



**Washington State Interagency Coordinating Council  
February 2025 Quarterly Meeting  
State Lead Agency Report**

**ACORN Readiness Assessment Team Formed**



An 8-member, statewide ACORN Readiness Assessment Team (A-RAT) has been formed to (a) advise the ESIT State Administrator on all aspects of systemic and human “readiness” for the Go-Live Launch, (b) strengthen a sense of shared accountability and responsibility for ACORN readiness across state, regional, county, and local leadership and (c) ensure successful data migration and cut-over to the new ACORN statewide Data Management System before Silverlight encounters a security breach requiring an emergency shut-down. The team includes 4 State Lead Agency (SLA) and 4 County Lead Agency (CLA) representatives (one from each of the four county systems).

**Objective:**

This 8-member statewide team has met six times and continues to advise and consult on the final phase of key ACORN components leading up to the Go-Live launch including:

- ✚ Readiness Criteria
- ✚ Readiness Engagement/Preparation Tasks
- ✚ Status of Local Readiness Verification Self-Assessments
- ✚ Training Environment & Self-Guided User Testing Status
- ✚ User Acceptance Testing<sup>1</sup> Plans (Pre-Launch)
- ✚ Identification of locked in Go-Live Launch Date.

**Intended Impact:**

- ✚ The intended impact is the successful data migration and cut-over to the new ACORN statewide Data Management System before Silverlight encounters a security breach requiring an emergency shut-down.

The team is messaging and continues to reinforce that ACORN is both an IT Project and Program (Workforce and Service Delivery) Project that requires collaboration from IT Technical Experts and Subject Matter Experts working together in unison.

I appreciate and hold in gratitude the work local ESIT Provider Agencies continue to engage in to complete and submit their respective **ACORN Readiness Verification Checklist**. This pre-populated checklist is a tool that helps the local provider agencies understand how to prepare their local systems for the new data management system and will help DCYF confirm overall user/agency readiness. The checklist also serves as a training tool for agency managers, county

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<sup>1</sup> User Acceptance Testing (UAT) is the final stage of software development or customization request lifecycle before Go-live; to verify the software does what it was designed to do in real-world environments.



lead agency managers, and Lead Family Resources Coordinators. The ACORN Readiness Verification Checklist includes step-by-step instructions to verify training completion, access to ACORN, agency information and user accounts.

Please continue to reach out to Kim Hopkins, ESIT Data Systems & Analysis Manager at [kim.hopkins@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:kim.hopkins@dcyf.wa.gov) with questions or reflections.

## Federal Update Shared by National Infant Toddler Coordinators Association



The National Infant Toddler Coordinators (ITCA) Association shared their most recent [ITCA Federal Update on February 17, 2025](#). The ITCA Association has been providing weekly updates on activities taking place in Washington DC that relate directly to our mission and purpose. It was noted that the House is on recess this week and will return next week. The Senate is in session this week, except for February 17<sup>th</sup> President's Day.

Highlights from this week's publication include:

### U.S. Department of Education

- ✚ On February 13, the Senate Health, Education and Labor (HELP) Committee held a hearing for Linda McMahon, who has been nominated as the cabinet level Secretary of Education. She was asked a number of questions about IDEA and suggested that IDEA may be better administrated under the Department of Health and Human Services where other health and disability programs are located. She also said she did not expect significant budget cuts under IDEA. The committee is expected to approve her nomination this Thursday, February 20<sup>th</sup> after which the full Senate will consider the appointment.
- ✚ Meanwhile, in the last week, the Department cancelled almost \$900 million in contracts for the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), the agency responsible for funding education research and maintaining extensive education statistics. These cuts resulted in the termination of 89 contracts. Also canceled were over \$350 million in contracts and grants for ten Regional Education Laboratories (RELs) and four Equity Assistance Centers.

