

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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## Maine Regional Discovery Forums

### Summary Report

11-22-19

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently in Maine, almost all three and four-year-old children receive services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through Child Development Services (CDS), though a small number of districts provide IDEA services for four-year-olds. Legislation Document (LD) 1715 proposes to move the provision of IDEA services for eligible children ages three through five to the school district of residence. In an effort to better understand the impact of moving services to the public schools, the Maine Department of Education asked the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) to conduct facilitated discussions across the state.

Regional meetings were held in seven locations across the state on September 16 – 19, 2019, providing an opportunity for district administrators and early childhood community partners to learn more about the proposal and to share their insights regarding what districts would need to have in place to serve preschoolers with disabilities. Discussions were facilitated around four broad areas the proposal would impact. The service delivery areas were Child Find, services and programs, personnel and funding. Participants were asked to discuss each area, providing details about the processes, challenges, including questions, and the identification of supports needed to implement the legislation.

While concerns were shared about the capacity to serve three-year-olds, many participants expressed a strong sentiment that providing IDEA services to four-year-old children could be achievable and would afford an opportunity for both districts and families. Schools could become community hubs, offering coordinated services for children and families in their communities. Services provided to preschool children with disabilities by school districts require thoughtful consideration and planning for Child Find, service delivery, funding, and availability of qualified personnel to ensure a successful transition from CDS.

#### Themes that emerged from the regional meetings are summarized below:

- **Funding:** A need was expressed for clarification of funding processes, the funding formula and provision of adequate funding for the initiative. Districts requested data on cost projections, timely distribution of funds, guidance on requirements for the use of funds, and most

importantly, clarification of MaineCare services, reimbursement processes, seed contributions, and assurances for the timely receipt of funds.

- **Rules and Regulations:** Districts will need clear guidance on federal and state regulations and requirements for serving preschool children with disabilities, including areas where flexibility exists. Specific issues requiring policy guidance exist around parent choice and services for children who attend programs out of district and the process for the determination of placement and service delivery. Collaboration between districts, Early Childhood Special Education Programs (Special Purpose Programs) and other community early childhood programs is critical to having coordinated and appropriate inclusive placement opportunities available across the state.
- **Child Find:** Concerns were expressed about the number of children being identified and accessing school services than are currently served by CDS and the processes and procedures for locating, evaluating, identifying and serving young children, particularly for children who transition from the CDS Birth to Three Program (Part C) in the summer months. Questions were also posed about how to plan for and provide services to children as they become eligible for preschool services, throughout the year.
- **Service Delivery Models and Programs:** It will be important during the transition to ensure the service delivery system offers inclusive placement options. In addition to the availability of public preschool programs, collaboration and partnerships between districts and existing community early childhood programs will be key. For some districts, the need to renovate or locate additional space for preschool children with disabilities will be part of their planning process during a transition. Districts will need to consider inclusive opportunities instead of creating separate, self-contained programs.
- **Facilities:** While variations exist with regard to appropriate space for preschoolers, many districts expressed the need for facility modifications and improvements to ensure developmentally appropriate, engaging, and safe indoor and outdoor environments. Access to additional funding was a key factor, as well as the need for community partnerships as sites for service delivery.
- **Personnel:** Recruitment and retention of qualified personnel was a significant issue expressed by many across the state. Policies around current certifications and availability of personnel with early childhood expertise will require consideration. In addition, collaboration with Institutes of Higher Education (IHE's) is needed to address critical shortages of personnel and to consider incentive programs for increasing the availability of qualified personnel for districts. Districts also reported the need for professional development, technical assistance, and access to best practice models before implementation.

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## PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

In closing the Discovery Forums, participants were asked to consider and answer the following question: “What are you most excited about should the 619 Services Plan go into effect?” The thoughtful responses capture the commitment of district administrators and other local and state participants when asked to consider transitioning services for young children with disabilities.

### Aroostook

- Serving young children within schools and districts was mentioned by each participant as an exciting prospect. Additional comments included: Providing quality services, working collaboratively with more districts, meeting children’s needs, being more in the ‘driver’s seat’, and having potential funding supports. Others expressed excitement knowing that concerns and ideas are being addressed and that supports and guidance will to be put into place by the state.

*Kids will be fed and warm, part of the community and have their learning and needs met earlier.*

### Cumberland and York

- Most participants mentioned their excitement about the opportunity to ensure high quality, consistent, equitable services for all children ages three through five. In addition, some districts mentioned better transitions, meeting behavioral needs, having qualified staff, and improved transportation options. Partnerships, collaboration, and creative ways to provide services were also shared. Several participants wrote of their excitement in being heard by the Department of Education, having lead-time to consider this change, getting answers to questions and access to national and state resources. A district commented that they have an established PreK program.

*I’m excited that having four-year-old’s in our schools would ensure that early childhood is recognized in public school.*

### Kennebec

- With adequate funding and personnel resources, there is excitement about delivering services to young children effectively and consistently. Many in this region liked the idea of having children in school and community environments earlier, allowing more children to receive quality, evidenced based services and supports with a continuity of programming. Getting to know families sooner and learning more about their children’s needs before they enter kindergarten will provide a sense of community. Others mentioned the potential for regionalization to expand programming and partnerships among communities and agencies.

*I started my career in the CDS systems and am excited to work with students 3-5 and serving students with special needs at that age level. I am a firm believer in the necessity of early interventions to reduce the need for services later.*

## Midcoast

- Many expressed their excitement about serving young children and ensuring all needs are met, including increased access to quality services in rural communities. Ideas were expressed that early intervention is important and partnerships between early intervention and K-12 would be fun and rewarding in sharing ideas, thoughts, and concerns for the benefit of children and their communities. Some districts expressed excitement that the plan makes sense and that it is important to dig deeper for what this may look like in action, with the caution that a very thoughtful plan needs to be in place for this to happen.

*I'm excited about increased partnerships and access to regional services for children with disabilities, (implementing) proactive, progressive thinking, and utilizing best practices from around the country.*

## Penquis and Bangor

- Almost every participant mentioned enthusiasm about having services for young children in place earlier. Some participants felt that some variables, including timely Child Find, the provision of quality services in local and community settings, seamless transitions, regional collaboration, and supportive relationships with children and families could enhance early intervention and potentially prevent some issues that may present themselves later. One district shared its excitement about already serving four-year-old children with disabilities.

*I'm excited about the potential for seamless transition from age three through five to K-12, and the possibility of quality effective services so that children can grow and develop into satisfied, productive, healthy people.*

## Washington and Hancock

- All participants mentioned being excited about the ability to serve four-year-olds before they turn five under the umbrella of the public schools. Participants were hopeful there would be access to adequate funding for programming and shared that they were optimistic their concerns were being heard by the state.

