



**Southern Strategy Group
Presentation to
NICA
September 14, 2012**



Memorandum

To: Kenney Shipley
From: Paul Mitchell
Date: September 10, 2012
Re: Survey Results and findings

History – In 2001, then Treasurer and Insurance Commissioner, Tom Gallagher, was contacted by numerous “NICA families” who were concerned with the treatment they were receiving from NICA. Specifically, the families had complaints regarding the Executive Director and their feeling that some families were treated more fairly than others, and that many of the “covered needs” of some of the families were not being met. Their complaints had many things in common, but at their core, seemed to focus on a lack of knowledge of what were covered benefits and what was not, and the sense that the Executive Director was setting different policies and procedures for the different families. It had been strongly suggested by all of the families who came forward that her actions were arbitrary and based solely on favoritism.

As a result of several written complaints to Treasurer Gallagher, coupled with at least 3 personal visits to his office in Tallahassee by separate families over a 2-month period, Gallagher asked that a survey be performed to determine if the other families felt the same way as the families who had taken the time to write or visit. The Division of Consumer Services of the Department of Insurance designed a survey-instrument that asked the participating families a range of questions designed to determine three basic things: 1. Were the qualified services and benefits well explained and known by the families; 2. Were the qualified services and benefits equally and fairly awarded to **all** of the families; and 3. Were the families being treated with respect and kindness by those they dealt with at NICA.

The results of that survey are fairly easy to summarize, but what was most surprising was the response rate received by the Department and Gallagher – roughly 85% of the participating families responded to the survey. Sadly, it was the feeling of a large majority of the respondents that the benefits that they were qualified for were neither known nor explained to them by the Executive Director. While a few of the families were satisfied with the benefits they received and felt like they could get what they needed from the Executive Director, a very large majority felt just the opposite. Perhaps most disappointing was the fact that, based on their responses, roughly 70% of all respondents felt as though they were not well regarded by NICA (specifically, the then-director of NICA), and were treated without care or kindness.

The results of the survey also revealed many other irregularities, which prompted an audit of the organization and its policies and procedures. The findings of that audit, coupled with the survey results, prompted significant changes in NICA. Those changes made nearly 10 years ago, remain today and have helped shape both the written policies and procedures of NICA, while also dictating the overall spirit of the organization to treat the families with dignity and kindness.

In an attempt to quantify the difference those changes have made, NICA Executive Director, Kenney Shipley asked for a similar survey to be performed. The survey and its results (by percentage of response) are attached to this memorandum, and form the basis of the analysis and recommendations for improvement below.

Analysis – Much like the survey of 2001/2002, the results of this survey are fairly easy to summarize, with a slightly lower rate of response coming from the participating families – roughly 50%, or half of all families responding to at least part, if not all of the survey. Also like the previous survey, this survey found that an overwhelming large majority of the respondents answering the questions in a like-fashion, with most questions resulting in a 80%-85% common answer (strongly agree or agree). There is one remarkably striking and dramatic difference between the two surveys, however. If the 2002 survey could be characterized as “negative,” then the 2012 survey can only be characterized as very positive. With question after question, the families answered in a mostly favorable manner, and often taking the time to offer additional comments complimenting the staff (mostly the nurses) for taking the necessary time to understand the families’ needs, and to show that they care. There were several families who did express a concern for how they receive their payments and many specifically asked for an electronic (direct deposit) form of payment and an easier way to submit requests for payments.

In addition to simply surveying the families, we also took the time to survey, via personal interviews, the staff of NICA. Again, the difference 10 years can make is both dramatic and remarkable. Without trying to speak for the staff of NICA from 10 years ago, the results of the performance audit suggested strongly that the organization lacked direction and that overall morale was low. Many of the employees complained that NICA was really only one person – the Executive Director – and that she made all decisions without consultation from the nurses and families. It is safe to say that there has been a 180 degree shift of that attitude, and that the overall morale is high, and that collaboration and cooperation is both encouraged and employed with regularity. One significant finding did come out of the interviews with the nurses, and that is a feeling that while the number of families who are being cared for has increased over the last several years, the number of nurses assigned to those families has not increased. While none of the nurses complained that they had too much work to do, several comments were made expressing concern that they cannot get to all of the needs of their families and that they are afraid that something might slip. Certainly something worthy of the Board’s consideration in consultation with the Executive Director.

