

**Michigan Interagency Coordinating Council (MICC)**  
**Early On Michigan**  
**(Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act)**  
**Thursday, May 22, 2025**  
**9:30 am – 12:00 pm**  
**Lake Michigan Room**  
**Michigan Library and Historical Center**  
**702 W. Kalamazoo Street**  
**Lansing, MI 48915**

**Minutes**

**Members Present:** Nerita Adams-Spillers, Kae Dubay, Lindsay Galicki, Nicole Hamp, Stephanie Hirschert-Walton, Beth Jenkins, Sophia Lafayette-Lause, Irma Lopez-Barajas, Salina Mann, Tami Mannes, Tori McIntosh, Amy Miilu, Lisa Perugi, LaShorage Shaffer, Cara Sutcliffe, Vicki Thomas

**Members Absent:** Monica Gaines, Nancy Green, Andrea LaFramboise, Susan Morningstar

**Alternates Present:** Jihan Young

**Staff Present:** Gina Birnbaum, Laura Goldthwait, Kelly Hurshe, Mark Kuipers, Cheryl Najm, Gillian Ogilvie, Barb Schinderle, Janet Timbs

**Grantees Present:** Clinton County RESA Office of Innovative Projects:  
Christy Callahan, Jen Champagne,  
Jenny Koenigsknecht  
Michigan Alliance for Families:  
Victoria Martinez  
Inter-tribal Council of Michigan:  
Amanda Rinna  
Wayne State University (Evaluation Project):  
Luna Xuan

**Guests:** Elizabeth Flores, Courtney Gupta, Beth Kennedy, E. Renae, Meghan Shepard, Thomas Welch

**Call to Order:** Chairperson Lisa Perugi called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**Introductions:** Introductions were made and everyone was welcomed.

**Approval of Minutes:**

**A motion was made by Jihan Young and supported by Salina Mann to approve the minutes.**

**Motion carried.**

## **Approval of Agenda:**

**A motion was made by Nikki Hamp and supported by Jihan Young to approve the agenda.**

**Motion carried.**

## **“Worth Mentioning”:**

A recommendation came from the Parent Involvement Committee to start each MICC meeting with an activity that keeps children and families at the heart of what we do, helps the MICC members, alternates, grantees and staff get to know each other better, and allows others to understand the different perspectives that make up the MICC.

Rather than only the parents sharing their story at the beginning of each Council meeting, this would allow everyone in the room a chance to share so that it isn't always the parents being the only ones who share and make themselves vulnerable.

At each MICC meeting, two people will share why the work they do in early intervention is a passion of theirs. They may also include something they've done recently that they are proud of, why they like being part of the MICC, and what brings them to the table.

Gina Birnbaum has served as an *Early On* Consultant with the Michigan Department of Lifelong Education, Advancement, and Potential (MiLEAP) for over a year. Before this role, she worked at the Michigan Department of Education in the Office of Special Education. Coming from a family deeply rooted in special education, including her parents and a grandparent, Gina jokes that although she explored other career paths, she was destined to follow in their footsteps.

Her journey in the field began in a center-based classroom in Saginaw, where she first met Janet Timbs. She also gained valuable experience working in a preschool classroom. It was through these early roles that Gina discovered her passion for supporting children with autism.

Gina's dedication to early intervention became even more personal when her second child was diagnosed with torticollis at 15 months and later identified as being on the autism spectrum. Today, her son is thriving in college, a success she attributes in part to the critical role early intervention played in his development.

## **Updates:**

### **State Systemic Improvement Plan (SSIP)**

The three workgroups have completed their recommendations to MiLEAP and drafted an action plan, based on activities generated during the Root Cause Analysis. Draft recommendations are:

- Offer Positive Solutions for Families Trainings.
- Disseminate micro-learnings following the completion of Pyramid Model, Parent-Child Interaction Observation (PCIO) trainings, and Positive Solutions for Families trainings.

- Offer advanced SE training as a continuation of the Pyramid Model and PCIO trainings.
- Explore approval of training hours for other disciplines.
- Reframe evaluations for Pyramid Model, PCIO, and future trainings, with a more quantitative approach to identify gaps in learning.
- Facilitate ongoing support and networking opportunities for service providers participating in SSIP cohorts.
- Identify strategies to enhance the utilization of child and family outcome data provided by Wayne State University (WSU).
- Partner with Bold Challenges grant researchers to create a summary statistic incorporating all six child outcome measurements and use it to guide TA and support strategies for intermediate school districts (ISDs).

