. Corrective Action Plan Development:

The Androscoggin County Child development services Self-review plan has been reviewed and it is apparent that the interim director and staff have recognized through the internal audit similar concerns found by the on-site monitoring team.

In summary:

- 1.) **The Site will have one year from the date of this report to correct all areas of non-compliance that did not meet compliance 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.**

- 2.) **The site must submit a plan to correct the finding of Non-Compliance in the area of Unmet Needs of services for the children identified in need of early intervention services and special education services within one year of this report. The corrective action plan must be submitted within 45 days of the receipt of this report to the Department of Education, Child Development Services Department.**

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 you included is extremely helpful in increasing our awareness of concerns and issues within your site so we can provide necessary technical assistance to you and your staff. Assistance in the development of the site's corrective action plan can be arranged through my office at the State Child Development office upon request.

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 the CDS monitoring team, 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 my team and the flexibility and cooperation afforded us 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
Debra Hannigan, State Director, Child Development Services
Marnie Mournault, Androscoggin County Child Development Services Interim Director

Enclosures:

Part C Child Record Audit Form Summary
Part B Child Record Audit Form Summary
Parent survey results