

New York Zero-to-Three Network

• fostering collaboration among those who work with babies, toddlers and their families •



FROM: NEW YORK ZERO-TO-THREE NETWORK
TO: PROVIDERS, PARENTS, ADVOCATES, FRIENDS
DATE: MARCH 13, 2009

Note: Please pass this message on to your colleagues and friends and professional groups.

Please take action this week to preserve vital services for babies. You can do it from your desktop.

We are asking you to take two minutes of your time to help save the Early Intervention (EI) Program in New York State. **Write a letter and sign our e-petition** (<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/Save-Early-Intervention-in-NYS>). We have only a week or two to act before the proposed changes by Governor Paterson could go into effect as the NYS budget is adopted in April, causing thousands of infants and toddlers and their families to lose services and providers. Please act now.

Currently, this program is universally available, confidential, and free to all children under age 3. Governor Paterson's recent budget proposal requires that parents pay a fee, based on income, to receive EI services. Based on experience in other states, we know that this will dramatically reduce the number of children receiving critical EI services. Other proposed changes to EI include requiring all providers to enroll in the Medicaid program; changing eligibility criteria for children who only receive speech therapy, which would exclude children with significant communication disorders; and establishing new provider fees and approval and re-approval rules.

A solid body of research confirms that the quality of children's earliest interactions and development can profoundly affect their later health, education success, and ultimately their role in society. We know that nearly 30 percent of developmental delays are not identified until school age, when they are more expensive and difficult to treat. EI is cost effective, efficient and based on solid scientific research. EI helps to prepare young children for school physically, socially, and emotionally, as well as helping to avert behavior problems. Enormous amounts of money and services are saved in the long run. Not only do EI services reduce special education costs but there are also significantly better outcomes in teenage and adult health, behavior, and productivity.

Passing costs on to individual parents will cost New York State more money in the long run. There is no question that families will decline services if fees are charged. This will have a major impact on middle class parents, those who cannot document income, families who are afraid or underserved due to personal or family immigration status, and families already burdened by disabilities.

Immediate action you can do from your desktop

- 1) Sign a petition to Governor Paterson protesting the imposition of fees on parents for Early Intervention services at: <http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/Save-Early-Intervention-in-NYS>
- 2) Call or write to your state legislators this week and urge them to oppose Governor Paterson's budget proposal to require parents to pay for Early Intervention included in the Health and Mental Hygiene budget legislation (Article VII bill, S. 58/ A. 158).
A number of organizations have sample letters you can sign or customize on their web sites:
 - Interagency Council of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities Agencies, Inc. (IAC)
 - [Parent letter on Early Intervention issues](#)
<capwiz.com/iacny/issues/alert/?alertid=12881536&type=ST&show_alert=1>
 - [Staff letter on Early Intervention issues](#)
<capwiz.com/iacny/issues/alert/?alertid=12881576>
 - New York Physical Therapy Association:
 - [Model Letters](http://www.nypta.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3752) www.nypta.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3752
 - [Find out who your legislators are](#)
<capwiz.com/amerpta/state/main/?state=NY>
 - NYS Speech-Language-Hearing Association:
 - [Letter to Legislators](#)
<www.nysslha.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3390>
 - [Find Your Legislator](#) <takeaction.asha.org/asha2/dbq/officials/>
 - To find your NY State Senator, go to www.senate.state.ny.us/senatehomepage.nsf/senators?OpenForm. Senate Switchboard (518) 455-2800
 - To find your NY Assembly Member, go to www.assembly.state.ny.us/mem/. Assembly Switchboard (518) 455-4100
- 3) Visit your local representatives' offices this week and distribute information about Early Intervention from organizations below.
- 4) Get the facts. Read the action briefs on preserving Early Intervention prepared by professional organizations:
 - New York Physical Therapy Association: State Budget Proposals Will Harm Early Intervention Program <www.nypta.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3283#ei>
 - [Governors proposed budget language](#)
<www.nypta.org/files/public/legislation/EI_budget_language.pdf>
 - NYS Speech-Language-Hearing Association:
 - [Memo in Opposition \(Feb 6, 2009\)](#)
<www.nysslha.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3389>

- [Talking Points](http://www.nysslha.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3391): Early Intervention Budget Proposal
<www.nysslha.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3391>
 - New York Zero-to-Three Network Action Brief: Oppose Parent Fees for Early Intervention <www.nyzerotothree.org>
 - Citizens' Committee for Children of New York
 - Testimony of Joan Siegel, Senior Policy Associate (Feb 2, 2009)
<www.cccnewyork.org/publications/CCCMentalHealthTestimony020209.pdf>
- 5) Read about the state proposal. See the testimony from Richard F. Daines, Commissioner, NY State Department of Health, that includes Early Intervention plans
<www.health.state.ny.us/commissioner/testimony/2009-02-02_budget_testimony.htm>

Take Action for the Longterm

Steps we can take together to make Early Intervention a key issue; please let us know if you want to help with these longterm goals:

- 1) Connect with concerned legislators, those involved with budget talks, those with a personal level of concern.
- 2) Connect with other advocacy groups.
- 3) Connect with lobbyists on EI, early childhood issues.
- 4) Convene with other groups and write a joint letter to the governor.
- 5) Convene with other groups and plan a joint public awareness campaign.

Please e-mail us if you are interested in working together on this issue.

Sincerely,

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