The three workgroups met May 13, 2025, and approved the recommended strategies. The next steps are:

- The State-Level Activities group will reconvene to:
  - Add evaluation metrics to each activity
  - Estimate the implementation costs
- The revised action plan will be shared with all workgroups for additional feedback.

### Statewide Trainings

Pyramid Model trainings consist of five modules and will be offered twice in 2025.

Option 1: April 22, 29, and May 13, 19, 27 from 2:00-3:15 pm

Option 2: September 8, 15, 22, 29, and October 6 from 2:00-3:15 pm

The Parent Child Interaction Observation training will be offered September 9 from 9:30 am-12:00 pm.

### *Early On* System Update Meetings

The 2025 System Updates for *Early On* coordinators will be offered in-person in four locations across the state including Marquette Alger 5/28, Kent 6/3, Genessee 6/6, and Clare-Gladwin 6/17.

Topics for discussion include: MiLEAP and *Early On* Training and Technical Assistance (EOT&TA) updates, playgroups and natural environments, 1862 FTE calculation, data, and time for questions and answers.

Registration is available to *Early On* coordinators on [EOT&TA's website](#).

### **Michigan Alliance For Families Videos**

The Michigan Alliance for Families created six videos titled, "Making the Most of *Early On*" and the topics include:

1. [What is \*Early On\*?](#)
2. [Natural Environments](#)
3. [Parent to Parent Advice](#)
4. [Transition from \*Early On\*](#)
5. [Preschool](#)
6. [About Michigan Alliance for Families](#)

This collection of short videos is specifically created to help parents understand and navigate the supports and services available for infant and toddlers who have developmental delays and/or disabilities. Each topic includes closed captions in English, Spanish, and Arabic subtitles.

### **Michigan Division for Early Childhood (MiDEC) Conference**

The [MiDEC conference](#) will take place November 6-7, 2025, at Eastern Michigan University. This event brings together professionals, families, and students passionate about improving outcomes for young children with exceptional needs and their families. With engaging sessions, inspiring speakers, and opportunities to network with colleagues, the MiDEC conference is a chance to learn, share, and grow.

### **Early On Family Guidebook Revision**

A development committee is leading the revision of the *Early On* Family Guidebook to enhance content and design by incorporating updated information, resources, branding, and best practices. The goal is to ensure the guidebook more effectively supports and informs families of eligible children across Michigan.

### **Local Part C Determinations**

MiLEAP *Early On* issued local determinations on May 15, 2025, for each of the 56 ISDs. The U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) 34 CFR 303.700(a)(2), requires states to make determinations annually regarding the performance of each *Early On* Early Intervention System (local service area). States are required to use one of the four determination categories outlined in Part C of IDEA to evaluate each local service area:

- meets the requirements and purposes of Part C;
- needs assistance in implementing the requirements of Part C;
- needs intervention in implementing the requirements of Part C; or
- needs substantial intervention in implementing the requirements of Part C.

The data used to calculate each local service area's determination category include:

- State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report (SPP/APR) compliance indicator data as required by OSEP and aligned with the Michigan Part C of IDEA State Plan;
- Results indicator data completeness (matched entrance and exit ratings)
- correction of non-compliance/uncorrected non-compliance; and
- multiple years with a determination less than "meets requirements."

All but two ISDs received a determination of "meets requirements of Part C".

### **Part C Grant Submission**

Michigan Part C received its federal allocation for the upcoming fiscal year, which runs July 1, 2025, through June 30, 2026. This year, the funding remained flat; however, due to an increase in the census data, the allocation increased by \$126,318. The next step is for the *Early On* team to calculate and notify the 56 ISDs of their estimated allocations so they can start writing their grants for next year.

## **Mission, Vision, and Bylaws Ad Hoc Committee Update**

The Mission, Vision, and Bylaws Ad Hoc committee continues to convene regularly to develop recommendations for the mission and vision statements of *Early On* and the MICC. Once preliminary recommendations have been formulated, they will be shared with the field to solicit feedback. Revisions to the bylaws will also be undertaken; however, the committee's immediate priority is to establish the mission and vision statements.

## **Congratulations to Criss Hickey**

With heartfelt appreciation, we announce that Criss Hickey, IMH-E®, will retire from her role as early childhood intervention specialist at CCRESA Office of Innovative Projects on July 1, 2025.

Criss has been with CCRESA since 2002 and has supported *Early On* since its early days, serving in roles from parent representative to statewide trainer and technical assistance provider. She played a key role in developing and delivering professional learning, including leading the transformation of the IDA training and contributing to essential *Early On* resources and conferences.

Known for her expertise, clear communication, and deep commitment to families and young children, Criss leaves a lasting legacy. We thank her for her remarkable service and wish her a joyful retirement with her family.