*With the support, funding, etc., we could ensure that children get the interventions they need that will help increase their access to education over time.*

## Western

- Serving children more quickly and having them 'be ours' within their own communities and having opportunities for creating community hubs was a common theme expressed by most participants. Enthusiasm was also expressed around having more knowledge of children before kindergarten and doing what's best for children, with greater collaboration, partnerships, and smoother transitions into school age services.

*I'm excited about the potential for better use of community resources to benefit ALL children through partnerships and collaborations.*

## MEETING PROCESS

Seven regional meetings occurred within one week in September 2019. Two of the seven meetings combined participants from more than one region (Cumberland/York and Washington/Hancock). Facilitators and state staff organized discussions following the same format for content and facilitation questions across all meetings.

Each group discussed the following four service delivery topical areas:

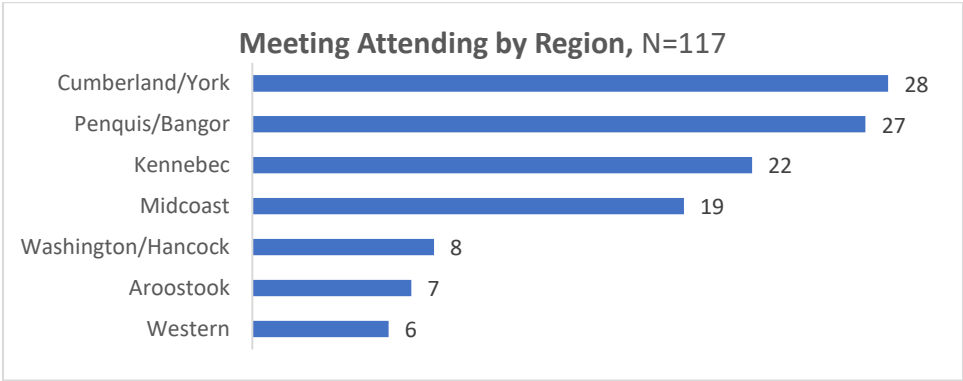
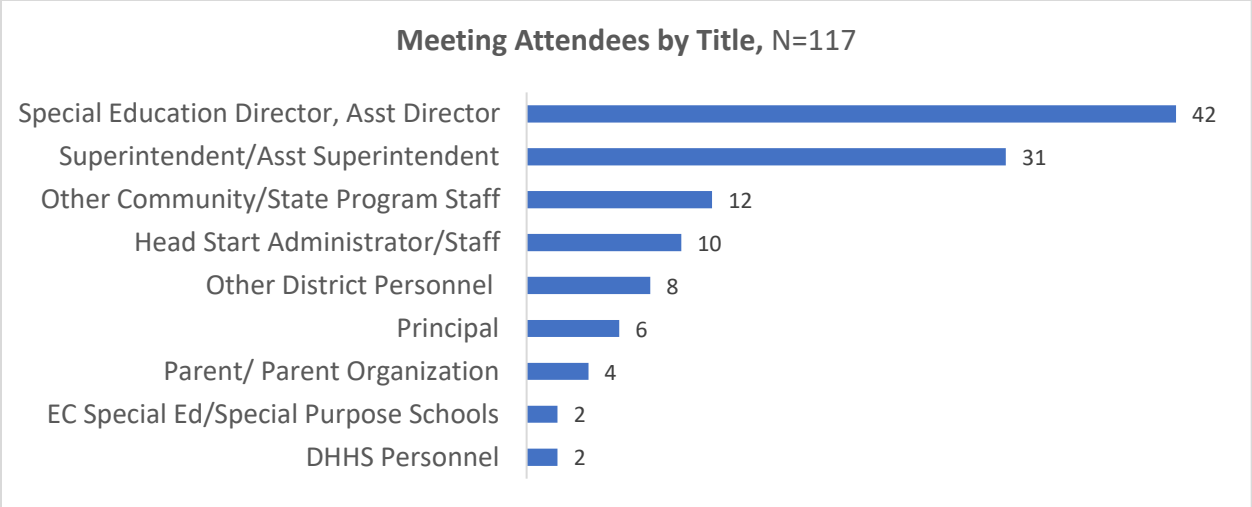
- Discussion One: Child Find, Transition and Children Served
- Discussion Two: Program Models, Facilities and LRE
- Discussion Three: Personnel
- Discussion Four: Funding

The discussion topics were determined from a review of four data sources about current and future services to preschool children in Maine. The authors reviewed two studies on preschool programs from 2015 and 2019, published by the Maine Education Policy Research Institute at the University of Maine. Data was considered from the results of two different surveys. One survey addressed the current service delivery system for preschool children with disabilities by CDS with school districts. The other survey was completed by MADSEC representatives. A thematic analysis of these surveys and the public preschool program studies influenced the selection of topics for the four discussion topics.

Notes of the four topical discussions were taken at each table, or in the case of smaller meetings, in one group. In addition to the discussion questions for each topic, participants were asked to record questions and identify needs for support. The discussion template used for all the regional meetings is contained in Appendix I. Participants discussed the topics at their tables, then were asked to share key information at the conclusion of each discussion. Key information was charted and organized by topical discussions. After all topics were covered, each participant was given two stars to highlight either specific comments on the chart paper or an entire discussion topic of most importance or highest significance to them. The Regional Summaries, beginning on page 12 of this report, contain the stars showing the participant prioritization of need and importance.

The participants of the meetings were primarily from school districts. The meetings were designed to gather input from district administrators such as superintendents, special education directors, principals and other types of school administrators. Additionally, efforts were made to invite parents and personnel from Head Start, Early Childhood Special Education Programs, and other community partners.





**DISCUSSION ANALYSIS**

During regional discussions, participants posed questions and requested supports such as guidance in all areas of the proposed rule, as well as with the special education regulations and processes that will be required to implement this rule. Questions, supports and guidance that were similar across regional conversations are summarized below:

**Proposed Legislation, Special Education Regulations and Data Capacity**

- Legislation:** If the legislation is passed, clear guidance on the timing of implementation will be needed, including which children to include, service delivery requirements, the role of CDS, and any flexibility during the phase in process. Legislative Document (LD) 512 calls for an independent review of the system to provide recommendations. Guidance will also need to include the phase-in process and the timeframe for implementation. Details will need to include the process for moving three through five-year-olds into districts and the responsibilities for CDS during this transition. In addition, specific requirements for implementation and any flexibility around timelines and waivers, particularly for small districts, will need to be provided. Districts



will require access to knowledgeable state-level technical assistance support as the process unfolds.

