Cuomo Approves In-Person Special Education Instruction For This Summer

On June 5th, Governor Cuomo put forth an executive order allowing in-person special education this summer. This order has come with mixed reviews. There are those who are all for it and others who are somewhat wary about what returning to a classroom looks like and entails as far as health and safety is concerned. Most feel that more guidance is needed.

Kudos to the Kids Can't Wait Campaign's Virtual Event

On June 3rd the Kids Can’t Wait Campaign hosted its first virtual parent Tele-Talk. We were joined by an audience of twenty-five for
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a virtual discussion about Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education teletherapy services for children birth to 5.

We truly appreciate our panel of early childhood therapists who took the time to join us and share with our audience the benefits of teletherapy, what a typical session involves and tips for successful sessions. We then delved into a robust discussion about how teletherapy services were going from the perspective of parents and therapists.

Out of this discussion we learned that for some families who opted to receive teletherapy services things are going well. All involved in the process are going above and beyond to make the experience a success. On the other hand, some families who are receiving services feel that it is not working because their child isn’t interested or they are overwhelmed with the number of sessions, especially if they have more than one child who receives services. Then there are the families who don’t have access due to technology (no device and/or no service) and the families who say they were never contacted about teletherapy services for their child.

We'd like to keep this conversation going in an effort to keep up to date with how Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education teletherapy services are doing. If you have an experience (both the good and the bad) that you'd like to share or any suggestions on ways to improve the experience for all involved (child, parent and provider) please contact Kristen Rogers at kristen@thechildrensagenda.org.
A meeting of the Kids Can’t Wait Campaign Leaders Council was convened on June 9th. Members provided updates about how Early Intervention (EI) and Preschool Special Education (PSE) services were going in their areas amidst the pandemic. Much of the successes, barriers and concerns that were shared mirrored what is happening in Monroe County.

As we discussed what impact we can currently make to improve access to early childhood developmental services around the state during this time, two priorities emerged. The first, advocating for an extension to the deadline for children to receive EI services when they have been unable to receive preschool PSE evaluations due to the pandemic.

Federal law requires States to ensure a “smooth and effective transition” from EI to PSE. Usually, in New York State, a child’s EI services end when they turn three. However, a child may remain in EI beyond their third birthday if they are found eligible for PSE prior to. Children turning three between January and August have the option to remain in EI through August 31st, if they have been evaluated and found eligible for PSE prior to their third birthday.

As a result of the pandemic, evaluations became backlogged, resulting in the New York State Department of Health extending EI services through June 30th for any child who was unable to receive a PSE evaluation and an eligibility determinations prior to their third birthday. June 30th, is fast approaching and getting all children evaluated by then doesn’t seem likely. Thus, the need to advocate for the deadline to be extended beyond June 30th to make sure that children do not lose their services.

The second priority that arose was to advocate at the congressional level for a substantial increase in public education funding in the next COVID-19 relief bill.

In response to these two priorities, the Leader’s Council decided to sign-on to a letter to the Governor regarding the EI extension and participate in a Federal action alert for increased public education funds.

**Take Action!** Join us in urging Congress about the need for a significant increase in public education funding.
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