### Federal Funding

- ✚ Budget Resolutions were passed by the House and the Senate Budget Committees last week. The significant differences in these bills must be resolved before a final bill can be enacted. The Senate is working toward two separate bills, while the House is planning one larger bill. The final budget resolution cannot require cuts to specific programs but will require specific authorizing committees to select programs for budget cuts.
- ✚ The House bill directs the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has jurisdiction over Medicaid, to reduce the deficit by \$880 billion over ten years. It directs the House Agriculture Committee to reduce the deficit by \$230 billion

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over ten years and the Education and the Workforce Committee to make \$330 billion in cuts over a ten-year period.

- ✚ The Senate bill would increase defense and border security funding by more than \$300 billion. This would be paid for by cuts to federal programs. The Senate bill does not include provisions for tax cuts.

### **FFY 2025 Funding**

- ✚ The current Continuing Resolution (CR) keeps the government funded until March 14th with **all** federal programs funded at the FFY 2024 levels. Leadership in both the House and Senate appropriations committees currently are working to reach an agreement on the next steps. At this point, it is not at all clear what will happen between now and March 14<sup>th</sup>. Without agreement on final funding levels for all programs or on an extension to the CR, the government will shut down. There is discussion about a yearlong CR that would fund **all** programs through September 30, 2025.

### **Accountability & Quality Improvement Team Highlights**

Tammy McCauley, Accountability & Quality Improvement Manager, continues to lead her team as they actively engage in multiple circles of engagement with multi-disciplinary partners across the state. Results of these critically productive partnerships are represented in the three highlights below.

- ✚ **E-SIMS Statewide Roll-out (see ESIT Weekly Announcement)**
  - 90-day Training & Technical Assistance period began 1/2/2025
  - Orientation Webinars
    - Feb 10<sup>th</sup> 1-2:30
    - Feb 11<sup>th</sup> 9-10:30
  - Open Office Hours
    - Every Tuesday in March 12-1p
  - Effective April 1, 2025
- ✚ **Revised Early Childhood Transition Policy – Parental Opt-Out Pathway**
  - 90-day Training & Technical Assistance period beginning 4/1/2025
  - Orientation Webinars
    - May 20<sup>th</sup> 9-10:30
    - May 21<sup>st</sup> 1-2:30
  - Open Office Hours
    - June 5<sup>th</sup> 12-1
    - June 10<sup>th</sup> 9-10
  - Effective July 1, 2025
- ✚ **Revised System of Payment & Fees Policy**
  - Submitted for review and approval from federal Office of Special Education Programs
  - 90-day Training & Technical Assistance period will follow the approval date

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## **Progress In Motion for Data Share Agreement for Enhanced Medicaid Billing Initiative**

Co-Project Leads for the Enhanced Medicaid Billing Collaboration Project, Lauren Thompson, ESIT Resource Allocations Manager with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families and Christine Cole, Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health Program Manager with the Washington State Health Care Authority (HCA), are excited as they get closer to final authorization and execution of the new Data Share Agreement between the two agencies. This ground-breaking strategy, once approved and signed by both parties, will help assure cooperation in the implementation and funding of a statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary, and interagency system of early support services.

**The data shared through this mission-critical agreement will help the two systems, HCA and DCYF, better understand how to support billing and claiming processes for local ESIT Provider Agencies and identify statewide systemic strategies for enhancing and expanding Medicaid billing practices.** The implementation of new contract language, identified in partnership with Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) has begun. This is a result of increased awareness and understanding of the ESIT program and Apple Health's role in coverage of medically necessary services.

Starting January 1, 2025, managed care contracts will include:

- Definitions relevant to Early Supports for Infants and Toddlers Program;
- Requirement for MCOs to contract with local ESIT provider agencies; and
- Requirement for MCOs to not impose prior authorization on ESIT services, rather MCOs may use concurrent or retrospective review to assess medical necessity.