- **Special Education Regulations:** Maine Chapter 101, the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) will need to be clarified for districts to begin the planning process of providing IDEA services to young children. Districts will need strong policy integration and guidance, and specifics about allowable flexibility, in place before a transfer of responsibility for service provision is enacted. Key areas requiring thoughtful deliberation and clear guidance include the initial evaluation and eligibility determination timeline difference between the 'sixty calendar day' timeline used for three through five-year-olds and the forty-five school days timeline used for kindergarten through grade twelve, application of Response to Intervention (RTI), transition from CDS Part C, parent choice, parent refusal of service and out of district placements. There are questions about the applicability of regulations which Chapter 101 does not explicitly connect to preschool age children.
- **Data:** Preschool data is currently collected and housed in a system that is separate from the data system used by districts. Concerns were expressed about the possibility of having to use two separate data systems. Regardless of the system employed, guidance and training on collecting preschool data will be required. There is also a need for historical data, including census data, types of disabilities, level of need, frequency, intensity of services in least restrictive environments, children not in CDS receiving medical model services, and trends over time to determine how many children will be entering the system and the slots and resources needed. Having a unified data tracking system to document and track children would be helpful.

### Child Find, Children Served and Transition

- **Child Find:** It is anticipated that more children will access school services if the legislation passes. There will be a need for regulations and policies for a uniform referral process (Child Find, referral, screening, evaluation, timelines, families who are transient or homeless, parent refusal) based on current CDS Child Find processes, forms, and flyers. The development of a directory of current CDS partners was suggested. Training and guidance on requirements regarding the responsibilities for screening, assessment and eligibility processes are needed. Districts suggested funding for training, as well as for screening and assessment tools.
- **Rolling Enrollment:** Guidance and training is needed concerning the rolling enrollment of children identified for services throughout the school year, including strategies to deal with the complexity of how to address children exiting Part C services in the summer. Also, the timing of beginning services for children identified as eligible for Part B who have been served under Part C of the IDEA is different than for preschool children who did not participate in those services. Under the IDEA, children served in Part C, if identified as eligible for Part B, must begin services

at age three, regardless of the time of year. This process of rolling enrollment and determining corresponding resources was an area of common concern for many districts.

### **Programs, Service Delivery Models and Least Restrictive Environments (LRE):**

- **Service Delivery and Program Models:** Districts expressed questions about the differences between medical and educational service models, serving more children with challenging behaviors, and the possibility of a process for blending private early childhood special education programs (special purpose preschools) with district programs. Some districts in more rural areas recommended the use of regional service centers and wanted to explore options for regionalization of service, including a process for the centers to coordinate with community programs and existing developmental programs. Districts would like more information on inclusion requirements, guidance on the ratio of children with and without disabilities in inclusive classrooms and caseload requirements. In addition, questions were asked about the intersection of programs with the Preschool Development Grant, which is studying how to address early childhood capacity issues and the impact on Head Start and private providers. Requests for examples of best practice and national models were expressed.
- **Program Approval and Licensing:** Guidance will be needed on the regulations and requirements for the school program approval process and the degree to which child care licensing requirements may impact district preschool programs. Requirements regarding the age range of children that might be served in a single classroom needs clarification. Other information requested during the discussions included whether there would be state expectations for a required curriculum and expectations for indoor and outdoor learning environments.
- **Parent choice:** There is a perception that parents currently have more choice with CDS. Districts will need to have a clear understanding of the process for how placements are determined and who is responsible for IDEA services for children who access programs outside their home districts.
- **Out of District placements:** Clarification is needed on who is responsible and how to fund and serve children who attend early childhood programs or child care in other districts, such as child care where their parents work, or Head Start housed in another district. Often local districts won't transport outside their district.
- **Facilities and Space:** Districts requested guidance and support to locate, retrofit and/or create classrooms and space. There was a clear agreement about the importance of developmentally appropriate environments and materials, including appropriate and safe transportation services.

- **Partnership: and Collaboration:** Most participants agreed that it will be important to develop partnerships and agreements with community resources, as is currently happening in many districts across the state. Opportunities for partnerships exist with Head Start, child care, preschool programs, the YMCA and programs like. There is a need for alignment between agencies and the Department of Education on certification, credentialing, finger printing, and licensing. It would be helpful to have suggestions, templates, or other supports detailing how to begin planning with partners, a list of suggested collaborators, and time to meet for planning. Guidance was requested for ways to leverage partnerships by blending programs and braiding funds, though disparity in salaries of public-school personnel and private providers can make it difficult to blend programs. When partnering, guidance is needed on the processes and responsibility for ensuring quality of programs and staff, appropriate certification, evaluation and supervision of staff, district liability, and due process.

## Personnel

- **Staffing Needs and Personnel Shortages:** Many districts expressed concern about staffing issues and shortages of personnel. Recruitment and retention of qualified teachers, related service providers, and Ed Techs is difficult across the entire educational system, with rural areas more acutely impacted. Discussions recognized the differences of personnel requirements and systems for serving young children. Districts discussed the variety of staff needed to enact this initiative, including administrators, case managers, preschool coordinators, teachers, evaluators, Ed Techs, specialists, therapists, psychologists, Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), nutritionists, nurses, and clerical staff. Supports needed include clarification and guidance on the certification requirements for 282, policies, waivers, shared service, contracting, and consistent pay structures for services. Procedures and technical guidance will need to be provided for hiring or contracting with CDS staff, and certification translations. Differences between CDS and retirement systems were identified as an additional area of concern as current CDS employees do not participate in the State retirement system. Restructuring and hiring personnel from other systems will require considerations for school unions and districts within the Alternative Organizational Structures (AOSs).
- **Recruitment and Retention:** Questions were raised around the state's plan for building capacity to meet personnel needs across the state education system, and particularly for preschool. Ideas generated for recruitment and retention included shared and regionalized staff, training and certification initiatives, as well as incentives and loan forgiveness programs. Suggestions were made to publicize existing programs that pay off or forgive teacher loans, initiate, provide and fund personnel incentives and collaborate with Head Start and other programs that provide training dollars and opportunities for coursework. Additional suggestions were made to collaborate with community colleges and universities to produce more Speech language therapists, PreK and special education graduates, develop consistent certification requirements, and alternative routes to certification and recertification.

- **Professional Development and Technical Assistance:** Training and guidance for staff will need to occur before planning and implementation take place. It would be helpful if a professional development calendar could be established and available to all districts. Districts requested support and written guidance to develop a work plan, meet with directors from other states, and learn more about evidenced based practices and models.