Recommendations for consideration by the Board:

1. **Update the Benefit Handbook:** while some of the participants find the handbook to be useful, many offered that some parts were confusing and a little hard to understand. It has been a while since the Benefit Handbook has been updated. Perhaps, now is a good time to go through it and make it a little more user friendly with an explanation of the statutory references in lay terms. Also, if any of the benefits have changed, now would be a good time to put those changes in the Handbook.
2. **Electronic Transfer/Direct Deposit of funds:** without a doubt, this was the one issue mentioned by more participants than any other. Many of the participants pay for Federal Express to overnight their payments out of necessity. If NICA established a form of electronic payment, those participants with a checking account would be able to have the funds transferred either the same day or overnight, and at no cost to the participant or NICA. This one change would make the biggest “instant” impact on a large number of the families.
3. **Website:** a complete revamping of the website would be a huge favor to most of the families. Based on the comments offered by respondents to the survey, families either didn’t know that there was a website or found it mostly unhelpful. A new website designed to meet the needs of the families is recommended. Perhaps the best approach at a new design is to ask the families what sort of information and links they would find useful to have at a “my nica” website.
4. **Claims procedure:** there appears to be some confusion as to what is the best way to submit a “claim” for certain covered benefits to NICA, as well as the best way to be reimbursed for expenses. It is suggested that an electronic request form be established and put on the NICA website where families could fill out a request and submit it electronically. Included in this should be consideration of developing an “electronic wage sheet” for those families who seek hourly wages for the care of their child.
5. **Additional nurse:** in the memorandum to Kenney Shipley providing an evaluation and overview of the survey responses, it was mentioned that the staff at NICA was also interviewed. There is no doubt that the NICA nurses are completely committed to “their families” and go way beyond what is expected of them to make certain that, to the best of their abilities, they are meeting the needs of the participants and their families. NICA has considerably more participants now than at any point in the history of the program. While the number of participants has grown, the number of nurses has not kept pace. Consideration should be given to adding either one full-time nurse, or at a minimum, a ½ time nurse.
6. **Administrative issue:** the morale of all of the employees is very high. People talked about enjoying coming to the office, and feeling like they were doing something worthwhile and meaningful. It was clear that each employee had a good grasp of their responsibilities, and most have a very clear idea of what the mission of the organization is. They all feel appreciated and well led by Kenney Shipley. If there is one area that could be improve upon, it is finding a simple way of bringing all of the pieces together, where each employee had a clear idea of how what they were doing fit in with all of the others. A weekly or twice-monthly staff meeting would go a long way of correcting this. It would also give the nurses an opportunity to talk with each other about “best practices” – where they have seen a particular technology helping a child or a family. It is clear that the employees see themselves as a family, but getting together on a regular basis may go a long way towards helping the organization function better.

	QUALITY RATING					
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
NICA						
PAYMENT PROCESS						
The payments are received in a timely fashion.						
Comments, suggestions for improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct deposit works best. • Tell us the day of the week receipts are needed in order for NICA to reimburse that week. • Some small items are missed out like mileage reimbursements. • Sometimes they are but direct deposit would be so much better as to mail can get lost sometimes. • Very rarely a delay has happened of course. • Is there a direct deposit option – mail service is slow or lost. 	62%	29%	5%	2%	2%	0%
Requests for reimbursements are easily made.						
Comments, suggestions for improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sometimes a little difficult • Email is very helpful, thanks. • I always argue with the nurse over 5 miles difference in long distance travel to a doctor. My route may be different than MapQuest. I detest this treatment. 	64%	25%	7%	2%	2%	0%
Reimbursement checks are distributed when requested and delivered on time.						
Comments, suggestions for improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Even when we pay more money for faster service, checks are not timely. • This has been a problem at times but has improved if I follow-up. • It takes too long from the time that timesheets and requests are sent in. • Mail Service • Jacque is an angell! Always helpful, willing to listen. 	64%	24%	8%	2%	2%	0%
BENEFIT HANDBOOK						
The benefit handbook has been helpful.						
Comments, suggestions for improvement: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More in-depth explanations • It is helpful • Better if NICA gave the handbook in Spanish • Should be updated 	62%	24%	10%	2%	2%	0%