We appreciate the continued partnership with HCA and look forward to the next steps involved in the final signatory process and then implementation of the Data Share Agreement. For more information about the Enhanced Medicaid Billing Collaboration Project, please feel free to contact Lauren Thompson, ESIT Resource Allocations Manager with the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families at [lauren.thompson@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:lauren.thompson@dcyf.wa.gov) and/or Christine Cole, Infant-Early Childhood Mental Health Program Manager with the Washington State Health Care Authority at [christine.cole@hca.wa.gov](mailto:christine.cole@hca.wa.gov).



## **Kim Hopkins Bestowed Prestigious 2024 Washington State Employee Recognition Award by Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs**



Please join the Early Support for Infants & Toddlers (ESIT) State Leadership Team in recognizing and celebrating Kim Hopkins as the honored recipient of the prestigious **Veterans Employee Resource Group (VERG) - Spotlight on Success – Washington State Employee Recognition Award!** This distinguished award celebrates Kim’s outstanding contributions and dedication to our military-connected community across the state of Washington!

The Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs recognizes Veterans Day as a time to honor and elevate the brave servicemembers who have served in all branches of the United States Armed Forces. Each year there is a special ceremony that serves as an opportunity for everyone to come together as a community to express gratitude and appreciation for people just like Ms. Kim Hopkins, for their dedication, sacrifice, and unwavering commitment to our military-connected individuals!

Ms. Hopkin’s academic achievements are vast and deep. She earned her Master’s degree in Financial Management and Information Systems (2018) and Bachelor of Arts degree in Business Administration (2016) from the University of Maryland. **Both degrees were conferred with Summa cum Laude designations signifying degrees earned with the highest educational honor and distinction.** She also holds an Associate of Science degree in Business Operations Management (2014) from Fayetteville Technical Community College in North Carolina.

For the past 15 years Kim’s professional career has focused on serving, supporting, and championing the aspirations and goals of those around her. While serving in the military (October 2010 through April 2015) both abroad and in the United States, she provided executive managerial services that included account management, fiduciary oversight, reconciliations of information technology and validation of system metrics, and preparation of long-range costs estimates for use of funds to advance specific organizational military projects and programs. Kim joined the Early Childhood Education & Assistance Program (ECEAP) in 2015 and successfully advanced into the world of Information Technology with the ESIT Program in 2017. In her current position as the ESIT Data Systems & Analysis Manager, Kim is responsible for direct administrative oversight of the development, implementation, evaluation, and ongoing improvement of the comprehensive state data management and reporting system. **As a result of her leadership, leaders and influencers can make data-informed policy decisions and/or recommendations to improve outcomes for infants, toddlers, and their families.**

Ms. Hopkins has also engaged in extensive volunteer work over the past 8 years. Examples include serving the Mom2Mom Bavaria as the Financial Director (2019-2021) and the Washington State



Combined Fund Drive as the Agency Campaign Chair (2017-2018). Ongoing volunteer work includes serving as the Chapter Leader (2019-Present) for the Military Birth Resource Network and Agency Representative with the Washington State Veterans Employee Readiness Group (2017-Present). Kim holds multiple certifications including Six Sigma Black Belt (2014), Certified Birth and Bereavement Doula (2019), and Military Lactation Counselor (2022).

Ms. Hopkins received the 2024 Washington State Employee Recognition Award at the “*A Legacy of Loyalty and Service*” Ceremony held onsite at the **Washington State Capitol Legislative Building on November 6, 2024**. At this special ceremony, Ms. Hopkins was presented with the VERG Challenge Coin and a Certificate of Appreciation. In addition, she had a spotlight featured on the VERG website. Congratulations and accolades abound for Kim from all of us, across the early support landscape in Washington State!

### **Workforce Development Team Update**

The Workforce Development Team has continued to be collaboratively engaged with diverse community partners on several developments related to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). Dr. DeEtte Snyder, Workforce Development Manager, is pleased to share a major milestone in this important work.

