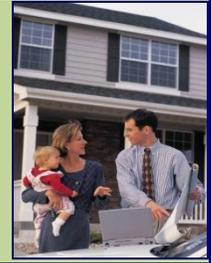




KIT

"Keeping In Touch"

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Resource Article



This month's KIT article "Recommended Outcomes for Families of Young Children with Disabilities" by Don Bailey and colleagues provides background information on the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center and its work to establish a family outcomes measurement framework including the rationale for documenting family outcomes. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) specifically defines *enhancing the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers* as one of the four purposes of early intervention. This reinforces that early intervention is not just about the child. Rather it is about the child and the family that nurtures, supports, and cares for him/her. Hence, outcomes of early intervention programs must include results for families as well as results for children. Examining results of one or the other would not provide the comprehensive information needed to truly determine early intervention program effectiveness. Reinforcing this position, the authors of this article make and support the following four points:

1. Children and family services and goals are integrally linked in early childhood programs (p. 229).
2. Families play critical roles in their child's development; helping families has direct implications for the extent to which children benefit from services (p. 229).
3. Family members themselves can be affected by having a child with a disability, and services ought to promote positive adaptation and reduce potential negative impacts (p. 230).

4. Documenting parent and family outcomes might be especially important for families whose children have serious health and developmental challenges and make relatively little progress (p. 231).

Prior to the requirement that states collect and report child and family outcome measures, many states, including Army EDIS programs, collected some type of information about family satisfaction. While satisfaction measures are useful, they are not the same as measuring the benefits or results gained from participation in early intervention services.

All state must report the percentage of families participating in Part C who report that early intervention services have helped the family a) know their rights; b) effectively communicate their child's needs; and c) help their children develop and learn.

The ECO Center specifically defined family outcomes "as a benefit experienced by families as a result of services received" (Bailey, et al., 2006, p. 228). Accordingly, measuring family satisfaction alone does not get at the measure of positive outcomes for families. Considering the three required measures indicated above, the authors find that these measures do not meet the rigorous definition of a family outcome proposed by the ECO Center and that these three indicators do not fully reflect the gamut of desired family outcomes (p. 245).

Many states, including Army, have decided to collect outcome measures beyond the three indicators noted above. Some states, including Army EDIS, are incorporating the five family outcomes proposed by the ECO Center:

1. Families understand their child's strengths, abilities, and special needs.
2. Families know their rights and advocate effectively for their children.
3. Families help their children develop and learn.
4. Families have support systems.
5. Families access desired services, programs, and activities in their community.

The authors encourage states to collect family outcome measures beyond those required, so that they can more effectively determine the quality of programs supporting infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.

The remainder of the article describes the extensive process the ECO Center undertook to define the five outcomes it proposed the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The following list provides a brief description of these ten steps that took just over 12 months.

1. National advisory board met to draft plans for identifying family outcomes. The board included parents, researchers, and administrators at various levels. It was agreed that family outcomes must be research based, aligned with IDEA, easily understood, and validated by diverse stakeholders.
2. Early Childhood (Part C and B) state coordinators met to review plans for identifying family outcomes.
3. Literature review was completed which resulted in suggested family outcomes.
4. A report from the extensive literature review was developed and shared with stakeholder groups.
5. A two-day meeting with leading family researchers was convened to refine the family outcomes into a set of six.
6. Another two-day meeting was held with stakeholders, including parents and representatives from parent organizations. This group clearly endorsed five of the six proposed outcomes.
7. Following revision of the outcomes, conference calls were conducted to gather input and suggestions for revising the proposed family outcomes.

8. The agreed upon outcomes were then placed on the ECO Center web site for feedback.
9. The national advisory board met again to review and finalize family outcomes for recommendation to OSEP.
10. Five family outcomes were ultimately recommended to OSEP.

With a focus on the benefits families experience from early intervention, the ECO Center continues its work to assist states with quality measurement of family outcomes. In consultation with the ECO Center, Army EDIS is also examining ways to enhance the collection of family outcomes.

Bailey, D., Bruder, M. B., Hebbeler, K. (2006). Guidance for states in documenting family outcomes for early intervention and early childhood special education. Early Childhood Outcomes Center. Retrieved August 2010 from http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/assets/pdfs/guidance_for_states.pdf

On the WWW



This month the web resource is the Early Childhood Outcomes (ECO) Center website, specifically the ECO Resources Family Outcomes Survey tab. The direct link is:

<http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/pages/tools.cfm>

At this webpage, you will see an overview of the FOS including an update on recent work, the different survey versions, ECO publications, and additional resources such as state approaches, materials related to collecting and using family outcome data, and information about informing families about outcome measurement.

Translations of the FOS are also available at this link under state activities and materials. The state of Minnesota has translated the FOS into several different languages. The direct link to these translation is:

http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~eco/pages/states_family_outcomes_materials.cfm