<p>The information provided in the handbook is clear and understandable.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not all sections are understandable • Can be better. 	53%	31%	12%	2%	2%	0%
<p>The information provided in the handbook is sufficient and offers good guidance.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be more clear • Kind of vague as to how to proceed when there is a disagreement. • Could be more clear in explaining per diem and what type of visits qualify (doctor, therapy, etc). 	43%	38%	15%	2%	2%	0%
WEBSITE						
<p>The website provides adequate and up to date information.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I rarely access the website – maybe include it on correspondence to remind me it's available. • Never used it • I have only utilized the website when directing other health care providers to it so that they can familiarize themselves with the program. • I think it can be a little more user friendly. Try making it more interactive and by updating it more frequently with useful info for families. Helping them become aware of services and such they may not know how to go about getting. • Should be more specific. 	31%	23%	10%	0%	5%	31%
<p>I can easily find the information I am looking for by utilizing the website.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a special section for families in the program? I don't look for things on the website. • Update periodically with resources for parents. 	31%	19%	14%	0%	5%	31%
<p>I would like to see some new information and links added to the website. (Please use the comment box below for additional suggestions.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An optional network for families to come together to get to share stories and get to know each other. 	46%	9%	9%	0%	3%	33%
VAN AGREEMENT						
<p>NICA's process to qualify for and have a van delivered is</p>	54%	10%	7%	2%	5%	22%

<p>understandable and efficient.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I don't think its right to make families wait until the child is 6 y/o or 45lbs. When the child needs a wheel chair, they need a van. This was a great help. I think some adjustments can be made to allow for more options for the families whether in regards to qualifying for a van and for adaptation options for the van itself. 							
<p>The maintenance and information provided by NICA for the vehicle is sufficient.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prepaying to the car maintenance is very helpful. I think there needs to be a pre-approved list of services along with the anything over \$150.00 approval notice. Jeanine does an excellent job!! Always helpful!! 	51%	10%	5%	7%	0%	27%	
CLAIMS PROCEDURES							
<p>I clearly understand the procedures for the claims process through NICA.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We went through a learning process 	53%	35%	12%	0%	0%	0%	0%
PERCEPTION OF PERSONNEL							
<p>The nurses I interact with are kind and caring.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We love Sandy – she does a great job. Have no interacted with the nurse. I interact with Sandra Kelly and she is the most caring individual I know for the past 12 years. Thank you for all your help and kindness. Answers to my questions are always answered in a timely fashion by the nurse assigned to our family. I do not hesitate to ask for information I need. Sanda Kelly, Vicki Evelo and Jeanne Heath are great. Kathie Alexander is amazing 	63%	15%	2%	0%	0%	20%	
<p>When contacting NICA representatives, they treat me with fairness and respect.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Absolutely Excellent – Hay Jay-Low 	83%	15%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Phone people/Contact answer phones: RUDE 									
I know who to direct my questions to when contacting NICA.	82%	16%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Comments, suggestions for improvement:									
NICA'S MISSION									
I understand NICA's three-fold mission to 1) encourage physicians to practice obstetrics and; 2) make obstetrical services available to patients, to stabilize and help make malpractice insurance available to all physicians and; 3) to provide needed care to injured children is clearly the objective of the organization.	67%	24%	7%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
NICA treats my child with dignity and recognizes his/her personal needs.									
Comments, suggestions for improvement:	84%	14%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Yes, you are awesome and we appreciate all you do for the family. They are great. 									