- ✚ DCYF ESIT has been approved by the OSPI to offer and issue clock hours to certificated educators for attending and successfully completing ESIT trainings. Currently clock hours are available for those who complete the Initial Training Framework courses, including all recorded trainings available in the DCYF Learning Portal and Live Seminars. The entire series of the Initial Training Framework has been aligned to both the ESIT Core Competencies and the OSPI Teacher Standards, a requirement for clock hour approval. The SICC Personnel and Training Committee will act as the approval body for courses provided by ESIT for which clock hours will be available.

### **Service Delivery & Technical Assistance Team News**

Through the leadership of Laurie Thomas, Service Delivery & Technical Assistance Manager, several initiatives are underway, led by regionally based Technical Assistance Specialists serving on the team.

- ✚ The Service Delivery and Technical Assistance Team is partnering with the King County Lead Agency in gathering and producing materials to support families who are experiencing stress regarding their immigration status that providers can distribute as well as information to support providers if they are present during a US Immigration and Customs Enforcement interaction.
- ✚ Work continues on [ESIT’s Staff Retention Toolkit](#) which is built around the [Surgeon General’s Framework for Mental Health and Well-Being](#). The first two sections covering *Protection from Harm* and *Mattering at Work* are complete and the third section on *Connection & Community* is very close. A big shout out to the SICC Service Delivery

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Sub-Committee for their work on this project. Stay tuned for information about a rollout presentation coming soon!

- ✚ Iris Dunaway has been facilitating the efforts of the Forms Workgroup which has been tasked with streamlining and consolidating ESIT’s approach to paperwork requirements for families. This work may not seem glamorous, but it is critical to ensure that families understand their rights and give consent for various procedures in support of quality services.
- ✚ Michelle Baker is facilitating a *Virtual Winter Walk Across Washington* for the ESIT State Leadership Team that serves the dual purpose of promoting walking and other activities to get the team moving during the winter months, and an opportunity to learn more about ESIT provider agencies as we ‘virtually’ walk from agency to agency across the state.
- ✚ Molly Stryker has been leading the development of a guide designed to assist providers in evaluating tools, methods, and approaches to service delivery in support of identifying quality indicators in service delivery.

### **Leadership in Early Support: Planning for a Bright Future by Judy King**

As some of you may have heard our wonderful Early Support for Infants and Toddlers (ESIT) State Administrator, Val Arnold, will be retiring at the end of June 2025. For those of you who know her you have likely seen her serving and giving to her community to support children and their families. After many years working in non-profits, she started her state government journey with the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction twenty years ago. The ESIT program has been fortunate to have Val working in and among us since 2019, and within her current role as the State Administrator of the IDEA Part C Program since July 2023. Val’s knowledge, strategic partnership work and deep commitment to early childhood and special education have been an incredible asset to the field.

Her influence and contributions as a supporter of “all things family”, living out her values as a supportive supervisor and leader, and engaging with you as her partner and colleague is something that has happened in many places and spaces. We are happy that she will soon have more time with her beautiful family at their Critter Creek homestead in the future!

As a result of this we are doing some key planning in anticipation of this leadership transition. We are interested in learning from our partners across the early support landscape about what is needed for the next era of Early Support/Early Intervention as we are shaping the recruitment process for a new ESIT Sr. Administrator. We will be reaching out to several of our groups to invite virtual participation and dialogue in February, and we will also have a survey available for anyone that would like to weigh in on the bright future with strong leadership in ESIT. Soon we will provide information about the posting of the position at DCYF and the timeline for bringing a leader into this role.

We will have more opportunities in the future to celebrate Val and to support the transition for a new Administrator in the upcoming months. Stay tuned!

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---- Judy King, Director of Family & Community Support  
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### **Spotlight on 2024 State Interagency Coordinating Council Structure [Updated]**

The Washington State Interagency Coordinating Council has a rich history of consulting, advising, and assisting not only the IDEA Part C State Lead Agency, but partner state agencies serving on the council as well. The SICC advises and assists the Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families, (DCYF) and other participating agencies in implementing a collaborative and comprehensive statewide system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers who have disabilities and their families, including identifying sources of fiscal and other support for services for the early intervention programs, assigning financial responsibilities to the appropriate agency, promoting interagency agreements and providing appropriate services for children.