## Funding

- **Funding and Specific Costs:** Districts will need specific information about how this initiative will be funded, how current CDS money will be reallocated and distributed to districts over time, and the responsibility and timeline for districts to assume funding. Additional personnel costs were anticipated Child Find, summer services, curriculum and materials, transportation, equipment, facilities, playgrounds, and food services. Funding formulas will need to consider more than child count. Formulas to fund preschool services should consider preschool children accessing services throughout the year, individual child needs, start-up costs, and support for the immediate provision of services. An increased weight for preschoolers in the EPS subsidy formula was suggested. There was discussion about renovation funds and how they would be available, allocated, and accessed for renovating facilities, playgrounds, and retrofitting busses. District leaders expressed the importance of timing decisions for funding to align with district budgeting processes, ideally one year out, but by December/January at the latest.
- **MaineCare:** Many districts expressed concern that MaineCare can be difficult to understand and access. This can lead to audits and districts reported a hesitancy to access MaineCare for reimbursement. Districts requested data on MaineCare actual costs for OT, PT, SLP and other services, compared to CDS reimbursement rates, and guidance on how these costs will be addressed in the future. Early Childhood Special Education Programs (Special Purpose Preschools) receive tuition and MaineCare. Many districts expressed a need to have more clarification on the seed cost to public schools. Most agreed, it will be critical to develop and share clear and consistent guidance on the expectations for billing MaineCare, along with simplified forms and joint professional development around billing.
- **Transportation:** This discussion centered on the rules, responsibility, adaptations, and funding for the transportation of preschoolers, including specific requirements and available funds for car seats, seat belts, harnesses, and bus monitors. In addition, districts requested guidance on the processes CDS and MaineCare have in place to broker other transportation resources, such as taxis or private vehicles.

## REGIONAL SUMMARIES

The following section contains the summary highlights for the seven regional meetings. These reflect a review of the final notes for each regional discussion and the priorities shared during each discussion summary. Stars indicate ideas or topical areas participants prioritized as important.

**Maine Regional Discovery Forums  
Summary Highlights  
Aroostook**

9-18-19

**Questions**

- ★ **Funding:** At what point will extra funding be pulled away?
- **Legislation:** Will the legislation dictate uniform service delivery, or will there be flexibility?
- **Personnel:** What will CDS look like during this transition?
- **Service Delivery:** What does Child Find and providing services for four-year-olds look like?

**Supports**

- **Training:** Training and guidance for staff before implementation will be needed.
- **Regulations:** Guidance will be needed on requirements for Child Find, rolling enrollment, newly referred children, age cut-offs, and what services should look like. Information on hiring personnel is important as there are different requirements (pay structures, retirement systems, etc.) depending on the school or agency. Guidance on transportation for preschoolers will be needed. Clarity about what the rules will be regarding allowable flexibility will be helpful.

**Discussion One: Child Find, Transition and Children Served**

- More children will access school services.

**Discussion Two: Program Models, Facilities and LRE**

- ★ ★ ★ **Services:** Children often need more services than can be provided.
- **Personnel:** Our staff and services will be more thinly spread as we will have fewer people working in more roles.
- **Service Delivery:** We have been using tele-therapy for speech language services, but it can be expensive. It requires an adult in the room with the child and seems more difficult for younger children to participate.
- **Collaboration:** It's important to collaborate and use community resources whenever possible. This approach reduces transitions and transportation needs. Head Start partnerships provide classrooms for children who need more services.
- **Other:** There are more challenging behaviors being seen in schools.

**Discussion Three: Personnel**

- ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **Recruitment and Retention:** Maine has a lack of providers throughout the entire education system, especially in rural areas. Availability of preschool teachers is limited. Encouraging the use of dual certification might help. More staff and training will be needed.
- ★ ★ **Ed Techs:** Certification programs with reasonable requirements are needed. There is turnover and need for support. More pay for Ed Techs. Ed Techs are now required to be offered year-round payment options. One course certification training for Behavioral Health Professionals and Ed Techs. Training is particularly needed for dealing with challenging behaviors.
- **Incentives:** There are programs in Maine to pay off teacher loans. Head Start provides training dollars and opportunities to anyone working with a Head Start child. Incentives in remote areas

are needed. Aware of companies offering free housing for staff. Funding for personnel incentives is needed.

- **Regulations:** Need for evaluation staff to meet the 45-day evaluation timeline. Head Start is required to screen children and make referrals.

**Discussion Four: Funding** ★★★★★★★★ **Overall Rating for Discussion**

- **Transportation:** There will be increased costs. Our busses are maxed out now. CDS is working with MaineCare on brokering transportation.
- ★ **Administrative Timelines:** Lead time to work on budgets would be helpful.
- ★ **Personnel Incentives:** Help with funding Incentives for Ed Techs and teachers in rural areas is needed.

**Maine Regional Discovery Forums**  
**Summary Highlights**  
**Cumberland and York**

9-19-19

**Questions**

- ★★★★★★★★★ **Funding:** How much does Maine Care pay for OT, PT, SLP, transition, etc., compared to CDS? What does DOE pay in seed money? Who takes on these costs in the future?
- ★★★★★★★★★ How will the CDS budget be reallocated to address public PreK needs? Is it only for the phase-in or for ongoing financial support? Is this really going to be revenue neutral?
- ★★★★★ **Responsibility:** If partnering, who is responsible for ensuring quality of programs and staff, certification, evaluation and supervision of staff, district liability and due process?
- ★★ **Regulations:** Will Chapter 124 include serving three-year-olds?
- ★ **Parent Choice:** Parents currently have more choice with CDS. Who is responsible for children who access programs outside their home towns? Is it school choice or an IEP and LRE decision? Are these parentally placed students? How does this relate to 101 regulations?
- **Referrals:** What are the current processes in CDS for Child Find, referral, and evaluation? Does a parent initiate the referral? What is the district response if parents do not want to engage?
- **Funding Formula:** What will the funding formula look like? EPS formula is more than child count. It includes facility and transportation costs. Create funding options to match placement/settings options.
- **Public Awareness:** How to get everyone to understand the needs of early childhood?
- **Data:** What are the federal reporting requirements and current data collection system? Will we be able to access that system?

**Supports**

- **Referrals:** Establish a protocol and guidance for the referral process based on current Child Find processes, forms, and flyers used by CDS, including a directory of partners.
- **Personnel:** Work with community colleges and universities on consistent certification requirements, alternative routes to certification and recertification credits and meeting the need for more PreK, EC and Special Education graduates. Create a SLP program similar to existing nursing programs available at various campuses. Create incentives and loan forgiveness programs.
- **Training and Guidance:** Will need criteria for what is considered to be a classroom setting. Bring in support and written guidance to develop a work plan. Bring in directors from other states and the Boston model to share successful processes.

