



## **A Four Point Plan to Address Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Crises in Monroe County**

**Overview:** Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education Services are in crisis in Monroe County. Several hundred children birth to 5 years old with developmental disabilities and delays across the County are waiting for services that are critical to their well-being throughout the rest of their lives. The wait list includes children with Down Syndrome, Autism Spectrum Disorders, Cerebral Palsy, and many other conditions.

This crisis in Monroe County can be attributed to five causes–

- Low rates set by New York State and Monroe County
- A cumbersome and labor-intensive Early Intervention billing process that raises provider administrative costs
- Insufficient County staffing to effectively manage the Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education systems and support families appropriately
- Lack of awareness and attention to early childhood developmental services issues in the state capital
- Lack of a strong working partnership between Monroe County leadership, service providers, school districts, and other stakeholders

### **A 4 Point Plan for Monroe County**

While New York State is primarily responsible for service shortages in Monroe County, there are a number of concrete steps the County should take, as outlined below. Done in concert with one another, they will significantly improve the state of birth-5 developmental services in the County.

- 1) Monroe County will establish a new Preschool Special Education Related Services rate structure (the only rates under the County's control). The County's recent rate increase was a good first step, but a new rate structure is needed to allow providers to offer competitive compensation to their workers, encourage the provision of group services when clinically and developmentally appropriate, and most importantly, ensure that

children in need of preschool special education services receive them as soon as possible. Specifically -

- a. Individual Rates will rise by 15% over current levels (i.e. the speech therapy rate would rise to \$70 per unit)
  - b. Group Rates will rise by 15% over current levels, (i.e. the speech therapy rate would rise to \$60 per unit)
  - c. Group of 1 services will continue to be paid at the Individual Rate
- 2) Monroe County's Department of Public Health will hire 10 additional service coordinators and expand their responsibilities in preschool special education. This will lower Early Intervention service coordination caseloads to levels found elsewhere in New York State and allow County staff to support providers in navigating the State's Early Intervention billing process. Expanded staffing will also allow County staff to better coordinate with local school districts to ensure children and families are served as efficiently as possible. The County is the only entity capable of coordinating group services across school district lines. Ensuring that children who need group services can receive them in groups benefits all parties.
- a. Children benefit from receiving services in a social setting, as determined by their Individualized Educational Plans.
  - b. Monroe County saves money by paying for these services at a group, rather than individual rate.
  - c. Providers benefit because staff are able to serve more children each day, thus maximizing revenue.
  - d. And most importantly, more children are able to receive services, because the more services that are delivered in groups, the more children are able to be served.
- 3) The County Executive will bring together our local delegation, other county governments, parents, and other advocates from around the state to push state leadership to address the growing statewide crisis in Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education.
- 4) Monroe County will establish and chair a task force comprised of school district staff, the medical community, service providers, parents, advocates, and other stakeholders to examine the challenges facing this sector and identify ways the County and community partners can collectively improve developmental services for young children in the community.