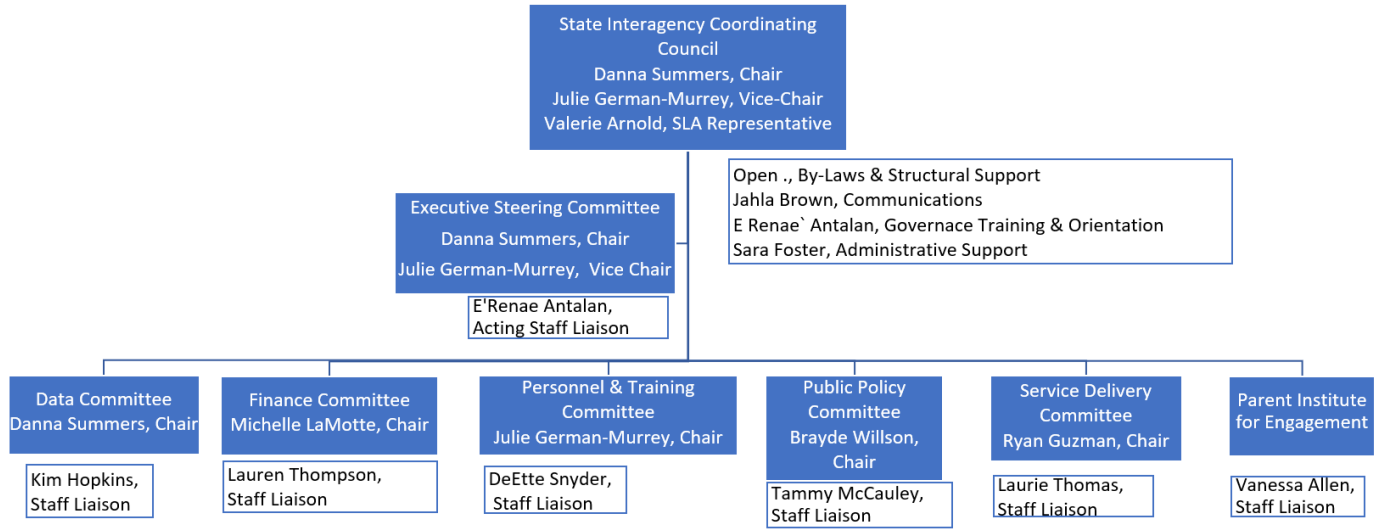
Operating under [Executive Order 19-02](#), the SICC responsibilities include assisting DCYF in effective implementation of the statewide early intervention system by establishing a process that includes seeking information from service providers, family resources coordinators, parents/caregivers, and others about any federal, state, or local policies that impede timely service delivery; and engaging in planned steps to ensure that any policy problems are resolved. One of the primary strategies for addressing this responsibility is the Council's creation of six sub-committees. The six sub-committees, reflected on the graphic below, operate under the direction and instruction of the full SICC. Diverse sub-committee membership is recruited from across the state and comprised of influencers at all levels of the early support community. The sub-committees engage in work priorities guided by the Council, in between the four quarterly SICC meetings. Chairs of the sub-committees, which must be currently seated Council members, collaborate with a designated ESIT Staff Liaison, to establish an annual work plan, which in turn drives the frequency of meetings, and ultimately committee agendas.

All sub-committee Chairs submit a SICC Quarterly Report to the Council to help ensure strong communication loops and that work plans are aligned with established Council priorities. For more information about the SICC and its sub-committees, please contact E'Renae Antalan, Community Collaboration Coordinator at [erenae.antalan@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:erenae.antalan@dcyf.wa.gov).





Washington State Department of  
**CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILIES**



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