**Discussion 1: Child Find, Transition and Children Served**

- ★★★ **Rolling Enrollment:** Need to address the complexity of how to address Part C children in the summer.
- ★ **Data:** Have a data tracking system to document and track SIS, sign-offs and other paperwork.



- ★ **Referral:** Universal PreK, if passed in legislation could assist with Child Find and referral processes. Partner with referral sources and systemize and align appropriate approaches to screening. Staff will be needed to process referrals.
- **Implementation:** Begin with four-year-olds and then work with three-year-olds.
- **Parents:** Need for access for families whose children are English language learners.
- **Community Partnerships:** Critical to have partnerships with child care providers, as well as parents and physicians.
- **Regulations:** Clarify eligibility criteria and definitions.

## Discussion 2: Program Models, Facilities and LRE

- ★ **Inclusion:** Districts without a public PreK program will have difficulty with inclusion.
- ★ **Curriculum:** Need for alignment of curriculum and standards.
- ★ **Facilities:** Consider building standards for playgrounds, bathrooms, fire code and buses.
- ★ **Partnerships:** Partner with Special Purpose Private Schools (SPPS) and Head Start. Develop partnerships and agreements with Early Childhood Special Education Programs (Special Purpose Programs), preschool programs and other agencies. Districts with space issues may need to partner more. Collaboration with SPPS and regionalization. Clarify the role of the SPPS. Disparity in salary of public-school personnel and private providers is a challenge.
- **Program Models:** Consider tele practice, home visiting, consultative models, and collaboration with child care.
- **Regulations:** Clarify responsibility for service provision and programming.

## Discussion 3: Personnel

- ★★ Union/Collective Bargaining Agreements and provision of services in the summer.
- ★ **Shortages:** Statewide work force crisis and shortages in state for Special Education services.
- ★ **Certification:** Need a preschool/PreK coordinator with a 079 certification for dual roles as the phase in progresses.
- **Benefits:** Clarification on retirement systems.
- **Recruitment:** Will need Board Certified Behavior Analyst services. Consider using Certified Occupational Therapy Assistants to provide services in collaboration with Occupational Therapists.
- **Other:** Can't take all CDS staff employees because CDS needs to continue functioning.

## Discussion 4: Funding

- ★★★★★★★★★★★★ **Funds:** Funds will be needed for transportation, retrofitting busses, administration, certification, curriculum costs, training, space renovation, building expansion, assessment tools, furniture, adaptive equipment, playground equipment and fencing. Incentives for start-up funds with rolling deadlines.
- **MaineCare:** Billing and the coding of medically necessary services. Staffing requirements.
- **Funding Formula:** Transportation services will require additional funding source based on formula. Establishing per pupil costs for the range of needs. Increase weight for preschoolers in the EPS subsidy formula.

**Maine Regional Discovery Forums**  
**Summary Highlights**  
**Kennebec Region**

9-17-19

**Questions**

- **Flexibility:** During the transition period, would there be flexibility to only be responsible for four-year-olds and older three-year-olds about to enter the public PreK program in the schools? What are the possible consequences of districts phasing in at different times based on local control?
- **Regulations:** Who is responsible for programming if a parent chooses a day care or school outside of where they live?
- **Certification:** What is the relationship between K-12 certification requirements and working with preschoolers? Can teachers with the 282 certification provide case management?
- **Personnel:** What is the state's plan for building capacity to recruit providers to meet the personnel needs? Are there any initiatives or a plan in place? Would a district be reimbursed for hiring preschool staff to be part of the comprehensive teachers' contract if there was a discrepancy in salary and reimbursement?
- **Training:** How will we be trained? What does it look in other states?
- **MaineCare:** Will we be mandated to use MaineCare as a funding source?

**Supports**

- **State Guidance:** Transportation guidelines for preschoolers. Clear guidelines from the state regarding space and how to access funding. Policies and regulations will be needed for Child Find and timelines.
- **Data:** The state could design and provide a state database with resources for programs. Districts will require data on types of disabilities and severity of children's developmental needs to determine how many slots might be required. Districts would like data on children identified and receiving medical model services that are not enrolled in CDS.
- **Certification:** Clarification of certification policies and guidance will be needed. Certification and training requirements for Child Find responsibilities will be useful.
- **Professional Development**

**Discussion One: Child Find, Transition and Children Served** ★ Overall Rating for Discussion

- **Regional Approaches:** Some districts found regionalization of providers as a viable option for service delivery. Ideas were shared for using smaller regional areas instead of current CDS map.
- **Partnerships:** Increased collaboration and outreach to existing providers was seen as important.
- **Personnel:** Districts indicated a need qualified staff and professional development.
- **Referrals:** A process for acknowledging receipt of referrals and providing summer services is important.
- **Data:** Technology needs were identified. There are currently differences in data systems used and possible integration of data systems was suggested. NEO and Synergy Streamline were mentioned.

**Discussion Two: Program Models, Facilities and LRE** ★★★★★★★★★★  
**Overall Rating for Discussion**

- **Facilities:** Expressed need for facilities and space. Build or renovate facilities for three-year-olds.
- **Partnerships:** Parent engagement is important. Support from KVCAP-Head Start for collaborative programming and support for sending students to programs. Building trust. Embed in-district consultation. Private early childhood special education programs will always be needed. Limited access to programs in rural areas and lack of partnerships is an issue. Geography affects access to programs.
- **Transportation**
- **Alignment of Requirements:** There is a need for alignment between agencies and Department of Education on certification, credentialing, finger printing, and licensing.
- **Other:** Need other types of information and staffing for programming.

**Discussion Three: Personnel** ★★★★★★★★★★ **Overall Rating for Discussion**

- ★ **Training:** Collaboration with higher education that will support new staff, existing teachers and therapists would be helpful. Technical assistance will be needed. We could bring in CDS staff.
- ★ **Specific Needs:** We will need personnel for Child Find, service provision and MaineCare funding. Increased personnel needs for clerical, administration and billing. Districts will need certified teachers (282b, 081), social workers, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, and speech, occupational and physical therapists.
- **Recruitment:** Providing free tuition at colleges for high-need positions. Districts could share staff.
- **Administrative:** Will need to update job descriptions.

