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. The series began in 2019 when many local systems were facing fiscal challenges and provider shortages. While the COVID-19 pandemic has mitigated these challenges in the short term, we are continuing to work on your behalf every day to address these issues for the long term. 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 convened by the Virginia Association of Community Services Boards (VACSB) is meeting quarterly. The work group held a training on Part C for MCO care coordinators on July 19, 2021. During the October meeting, the group focused on challenges securing interpreters through the MCOs. MCO representatives committed to reviewing their interpreter procedures, with an eye toward making those processes more user-friendly and effective.

Actions to address provider shortages:

- On August 27, 2021, the Department of Medical Assistance Services (DMAS) issued a notice that early intervention services are included in the telehealth supplement that was released on July 27, 2021. The supplement specifies policies for the permanent use of telehealth. These new policies offer an exciting opportunity to maximize the accessibility of early intervention, and we are grateful to our partners at DMAS.

- The October statewide Zoom meeting for local system managers included discussion about how using Early Intervention Assistants can benefit local systems and families by increasing and diversifying the available early intervention workforce. Three local system managers shared their experiences using Early Intervention Assistants.

- The EI/Preservice Consortium, which includes James Madison University, George Mason University, Old Dominion University and Virginia Commonwealth University, has compiled focus group feedback from local system managers on hosting students in early intervention placements. During the November statewide Zoom meeting for local system managers, this feedback will be shared and use of students in early intervention will be discussed.

Actions to address broader fiscal picture:

- At the end of the August 2021 meeting, the Infrastructure Work Group decided to pause its work until we can better evaluate the need for and direction of additional infrastructure work based on:
- Having the new statewide early intervention data system in place and understanding the ways in which it will streamline work and improve efficiencies; and
- Trying some shared service models with local systems who are interested in actually implementing a shared service approach for some component(s) of early intervention.

Virginia has received $5.1 million in one-time American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding for Part C. To ensure we can best meet both immediate and emerging needs over the period these funds are available, only a portion of the one-time ARPA funds will be allocated to local systems in state fiscal year (SFY) 2022. The funds have recently been released by the State, and this initial portion will be allocated to local systems soon. We will continue to examine data and solicit input from stakeholders in determining the most impactful use for the remaining ARPA funds.

State staff, consulting with subject matter experts as needed, are meeting multiple times per week with the vendor for our new statewide early intervention data system. Among many other features and functions, the new data system will support improved fiscal data and billing. The initial work to identify any missing data elements in the vendor’s off-the-shelf early intervention data system is nearing completion. Soon, stakeholders will have the opportunity to see demonstrations and provide input as sections of the system are customized for Virginia.