

Frequently Asked Questions About Serving On Advisory Councils and Boards

To join or not to join. This is the big question most parents' ask. It's nice to be invited, it's even nicer to have expertise to share, but...but...“Do I have enough time?” and “How will this effect my family?”

What does the Early Intervention Coordinating Council (EICC) do?

Advises and assists the New York State Department of Health Early Intervention Program with its responsibilities as the lead agency for the Early Intervention Program

What is an advisory council?

Advisory groups to an agency or organization. Within your community or state, there may be many opportunities to serve as part of an advisory group to an agency or organization. Generally speaking, advisory groups do not have responsibility for planning activities, fund-raising, or decision making for the organization. Their role is to advise – they study the issue at hand, collect input from members of the advisory group and perhaps externally from the community, and report back to the larger agency. Your duties on such an advisory group would probably include attending meetings, gathering information from your community, and certainly contributing your own perspective and expertise. The group may also have to prepare recommendations for the agency. Some advisory groups are permanent, and others will be disbanded after they have served their purpose of providing guidance and insight.

Why should I serve?

- Having a chance to help others, share what you have learned, and to help others learn.
- Influencing the direction of activities, services, and policies. Your opinion matters. You can help shape how services or policies unfold.
- Learning more about programs that may benefit your child and other children. This puts you in an excellent position to help your family and other families find and use helpful services and programs.
- Learning skills that will help you in your present job or help you get a better one. You can add your Council experience to your resume – especially any special projects you work on. Serving on the Council may broaden your network and contacts.
- Making a difference. This is your opportunity to create positive change in the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families. Your concrete and practical knowledge about disabilities can help ensure that the decisions made by the larger organization are informed ones.

With all my responsibilities, how can I make time for this?

Yes, time is always a good question. You will be asked to attend meetings, and you may need to do research between meetings. Find out how much of a time commitment is involved, and make sure you have – or can make – the time before you say yes. It may help to look at this time commitment as an investment in your family, in your community, and in yourself.

Can I really make change happen?

Usually, change happens when people become aware of what needs to happen, how it needs to happen, and care that it happens. You can make change happen by getting involved, giving your time and energy to the Council, and helping others to get involved.

How can I find out more about the LEICC in my county?

If you are interested in becoming a member of your LEICC or finding out more about the LEICC in your county contact your Early Intervention Official.

Local Early Intervention Coordinating Councils

New York State is a state that has made a requirement in law and regulation that each municipality/county have a local Early Intervention Coordinating Council (LEICC)

Impact of Family Advisory Councils:

- Giving providers and administrators access to an experienced, diverse group of families willing to serve in a consulting capacity for policy and program development and evaluation.
- Provides the opportunity to receive ongoing feedback that goes beyond what would be learned from satisfaction surveys and focus groups.
- Having a forum available to develop creative, cost-effective solutions to problems.
- Having mechanism in place for receiving and responding to community input on a regular basis.

The work of family advisory councils can lead to:

- Services and programs that respond more effectively to consumer needs and priorities.
- Increased understanding and collaboration between families and staff.
- Wiser use of scarce health care resources.

Some other questions you may wish to ask that are not in this packet

- What priority areas are being addressed at the present?
- Exactly what will my responsibilities be?
- Do you provide orientation or ongoing training for new members?
- Are there any travel requirements?
- How long will I be expected to serve?
- When is the next LEICC meeting?
- How can I receive meeting notices/minutes?
- How can I become involved?
- Is there support for parent member participation?
- What authority does the advisory group have for aspects such as: the budget, services/programs/policies, personnel, public awareness, legislative or advocacy activities, and review of performance?

*Some of this information was taken from *A Parent's Guide To Serving On Boards And Committees*.