**Discussion Four: Funding** ★★ **Overall Rating for Discussion**

- ★ **MaineCare:** Questions exist about using MaineCare. Districts will need to learn how to bill and be reimbursed.
- ★ **Guidance:** Clearly define covered costs. Districts need caseload regulations.
- **Funding Streams:** Understanding funding sources and how to access them is important. Funding sources can include ED 279, MaineCare, and Special Early Childhood Funding. Need information on the funding formula. Per pupil funding is affected by whether an educational or medical model is used. We will need clear information on the funding model. Understanding start-up costs.
- **Reimbursement:** Children present a range of symptoms and severity. We could look at a tiered reimbursement for children based on degree of severity, like the approach for children in foster care.
- **Facility Costs:** Renovation and capital investment need to be considered. Playgrounds will need to be fitted for preschoolers and safety considerations. Materials and supplies will be needed.
- **Transportations:** Travel and child transportation costs. We will need to adapt and buy car seats.
- **Start-up Costs:** There will be a need to hire additional staff and other start-up costs for serving more four-year-olds and three-year-olds.

**Maine Regional Discovery Forums  
Summary Highlights  
Midcoast**

9-17-19

**Questions**

- ★ **Training:** Why don't we learn from the states doing this well?
- **State Requirements and Regulations:** What are other state regulations on rolling enrollment? How much flexibility will we have in implementation timelines and waivers? What about space regulations such as requirements for bathrooms and playgrounds? Will school programs need to comply with child care licensing requirements? Will the Department of Education require a curriculum? Will transportation require car seats, seat belts and harnesses?
- **Service Delivery Models:** What are we being asked to do? Provide medical services or an education and curriculum? For all children or only for children with IEPs? What should adult child ratios in classroom look like? Can three and four-year-old children be served together?
- **Personnel:** How will we increase the number of service providers in Maine? Can an Education Service Center hire personnel?
- **Governance:** What is the impact of districts within Alternative Organizational Structures (AOS) and school unions? Are superintendent agreements being considered? What options are there for regionalization of efforts? Will there be a process for blending private special purpose school programs with district schools?
- **Funding:** Where is the funding?
- **Other:** How does this intersect with the Preschool Development Grant?

**Supports**

- ★★★ **Training:** We will need training and should take advantage of current expertise. It would be useful to know about best practices from rural states.
- **Guidance:** We need a definition of inclusion. Guidance would be helpful on the ratio of non-special education students to special education students. Transportation guidelines would be helpful.
- **Regulations:** Guidance on assessment, identification and eligibility requirements will be needed.
- **Funding:** Schools are struggling with current obligations. Years ago, our CDS system was fully funded and produced results. Consider going back to funding levels that made it possible for current experts to do the work. Clear guidance and assurance of follow through on funding promises.
- **Partnerships:** Opportunities for community partnerships with libraries, private child care or preschools. Consider using home education services.
- **Program Strategies:** Existing CDS sites remain during the transition. We could operate two year PreK programs with rolling enrollment. We should consider how to use Regional Service Centers. Flexibility for small districts is important.

**Discussion One: Child Find, Transition, and Children Served**

- ★★★★★ **Partnerships:** Partnerships will be needed for the transition.

- **Guidance:** Define the ratio of children with and without disabilities in an inclusive program.
- **Rolling Enrollment:** We need to understand the impact on budgeting and having adequate staffing. We would like to know how other states do this.
- **Service Delivery Models:** Consider regionalization of efforts.
- **Referral Sources:** We will need to interface with doctors and other referral entities.

**Discussion Two: Programs Models, Facilities and LRE ★★ Overall Rating for Discussion**

- **Partnerships:** Consider existing partners. Partnerships will be important as compared to other types of models. Providing a training or find a way to share on how partnerships came about.
- **Service Delivery Models:** Appropriateness of mixed age groupings for three- and four-year-olds.
- **Data:** We will need meaningful, reliable data. We could integrate data systems to know partners in a region.

**Discussion Three: Personnel: ★★★★★ Overall Rating for Discussion**

- ★ **Certification:** Certification is a barrier. We need to build the capacity of universities and regions to increase early childhood special education personnel. Certification is needed for staff. We could consider using specific certifications for a teacher or coordinator. Certification 282B is an option or we could use the general education certification 081. What about the possibility of teachers functioning as case managers?
- ★ **Recruitment:** Incentives are needed to hire personnel. CDS and local districts find it equally difficult.
- ★ **Data:** Planning for staffing needs is challenging with a lack of data.
- ★ **Specific Costs:** Lack of personnel, funding for non-billable services, certification, LRE, determining frequency and intensity and the need for personnel to know that aspect of intervention.
- **Shortages:** We will need speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists, observations, Board Certified Behavior Analysts, drivers, and parent trainings.

**Discussion Four – Funding: ★★★★★★ Overall Rating for Discussion**

- ★ **Facilities:** Renovations will be needed for classrooms and playgrounds. Expenses will include fences, adaptive equipment, furniture, clothing, diapers, gloves, and supplies. Safety considerations will be important in play areas.
- ★ **Transportation:** Vans to meet transportation needs. Transportation of staff for windshield time.
- ★ **Guidance:** We need a clear definition of “costs”. Remember 55%. Match Head Start and early childhood policies so they are not competing against one another.
- ★ **MaineCare:** Cost of MaineCare. Billing and associated costs of being a MaineCare provider need to be considered as well as seed costs.
- ★ **Professional Development:** Trainings and models for phasing in preschoolers. Evaluations and professional development.
- ★ **Additional start-up costs.**

**Maine Regional Discovery Forums**  
**Summary Highlights**  
**Penquis and Bangor**

9-18-19

**Questions**

- ★ **Timeline for Implementation:** What is the timeline for implementing the proposed change?
- **Regulations:** Is the “60 calendar day” timeline a federal requirement or can it be changed to “45 school days”, as used by K-12? What changes might be needed in Chapter 101? What about the regulations for childcare and licensing? How might licensing affect us? What is the timing for rule making, if passed? Who is responsible for transportation and how will it work? If parents of school-age students refuse special education services, the school provides response to intervention (RTI). What happens if a parent refuses CDS services?
- **Funding:** What about MaineCare regulations? How will this be funded? What about the seed money cost to public schools which is currently 38%?
- **Data:** What services and providers are available in a regional area? What are other states doing? What is the historical data on serving this population?
- **Training:** Is there a template and information on best practices we could use?

