

Setting a Context for Early On[®] Redesign

Remarks by Dr. Lindy Buch, Director, Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services, at the meeting of the Michigan State Interagency Coordinating Council, February 18, 2005

- When *Early On* was designed in 1987, the “system” was very different from what it is today; and back then people weren’t talking about services and supports for all families.
- When a child is born and has a disability, he/she is still a child first.
- In the last 20 years we’ve learned more, and know that the first 3 years are very important. It’s our responsibility to remind policy makers how important these early years are and not just focus on the preschool years.
- The State Council members and all *Early On* stakeholders are encouraged to look at the *Early On* system and be open and responsive to the material in the legislation reauthorizing IDEA, and put our understanding of young children to work for us.
- Moving towards results-based accountability requires us to look at and understand the results that we want to accomplish.
- It’s uncomfortable to look at systems work. It’s hard because we all have jobs, and like them, and looking at things differently may change what we do from day to day. If we will trust each other and believe we’re working for the best system for all our kids, we can look at our *Early On* system in a global way, utilizing data and resources we have and advocating for resources we need.
- If we don’t examine our *Early On* system from inside the system, with our focus on young children, then it will be done for us by people who don’t have that special sensitivity. It’s very timely that we do this and do it quickly. Everything must be put on the table.
- Staff members at the Michigan Department of Education, Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services, are committed to doing this work collaboratively.
- We need to approach our redesign task with open minds and keep moving forward.
- The redesign work will be hard but worth it.