The Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia (ITCVA) action report series focuses on efforts underway to improve the long-term sustainability of Virginia’s Part C early intervention system. You’ve told us about the fiscal challenges and provider shortages you are facing on the local level. We hear you, we understand you, we appreciate your hard work, and we are working on your behalf every day to address these challenges. These are challenges we have faced and successfully addressed before in the ITCVA, and we can do it again by working together and focusing on actionable strategies to make improvements.

**Actions to address Medicaid managed care challenges:**

- The EI-MCO Workgroup that was convened by the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards (VACSB) met in November and will meet again on December 17th. During the November meeting, solutions to the following challenges/areas of confusion were finalized and confirmed by the MCOs and local system managers: ability of all MCOs to process claims with the Medicaid ID number instead of the MCO member number, when/how a child’s MCO would change, expectations of care coordinators in CCC-Plus, role that care coordinators can play in securing interpreters (with enough notice), keeping an up-to-date list of MCO contacts for EI for both CCC-Plus and Medallion-4 on the DMAS website and adding contacts for requesting interpreters. DMAS will create a chart that covers all of the process topics discussed through the VACSB workgroup with each MCO’s specific procedures detailed.
- DMAS reported a significant decrease in the number of clean claims not processed within the required 14-day timeline from September (144) to October (5).
- DMAS staff, an MCO representative and two local system managers have worked together to draft a template for the new roster process that will eliminate the need for local lead agencies to submit monthly rosters to each of the MCOs and will provide the information MCOs need to efficiently process claims. This is expected to be ready for implementation via Excel within a month or two and will eventually become an electronic database process.
- Based on requests from CCC-Plus care coordinators, DMAS will be doing an additional training on early intervention. Based on discussion at the November work group meeting, DMAS also will plan a webinar for CCC-Plus and Medallion-4 care coordinators on standard expectations for collaboration and communication with early intervention service coordinators.
- DMAS will be developing training for Part C local lead agencies on the DMAS QMR process.

**Actions to address provider shortages:**

- Representatives from Virginia’s Early Intervention Professional Development Team and ITCVA state office will be meeting in early December with representatives from New York to learn more about an academic partnership they’ve established between the state and city universities.
and the New York City Bureau of EI. The partnership addresses early intervention preparation in college and university OT, Speech, Special Education and Social Work programs.

- The Early Intervention Professional Development Team has added activities to their work plan to address the goal of growing our EI workforce. Planned activities include developing resource materials for local system managers and college/university faculty to share practices and strategies for workforce development and providing information to local system managers on ways to collaborate with faculty (e.g., how to connect with and promote EI in colleges/universities in your area, what’s needed in order to have a student in your EI program, etc.).

- The Early Intervention Professional Development Team recently held a Higher Education Faculty Institute to make faculty aware of available resources on the VEIPD website (and how to use those resources in their courses), provide updates on current EI initiatives in Virginia, and solicit input on what colleges and universities need from us. Participants represented 6 universities and 5 community colleges.

- Reflecting that the personnel issues we are facing in Virginia are common nationally, the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has identified “ensuring that states have the support necessary to attract, prepare and retain service providers and special education leaders” as one of its three focus areas for the coming year.

Actions to address broader fiscal picture:

- ITCVA is finalizing membership in the stakeholder work group that will explore new ways to organize Virginia’s service delivery system to maximize the use of available fiscal and personnel resources. We anticipate holding the first meeting of this work group in January.

- ITCVA submitted our annual report to the General Assembly last week. Each year, this report covers not only the required data on numbers served, services provided, revenue and expenditures but also the overall fiscal outlook for early intervention. All of the fiscal and personnel challenges that have been identified at the state and local level, including insufficient reimbursement rates, difficulties with the transition to Medicaid managed care, program growth that is outpacing funding growth, personnel shortages and increasing instances of non-compliance, are discussed in the report. This report will be posted shortly to the Supervision and Monitoring section of our website, www.infantva.org.

Bonus: Strategy to try at the local level

Consider how the use of Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants, Physical Therapy Assistants and Early Intervention Assistants can meet child and family needs, as well as system needs. If you have questions about how this can work or you’re interested in talking with a local system that has experience using assistants, please contact your Technical Assistance Consultant or Monitoring Consultant.

Have a strategy to recommend? Please send it to Kyla Patterson, k.patterson@dbhds.virginia.gov.