**Supports Needed:**

- ★ **Regulations:** Information about requirements on the use of Regional Service Centers would be helpful. Knowing what changes will be made to Chapter 101, in the Maine Unified Special Education Regulations (MUSER) prior to planning. Rules and guidelines for transportation of preschoolers will be needed.
- **Training:** Funding and training for the referral process and screening tools. Access to knowledgeable state level technical assistance support as the process unfolds. Having a professional development calendar set up in advance will help. Training is needed now, so we can begin to get ready and have conversations with parents, school boards and other districts.
- **Data:** Historical data is needed. Census data and trends will be informative for determining the need for slots.

**Discussion One: Child Find, Transition, and Children Served ★★★★★ Overall rating for discussion**

- ★ **Regionalization:** Regional programs and Regional Service Centers could be used.
- ★ **Child Find:** It will be important to use uniform screening procedures statewide.
- ★ **Funding:** Determining the fiscal responsibility for case management will be important if parents take their child to another town.
- **Regulations:** there are differences in timelines for initial evaluations (60 calendar days versus 45 school days) and the approach to enrollment (open enrollment versus rolling enrollment). We need to understand the eligibility determination and evaluation practices for three-year-olds. We could take the processes we use for kindergarten transition and use them for the preschool transition from CDS to public schools.
- **Data:** Tracking transient children will be an issue.

## Discussion Two: Program Models, Facilities and LRE

- ★★ **Program Approval:** A Department of Education program approval system for early childhood developmental programs would be needed. CDS and Department of Education program approval process could be used statewide.
- ★★ **Regional Centers:** Many schools do not have the capacity in terms of time, staff, and space to do it alone.
- ★ **PreK Slots:** We could include 20% slots reserved in PreK for children with disabilities.
  - **Service Delivery Models:** We could use a non-traditional model instead of a traditional classroom approach with a heavy parental support and involvement approach. The approach to service delivery is not clear. Do we provide school services on-site or case management and access to services in the home?
  - **Partnerships:** We need to be connected to stakeholders and partners to serve this population effectively. Districts could partner with the YMCA, UCP, Head Start, child care and local nursery schools. Slots could be purchased. Regional Service Centers could coordinate with community programs and existing developmental programs.
  - **Transportation:** There are transportation approaches to consider such as a school bus, a taxi or in a private vehicle.
  - **Facilities:** Schools will need space and equipment.

## Discussion Three: Personnel ★★★★★ Overall rating for discussion

- ★ **Staffing:** A variety of staff are needed including administrators, preschool coordinators, teachers, Ed Techs, specialists, therapists, nutritionists, nurses, and clerical.
- ★ **Shortages:** There are shortage of staff in rural areas.
  - **Certification:** We need to look at staff credentials and certifications 282b and 282e.
  - **Recruitment and Retention:** Options for recruiting and supporting staff might include teleservice training, use of teleservice providers, building career pathways and encouraging future personnel from within. Training will be needed. State support will be important for expansion of Speech, Language and Pathology and Special Education programs and increased enrollment opportunities in universities.

## Discussion Four – Funding ★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★★ Overall rating for discussion

- ★★ **Billing Capacity**
- ★★ **Program Cost:** Knowing the real cost for real needs.
  - **Specific Costs:** Same expenses as for school age students, but districts will need training, equipment and resources specifically for preschoolers. Costs for transportation, facilities, personnel, food services, curriculum, and playgrounds will occur.
  - **Funding:** It will be important to know and understand the funding sources, the funding formula, timing, adjustments in school funding that consider unanticipated move-ins, billing processes, support for immediate services, and out of district tuition.



**Maine Regional Discovery Forum  
Summary Highlights  
Washington and Hancock**

9-17-19

**Questions**

- **Services for Three Year Olds:** Is serving preschoolers a stepping stone to districts serving children ages, birth to three? Would CDS continue serving three-year-olds? Head Start is providing services to three-year-olds. How can we blend money for serving three-year-olds?
- **Regulations:** What are the eligibility criteria for serving children ages three through five?
- **Rolling Enrollment:** What does the timeline look like for rolling enrollment?
- **Service Delivery Model:** What are the costs and logistics of serving children where they are?

**Supports**

- **Communication and Coordination:** We will need ongoing two-way communication and support. We would like direct contact with directors and have meetings within our regions. It is very important to do what is right for children.
- **Training:** Would like professional development around these changes.
- **Regulations:** Clear guidance will be needed on the responsibility for services to children in Birth to Three Services and preschool children.
- **MaineCare:** Guidance on billing Maine Care is needed, including streamlined joint training and forms for using MaineCare. It will be useful to receive guidance on changing expectations.
- **Personnel:** Need a retention plan for staff. There are issues in finding staff.

**Discussion One: Child Find, Transition and Children Served**

- ★ **Serving Four-year-olds:** Having four-year-olds could be manageable. We do want to serve four-year-olds, though not all districts have four-year-old programs.
- **Partnerships:** We have partners like Head Start who can help locate children.
- **Data:** We could use more data. The data doesn't show the whole picture.
- **Service Delivery Models:** We are seeing huge increases in mental health issues and younger children with higher needs. We have a medical model, if we change to school-based services, more children will come.
- **Regulations:** Need to better understand the time-line for rolling enrollment. Need to know if districts would use a 45 school day or 60 calendar day timeline for initial evaluation requirement.

**Discussion Two: Program Models, Facilities and LRE** ★★ **Overall Rating for the Discussion**

- ★ Children currently in child care could be served there.
- Most districts in this region are serving four-year-olds.

### Discussion Three: Personnel

- ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ **Personnel Shortages:** We have a lack of providers for CDS, and to serve children, ages, three through five, and students, aged, six to twenty-one. The problem is significant across all grades. Personnel are needed to provide evaluations. Staffing supports for children who are younger will be needed.
- **Certification:** it would be helpful if we could use K-8 certification add-ons that are reasonable, timely and affordable. We need a transition period for building capacity as people work towards getting new certifications.

### Discussion Four: Funding

- ★ **Funding Sources:** Four-year-old expansion dollars for extra room and space will be needed. Contingency funds for planning, especially for three-year-olds will be important. We are not billing MaineCare as it's too difficult.
- ★ **Guidance:** Need information on the timing for decisions and guidance around district budgeting process. This would be ideal if one year out or by December/January at the latest.
- **Transportation:** There are issues around transportation for four-year-olds and driver's companions. One person took a three-day course on installing car seats.
- ★ **Facility Renovations:** Facility upgrades need to be a priority in the renovation fund. More money will be needed in the renovation fund.
- ★ **Collaboration:** Outside placements are a huge expense. Sharing teacher pay and benefits with Head Start is an option.

