Memorandum of Support

Reimbursement Adequacy for Early Intervention Services

The New York State Occupational Therapy Association asks the legislature to add to the budget an 11% increase in Early Intervention reimbursement rates.

Early Intervention reimbursement rates as a whole have not been raised since the 1990s. Indeed, rates were cut twice under the previous administration for a total of a 15% reduction. In recent years the rate was restored by 5%. However, that leaves a cut of 10% rather than an adjusted increase over the years.

Individual providers and provider agencies have been steadily decreasing their participation in the program because they cannot afford to keep providing the services at the State's payment rates.

Indeed, recently the Department of Health Bureau of Early Intervention released an email in search of new practitioners.

The state-wide early intervention coordinating council after reviewing their payment rate methodology has recommended an increase of 11%.

Inadequate reimbursement has driven many occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants to either leave or reduce their participation in the early intervention program. In turn, this has led to greater problems in accessing occupational therapy services for children with disabilities or delays in development.

Improved payment rates would address this problem, it would attract more therapists to participate in the program which would go a long way toward helping children get the services they need at a critical time in their development.

The resultant financial hardship on providers has caused many to either stop or reduce accepting new early intervention cases.
Occupational therapy in Early Intervention is based on the belief that purposeful activity, or occupation, may be used to generate adaptive skills of children with developmental dysfunction. Developmental activities such as feeding, movement, play, and interaction with others are the primary occupation of infants and young children. By using the intrinsic motivation inherent in play and purposeful activities, occupational therapy helps the child to acquire an increasing repertoire of developmental skills and coping behavior patterns. Intervention promotes sensory-motor, psychosocial, and cognitive functions and may prevent disability or decrease dysfunction in order for the child to meet personal needs and adapt to the demands of the environment. Occupational therapy also facilitates the occupational performance of parents in coping effectively with the challenges of care giving and family life.

NYSOTA urges the Assembly and the Senate to include an 11% increase in early intervention reimbursement rates in their one-house bills. Early intervention providers need improved payment so that they may return to their responsibility of caring for vulnerable children in our state.