

## **High-Level Overview of Breakout Discussions**

Across all four breakout groups, participants expressed both optimism about the creation of IDEC and significant desire for continued clarity as July 1 approaches. Stakeholders noted strong progress from IDEC to date, including increased staffing, extensive engagement efforts, and visible momentum toward consolidation. At the same time, participants highlighted ongoing uncertainty about implementation details, communication channels, and upcoming operational changes.

The conversation across groups raised several clear themes:

### **1. Strong Desire for Clear, Consistent, and Predictable Communication**

Participants across all groups emphasized the need for more detailed, timely, and consistent information about what will change on July 1 and what will remain the same. Stakeholders are seeking:

- Regular updates and a predictable communication cadence
- Clear FAQs, accessible online resources, and streamlined messaging
- Transparent information about programmatic changes, technology readiness, and day-one processes
- A way to distinguish IDEC-related updates from unrelated federal or state policy changes

Many noted that without centralized and consistent communication, rumors and worst-case assumptions are filling the gaps.

### **2. Need for Greater Clarity About Implementation and the First Years of IDEC**

Stakeholders want to understand:

- What year one and year two will look like for programs, providers, and families
- How systems will function in the interim period before full consolidation
- Which systems and contacts will change, and when
- How decisions made today connect to longer-term IDEC strategy

Several groups asked for more detail on how IDEC will phase in changes over time, particularly for school-based programs, home visiting, early intervention, and ROEs navigating both IDEC and ISBE.

### **3. Anxiety and Uncertainty Among Providers and Staff**

Participants reported substantial concern among staff across the field—especially about job security, system changes, and unclear timelines. Stakeholders noted that without

concrete updates, providers often assume the worst or conflate IDEC changes with other unrelated shifts (e.g., federal funding uncertainty).

Many emphasized the importance of ongoing communication beyond July 1 and maintaining feedback loops throughout the transition.

#### **4. Appreciation for Engagement to Date, Paired with a Call for More Meaningful Inclusion**

Across rooms, participants recognized IDEC's engagement efforts, listening sessions, and the growing capacity of the new department. At the same time, groups expressed a desire for:

- More opportunities to engage directly with IDEC leadership
- Greater inclusion of diverse stakeholders (e.g., higher education, pediatricians, non-traditional partners)
- Consistency in messaging across workgroups and advisory bodies
- Assurance that input collected through listening efforts will influence decision-making

Some participants noted concern that the ELC has been less engaged in recent months and urged a return to a regular meeting schedule.

#### **5. Opportunities in a Unified Early Childhood Agency**

Stakeholders highlighted a number of potential benefits of IDEC's formation, including:

- Simplified access to services for families
- Better coordination across early childhood programs
- Improved consistency in identification and supports for multilingual learners
- Data integration and stronger cross-system insights
- A stronger statewide strategy for funding and equity

Participants expressed hope that IDEC can help address longstanding fragmentation and improve experiences for families and providers.

#### **6. Risks, Gaps, and Considerations for IDEC as It Moves Forward**

The breakout groups lifted several cautions for IDEC's transition team:

- The need for clear, equitable structures as new funding comes online
- Supporting providers through system changes and reducing unnecessary anxiety
- Ensuring consistent messaging about what is changing and when
- Addressing confusion created by overlapping state and federal updates

- Maintaining transparency about governance, organizational structure, and long-term planning
- Creating clear channels for reporting feedback, questions, and issues

Groups also emphasized that a well-designed public dashboard or reporting mechanism could help track progress, support transparency, and reduce uncertainty.

## **7. Guidance and Priorities Elevated for the IDEC Transition Team**

Across the four groups, the following priorities surfaced most consistently:

- Increase the frequency and predictability of communication, including FAQs, timelines, and regular updates
- Clarify what will change on July 1 and what will not, with specific attention to providers' day-to-day operations
- Re-engage the ELC in a more meaningful, structured, and regularly scheduled way
- Provide transparent details about IDEC's organizational structure and points of contact
- Ensure ongoing, two-way engagement beyond July 1
- Offer support and reassurance to providers and staff navigating uncertainty