**Maine Regional Discovery Forums**  
**Summary Highlights**  
**Western Region**

9-16-19

**Questions**

- ★ ★ **Enrollment:** How to plan for rolling enrollment? What is the process for enrolling preschoolers into districts?
- ★ **Funding:** How will Medicaid be billed? Will we use two systems? Will out of district placement costs be reimbursed or paid up front? How does MaineCare work? Will seed money be an issue?
- ★ **Transportation:** Transportation for homeless. What guidance will there be for preschoolers?
  - **Child Find and Referral:** Would laws have to change for public schools to take on early childhood referrals? Could the current system align to the current public school system? What does systematic Child Find look like? How do referrals come into the system? Should parents call school districts to start the process?
  - **Service Delivery Models:** How to deal with children who attend early childhood programs or child care in other districts, such as child care where their parents work, or a Head Start in another district? Often local districts won't transport outside their district.
  - **Program Approval:** What is the approval process for public school preschool classrooms?
  - **Facility Space:** What supports will be in place to renovate or build space connected to local districts? Might there be space in other places? How do we create space?
- ★ **Personnel:** What happens if staff cannot be hired? Certification (282) and waivers needed. Will CDS staff transition to public schools? If CDS staff are hired by the school system, will they be under the contract process?
- **Community Partnerships:** What is the impact on Head Start and private providers if the responsibility for preschool programs falls to the public schools?

**Supports**

- ★★ **Collaboration:** Need resources on partnering with others. List of suggested collaborators and time to meet with collaborators.
  - **Policy Guidance:** Strong policy integration and clear policy guidance, including national service models, and Medicaid clarification.
  - **Personnel Guidance:** Guidelines and technical information around hiring personnel. Guidance about providers and CDS staff remaining outside of state retirement system is needed.
  - **Funding:** More information on how money will be distributed over time, and responsibility of districts to take over funding.

**Discussion One: Child Find, Transition and Children Served**

- **Referral Sources:** Referrals sources for schools could be parents, doctors, providers, case managers and outside sources. RSU 10 has a CDS case manager stationed in one of their towns who takes in referrals. Head Start, CDS, and PreK would work with local schools.

- **Referral Process:** Districts currently receive IEP's for preschool students transitioning from CDS by December 1. A phase-in would need to occur. Schools would need to understand the referral process. CDS regions are broad. Empowering local school districts could streamline the process. Students may get referred to distant locations. Serving students in their own district benefits and supports parents and would minimize going great distances for services.
- **Service Delivery Model:** Medical model versus an educational model needs to be discussed. Some families won't use CDS services, which is their choice.

#### Discussion Two: Program Models, Facilities and LRE

- **Regulations:** Difference exist in systems and evaluation timelines between Part C and Part B.
- **Service Delivery Options:** Having districts serve preschoolers could be an opportunity. The district can serve as a "hub" for services and provide a network with local providers. Flexibility for how you serve students. A regional program could work.
- **Capacity:** Funding would be key. Space is a concern. Some districts have the capacity to provide services, but others do not have enough K-12 personnel.
- **Partnerships and Slots:** If slots are full, how do we determine services or how to expand? Programs exist beyond districts. Partnerships and collaboration are key. For example: Androscoggin Head Start, Lewiston/Auburn and Livermore Falls and CDS partner, Rumford Head Start serving children in the school system. Districts could pay for a number of "seats", while Head Start and CDS could pay for other "seats." Transportation is critical to getting students to programs.

#### Discussion Three: Personnel

- ★ **Personnel Needs:** Case managers, therapists, psychologists, evaluation staff, school nurses and classroom teacher(s) for a three-year-old program, special education director for preschoolers, early childhood services or public PreK coordinator, Extended School Year (ESY) staffing and costs.

#### Discussion Four – Funding

- ★★★ **Program Costs:** Dedicated funds for preschool and 100% full funding is important. Need to fund the true cost of services.
- ★ **Alignment:** Aligning how the money will follow children. The process needs to align district timelines and budget planning which usually begins in December/January.
- ★ **MaineCare -** Schools may not want to bill MaineCare due to issues and audits. Agencies can bill 100% to MaineCare. Schools pay 35% in seed money. Guidance on Early Childhood Special Education Programs (special purpose preschool) tuition and MaineCare funds.
- ★ **Funding Considerations:** Determine the elements that would go into a funding formula for preschoolers. More students means more money will be needed. No reduction in ED 279 to help pay for this initiative (shifting of funds). Need dedicated funding source. Costs include space renovations, services, transportation, start-up costs, due process fees, and facilities. Would need to provide information to prepare School Boards for this change.

## **Appendix I**

### **Regional 619 Transition Discovery Forum Discussion Form Template**

## Regional 619 Transition Discovery Forum

### Discussion Notes

**Note takers:** Please capture key thoughts, bulleted phrases are fine. Thank you!

Region or Location: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Discussion 1. Child Find, Transition, and Children Served

1. Where will referrals come from now and long term?
  - For Example: Who are your current and future partners? Part C three-year-old, health departments, families, community partners. How might you collaborate with your partners to facilitate referrals?
2. Rolling enrollment –How will you anticipate your response to that? Summer birthdays
3. How do you anticipate phasing in services to the children in your region?
  - For Example: Are you planning on serving both threes and fours? Approximately how many three and/or four-year old children might be served in the first year?
4. What questions do you need to have answered to continue planning?
5. What supports do you need to plan for serving preschoolers during a phase in?

## Discussion 2. Models, Programs, Facilities and LRE

1. How are you intending on integrating children with disabilities in existing programs?
  - For example, how will you create inclusive classrooms? How many slots would you anticipate needing?
  
2. Who will your partners be for providing classroom slots for children with disabilities in community or existing programs?
  - Consider Public preschool, Head Start, community programs, private preschool and child care?
  
3. How do anticipate private early childhood special education programs and services be accessed?
  
4. What questions do you need to have answered to continue planning?
  
5. What supports do you need to plan for serving preschoolers during a phase in?

## Discussion 3. Personnel

1. What kinds of staff do you anticipate needing?
  - For Example, who might you consider using – CDS staff, existing staff, shared staff, new staff, contracted providers?
  
2. How many staff do you anticipate needing?
  - Consider specialized staff such as Speech, OT, PT, evaluation staff?
  
3. What questions do you need to have answered to continue planning?
  
4. What supports do you need to plan for serving preschoolers during a phase in?



## Discussion 4. Funding

1. What potential expenses can you envision in moving forward with serving preschool children?
  - Consider existing public preschool, private community programs such as Head Start, Child Care, Special Purpose Private Schools;
  - Transportation; facilities, etc.
  
2. What questions do you need to have answered to continue planning?
  
3. What supports do you need to plan for serving preschoolers during a phase in?