

Talking Points

Reimbursement Adequacy for Early Intervention Services

I would like to talk to you about adding an 11% increase in Early Intervention reimbursement rates to the state budget.

The executive budget has proposed a 5% increase and an additional 4% for treating children in underserved areas.

I am asking for 11% plus the 4% for underserved areas.

Early Intervention reimbursement rates were cut twice under the previous administration for a total of a 15% reduction. In recent years, the rate was restored by 5% and 1%. However, that leaves a cut of 9%. And nothing that has kept up with the cost of living over more than 43 years.

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

For years, 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.

According to a report in February 2023 by the State Comptroller, over 3 thousand children are getting no services. Over 40 thousand children are not receiving all the services that federal law says they are entitled to.

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.

We know that the 11% increase did not make it into the final budget at the end of negotiations last year. Please fight for it this year.