## **Help Me Grow**

Courtney Gupta, project coordinator for Help Me Grow Michigan, provided an overview of the initiative, including its purpose, the Help Me Grow/Build Up pilot, and plans for its future. The goal is to connect all Michigan families with the resources they need by strengthening the system, identifying gaps, and ensuring families are matched with the best possible supports. As Courtney emphasized: *When you don't know, call Help Me Grow!*

The Help Me Grow process typically follows these steps:

1. An initial inquiry is made through an external referral, caregiver, or completion of an Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ).
2. A care coordinator reaches out to the family to discuss questions, concerns, and needed resources as well as share the results of the ASQ.
3. The care coordinator refers each family to local resources, dependent upon their needs.
4. If the ASQ raises concerns around the child's development, a referral is made to *Early On* or Build Up.
5. The care coordinator then follows up with each family to ensure contacts were made and families were connected with resources.

Eighty-five percent of Michigan's birth-five population now live in a Help Me Grow community, spanning 63 counties across the state. Through the pilot partnership with Build Up, Help Me Grow is expanding and with next year's final cohort, the hope is that Help Me Grow will be in every community statewide.

The Build Up/Help Me Grow pilot supports the identification of children ages 3-5. Benefits include:

- Free developmental screenings for children from birth through age 5
- A trained care coordinator to support families
- Access to [MiEarlyChildhood.org](https://www.miearlychildhood.org) platform for centralized intake of Build Up inquiries
- Marketing support for ASQ, Build Up, and Help Me Grow services
- Support in implementing Help Me Grow locally

The future of Help Me Grow Michigan includes:

- Cohort 3 - fall 2025
- Continue to promote referrals between Help Me Grow and *Early On/Build Up*
- Hone messaging
- Serve more families
- Utilize data for greater impact

### **Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (Lead K)**

Elizabeth Flores, program manager with [MDE Resource for Blind/Low Vision and Deaf/Hard of Hearing](#), shared information about LEAD-K legislation. Governor Whitmer signed [PA 256](#) into law in December 2022. The legislation includes a 15-member advisory committee and is very specific with regard to the roles. The advisory committee includes parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing along with advocates, educators, and other professionals. LEAD-K is for all deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) students, regardless of language or communication modality. The intent is to ensure that all children who are deaf or hard of hearing are well supported in building a full foundation of language during the critical period of language development.

Three main components of the law are:

- Develop a parent resource
  - A website will be launched by August 31, 2025, to allow parents to track and monitor their child’s language development and stages toward English literacy.
- Identify tools/assessments to be used by local school districts, ISDs, public school academies, and the Michigan School for the Deaf by September 1, 2025.
- Produce an annual report specific to language and literacy development of children who are DHH and are age 5 or younger as compared to their peers.
  - The first report is due July 1, 2026, and July 1 of each year thereafter.

There are language milestones for receptive and expressive language and pre-literacy goals.

The legislation also tasked the department with adopting existing tools or assessments to be used by local school districts, ISDs, public school academies, and the Michigan School for the Deaf to assess the language and literacy development of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing and is age 5 or younger. The LEAD-K Advisory Committee recommended ten assessments. The provider decides which assessment tool(s) to use with each family, based on the needs of the child.

The assessment is designed to track a child’s progress, not for eligibility.

### **Sharing Information From the Field**

Jihan Young shared that Kalamazoo hosted "A Party in the Park." This event was designed to encourage reading. Each child received a bag with snacks, a book, and miscellaneous items including information about *Early On* and Help Me Grow. It was funded through grants, donations, and the Kalamazoo literacy foundation.

Janet Timbs shared that the Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators (MAISA) is collaborating with *Early On* coordinators to explore the possibility of moving to a single-tiered eligibility system for *Early On*. Currently, Michigan uses a two-tiered system, making it the only state in the nation with this structure. The proposed shift would involve merging the existing eligibility criteria into one streamlined standard, which would require revisions to the Michigan Administrative Rules for Special Education (MARSE). While this idea has surfaced in the past, it is now being revisited with renewed focus. Janet emphasized that the MICC will have a voice in the process to ensure broad representation and input. The transition will take time, but the goal is to create a more consistent and equitable system for identifying and serving infants, toddlers, and their families.

### **Public Comment:**

None

### **Adjourn:**

**A motion to adjourn was made by Jihan Young.  
Motion carried.**

Individuals with disabilities may contact the MiLEAP ADA Coordinator to request an alternative format to these materials. Please visit [www.Michigan.gov/ADA](http://www.Michigan.gov/ADA) for a list of state ADA coordinators.