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

- I would like to thank the Board of Directors for addressing our concerns after our meeting with Mr. Tom Gallagher and Mr. Paul Mitchell. The resulting surveys of the participants in NICA provided a means to voice our concerns and complaints without fear of retribution by the Director. Appointing the new Director, Mrs. Kenny Shipley has truly been a God send for the organization and to our family for sure. Dealing with NICA now is a night and day difference. The main difference is that Mrs. Shipley handles our concerns with kindness. She truly cares and is concerned about our needs. Thank you for your continued interest in our needs.
- Regarding van insurance: coverage levels are unrealistic at 10/20/10 and unclear as to the exact requirement. We have had a frustrating process trying to get adequate documentation every 6 months, and it is difficult incorporating another car on the policy due to the required documentation. It would be easier to have explicitly outlined coverage's and requirements for the van specifically as it pertains to deductibles, roadside assistance, PIP, etc.
- Regarding the website: having access to perjury statements and requirements and paperwork would be helpful.
- I wish there was an easier way to submit monthly parental care forms. When I am the only one caring for my daughter it seems silly to have to submit the same monthly hour's every time. Couldn't I just do a signed affidavit that I provided all care for her for the month?
- We are extremely happy with and feel very fortunate that our son has NICA coverage. It has been a great service for him. I only checked "agree" and not "strongly agree" on the first page because not all two day delivery requests arrive on time. I feel this is more a reflection of the postal service, however. And I have never used the website which is why it was "neutral".
- I think NICA could be more helpful in the beginning process to help families know what benefits are available to them.
- Since the acceptance of my child into NICA, we have had nothing but a positive experience and I am so very thankful for all they have done for my son and our family.
- From start to present, every question has been answered. If I have any problem, they are taken care of. Everyone answers questions and are very helpful.
- The main objective should be to encourage physicians who practice obstetrics to do it safely. My labor and delivery was Murphy's Law. Anything that could go wrong did. My obgyn had multiple warning signs and if she would have used her abilities in a safer manner, my son would be able to run, play

- and took like his profiners. Also, my son's wheelchair weighs over 60lbs and has to be packed up and into the back of my SUV. Family friends only have cars struggle to transport their child. I carry bruises across my thighs from lifting his chair in and out of my SUV.
- Direct deposit: very important for continuity in payments for the care of the child. -- Raises established for competitive wages for respite care provides for the area to which they live. We live in PA and CNA's receive more money per hour than what our CNA makes through NICIA. Basically it forces us to pay her out of pocket to make up for the difference.
- The only things I can think of would be a direct deposit option. I have been told in the past that is only set up for NICIA employees but maybe there is a way to do it for reimbursements or a special card that funds can be put on. That would be a huge help in cutting down on trips to the bank and waiting for checks to clear. The other thing would be if other people/family members (that are able to provide care in lieu of skilled nurses) could get compensated. For instance, we currently do not have a back up nurse, so if my mom or sister could stay with my child while I am at school they would have to miss work, so I have to offer to pay them. Currently it states only a parent/guardian can do this.
- We appreciate the prompt service that NICIA offers. Would it be possible to establish escrow accounts for wheelchair and durable equipment repairs due to delayed responses on general insurance claims?
- Please put reimbursement respite-forms on website for easy download, or are they? Also, put a box for total hours at the end of the week. Also, prefer to start on Sunday rather than end.
- Benefits for reimbursement mileages with van provided at .23/mile needs adjustment.
- At this present time I have no problems with the way my child and I have been treated through NICIA. Whenever I have a question concerning any matters I always get an answer that's understandable and helpful. NICIA has been a true blessing for my child providing items needed for her care and offering much support to us. God bless you and keep up the great work!!!
- In general NICIA is an awesome organization. The staff is very kind and professional. My son and I are very grateful and happy with NICIA. I think when there are families in these matters they should be better guided and not left to fight for themselves like I was an now I have a house that I've had for 6 years and me and my family are staying with someone else we've never lived in our house because it was unstable to live in but not knowing or having the knowledge about a house just trying to do the right thing.
- I would like to see more of the reimbursement process completed electronically. Timesheets for Parental Pay could be completed through an online system that is secure. Perjury statement signature could also be done electronically, allowing timekeeping to be done in a paperless fashion.
- As parents we depend on NICIA as an only income and with that being the case, we have bills that are due and when we can only submit a payment request bi-weekly and then have to wait for it to come in the mail, it is really annoying and frustrating! This causes a lot of late and missed payments. Direct deposit would really be so much better, a life saver. Please consider this as an option; I'm sure most, if not all, parents would agree if a poll were taken! Aside from that, I am really thankful and appreciative to God for NICIA and everybody involved, you guys really make a difference when a lot can already be complicated when caring for a child whom NICIA services!
- My understanding is that each child's nurse does an end of the year report on their children. Is there any way that information obtained from all the doctors could be used to cut back on the mountain of letters medical necessity that have to be obtained during a year for every single thing requested? Sometimes doctor's visits are not reimbursed due to NICIA saying they aren't related to CP - CP affects everything in my child's life. Even more susceptible to pneumonia, weight loss, etc.
- NICIA is fabulous but there are a couple of areas I think could use consideration 1) \$30,000 for housing modification is fairly low especially over the lifetime of a person 2) Special equipment which is medically necessary is too narrowly defined - it is medically necessary to have an accessible rental van if the family has to fly regardless of reason - the child must use the wheelchair everywhere, even on vacation. The child may have specialized equipment to participate in recreational activities; it is medically necessary due to the child's condition - that's not convenience. 3) After the age of 10 or so, the therapeutic joy benefit is not helpful or appropriate. If you have to get documentation from a therapist for something, NICIA should be covering it anyway. It is also not clear if you can save up this benefit over the course of several years to get something over \$500.
- I can't think of a damn thing to say bad about NICIA. They sure have improved so much with their services. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Moo-moo and Jimmie thank y'all too.
- I think the nurses could be more informed on the procedure and on the issue of taxes pertaining to the large settlement, but overall, they seem to be understanding of my daughter's condition.
- My son was the first client after the FL Supreme Court decision to be accepted when only severely physically impaired. I believe that 90% of the time he is recognized for his own personal needs and certainly treated with dignity. His needs financially are significantly less than his majority of the clients in NICIA, and he and I strongly believe that this fact is not always remembered when some requests for reimbursement are asked for consideration. There should be some way to incorporate recognition and support in assisting to make an individual a viable member of society if possible. Because he is not a vegetable or severely mentally or physically challenged does not mean that he does not face difficult challenges in our able bodied world. Thank you. The staff I deal with is great, not looking forward to the day they retire. More info on planning estate, trust, guardianship.
- We are thankful and grateful for NICIA organization. We do not always agree with some decisions made by NICIA but they are always willing to listen to requests or arguments. Kenny and Sandy are always willing to have an open ear. I believe an area to start working on would be to start working outside the box of normal routine awareness of the needs for disabled kids. It's not just about the diagnosis of a child that meets the requirements for NICIA and then just treat them with the norm across the board PT, OT, speech, nursing etc. or whatever is needed. It's looking beyond that need and seeing the kids

hearts and individual needs the whole family needs. These kids need to be important so they can grow to be as independent as they can so they can reach out to help others.

My daughter and I have never experienced anything in any areas of NICA that have been negative. We have always been treated fairly and with great respect.

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	QUALITY RATING				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
NICA					
PAYMENT PROCESS					
The payments are received in a timely fashion.					
Comments, suggestions for improvement:					
Requests for reimbursements are easily made.					
Comments, suggestions for improvement:					
Reimbursement checks are distributed when requested and delivered on time.					
Comments, suggestions for improvement:					
BENEFIT HANDBOOK					
The benefit handbook has been helpful.					
Comments, suggestions for improvement:					
The information provided in the handbook is clear and understandable.					
Comments, suggestions for improvement:					
The information provided in the handbook is sufficient and offers good guidance.					
Comments, suggestions for improvement:					
WEBSITE					
The website provides adequate and up to date information.					
Comments, suggestions for improvement:					

<p>I can easily find the information I am looking for by utilizing the website.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p>									
<p>I would like to see some new information and links added to the website. (Please use the comment box below for additional suggestions.)</p>									
VAN AGREEMENT									
<p>NICA's process to qualify for and have a van delivered is understandable and efficient.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p>									
<p>The maintenance and information provided by NICA for the vehicle is sufficient.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p>									
CLAIMS PROCEDURES									
<p>I clearly understand the procedures for the claims process through NICA.</p> <p>Comments, suggestions for improvement:</p>									
PERCEPTION OF PERSONNEL									
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NICA'S MISSION									
I understand NICA's three-fold mission to 1) encourage physicians to practice obstetrics and; 2) make obstetrical services available to patients, to stabilize and help make malpractice insurance available to all physicians and; 3) to provide needed care to injured children is clearly the objective of the organization.									
NICA treats my child with dignity and recognizes his/her personal needs.									
Comments, suggestions for improvement:									

COMMENTS									
Please expand upon your assessment of any areas in which our program could improve upon services we deliver to you. We welcome your suggestions and if it would be easier to speak with someone about any of these items or something else, please provide us with your name, phone number, and a convenient time to reach you.									

OPTIONAL: If you would like to share your name with NICA, you may provide it here:
