KIT
"Keeping In Touch"
November 2010

A Publication of the Army Educational & Developmental Intervention Services CSPD

Resource Article

The KIT article this month reports data from a large-scale implementation study of the Family Outcomes Survey (FOS) in the participating states Illinois and Texas. Earlier articles (September and October 2010), in this KIT series on measuring family outcomes, described the process for determining the family outcomes and developing the FOS.

The study reported in this article "Measuring Family Outcomes in Early Intervention: Findings From a Large-Scale Assessment" by Dr. Raspa and colleagues included 2,849 families of children enrolled in early intervention for six months or more. All materials shared with participating families were available in English and Spanish. A smaller set of these participants also responded to a second survey addressing family-centered services. The questions on the second survey consisted of a select set of items from the National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring Part C Family Survey (NCSEAM). For more information on the NCSEAM survey please refer to the following website: http://www.monitoringcenter.lsuhsc.edu/. Participant demographic data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Participant Demographics*

Gender	Male	61%
	Female	39%
Race	Caucasian	66%
	Hispanic Latino	17%
	African American or Black	13%
	Other	3%
Eligibility	Developmental Delay	67%
	Medical Diagnosis	18%
	Atypical Development	11%
	Clinical Judgment	4%
Family Income	10,000 or less	25%
	10,001 to 25,200	20%
	25,201 to 58830	26%
	58,831 or more	29%
Time in Service		10.8 *(SD=7.2)*
Average Age		23.3 *(SD=9.2)*

Forty seven percent of the surveys sent out in Illinois were returned and 40% were returned in Texas. Overall, positive family outcomes were reported. On the FOS seven point scale the mean ratings for the 15 family outcome items ranged from 4.5 to 6.1. The range of ratings for the three items associated with each of the five outcomes is included in Table 2. The distribution for each of the 15 items on the FOS varied.

Table 2: *FOS Rating Ranges for Associated Items*

Families understand their child's strengths, abilities, & special needs.	5.8 - 6.0
Families know their rights & advocate effectively for their children.	4.5 - 6.0
Families help their children develop & learn.	5.3 - 6.1
Families have support systems.	5.1 - 5.6
Families access desired services, programs, & activities in their community.	4.5 - 6.1

Responses to the three questions about family perceptions of early intervention, also referred to as the universal outcome indicators which each state must collect and report data on, were positive. The mean ratings for these three indicators were 5.7, 6.0, and 6.2 respectively for these three indicators 1) *know their rights;* 2) *effectively communicate their children's needs;* and 3) *help their children develop and learn.*

Responses to family-centered questions from the NCSEAM six point scale survey were more varied with mean ratings ranging from 3.3 to 5.4. The two lowest rated items were *helped us get involved in community* (3.3) and *helped me talk with other parents* (3.6). The two highest rated items were *EI provider is easy to talk to* (5.4) and *EI provider is good at working with my* *family* (5.4). Looking closer at race and family outcomes, the researchers found that Caucasian families reported higher mean family outcomes than did families from other races. Families with higher incomes also reported higher family outcomes compared to families within other income brackets. The younger the child and the longer they were in services also correlated to higher mean family outcome ratings.

These data provide a glimpse into the findings from this FOS application study and the different ways FOS data may be analyzed to assist programs. The reader is directed to the complete article to learn more about the results of this important large-scale implementation study of the FOS.

Raspa, M., Bailey, D. B., Olmstead, M. G., Nelson, R., Robinson, N., Simpson, M. E., Guillen, C., & Houts, R. (2010). Measuring family outcomes in early intervention: Findings from a large-scale survey. *Exceptional Children, 76*(4) p. 496-510.

On the WWW

http://www.taalliance.org/

The website this month is the Technical Assistance (TA) Alliance for Parent Centers. The ALLIANCE consists of one national and six regional parent technical assistance centers and includes links and contact information for Parent Training and Information Centers (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) in each state. Collectively the ALLIANCE ensures a network of information and technical assistance for parents of children with disabilities and the professionals who support them. Assistance is intended to help parents partner effectively with professionals to meet their child's educational needs. Many of the ALLIANCE staff share a common experience with the families seeking assistance, as they are often parents of children with disabilities or individuals with disabilities. The ALLIANCE provides a wealth of resources including publications, data, national conferences, institutes, webinars, a monthly e-newsletter, and many other resources. Below is a quick look at the website home page. Be sure to check out the 'resources' and 'publication' tabs for a look at the numerous materials available.

What Do the Data Say?

Across the states what percent of families participating in Part C report that early intervention services have helped the family 1) know their rights; 2) effectively communicate their children's needs; and 3) help their children develop and learn?

To answer this question the PART C SPP/APR 2009 INDICATOR ANALYSES (FFY 2007-2008) publication was reviewed. The complete publication is available online at: http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/partc/part-c_sppapr_09.pdf

The table below presents the aggregate of actual state reported data for 2007. The criteria for positive response are somewhat varied depending upon the state survey selection and scoring criteria. For example, 21 states use the FOS and 81% of those use the recommended scoring criteria whereby ratings of five or above on the seven point scale are counted as met. Many states use the NCSEAM survey and others have state-developed tools that are used to measure family outcomes. Each state must define its measurement system and criteria for positive responses.

Percent of families participating in Part C who report that EI services have helped the family	Mean	Range
know their rights	81%	48 – 100%
communicate their children's needs	83%	51– 100%
help their child develop & learn	88%	56– 100%

From the last reporting period to this one, approximately half of the states reported progress for each of the three outcome indicators, while 40-47% reported slippage across the three indicators. A smaller percentage 6-13% reported no change. Explanations for progress or slippage were generally attributed to any one or a combination of policies, practices, procedures, data collection, comparability of the data, technical assistance, and professional development.

As these data are regularly collected and reported it will be critical to consistently review and analyze changes to identify progress and help determine where improvement practices may be needed. Next month, we will examine the EDIS family outcome data.

Consultation Corner

From September 2010 through December 2010 we are excited and honored to have Dr. Donald Bailey from the Research Triangle Institute (RTI) International as the KIT consultation corner expert addressing the topic *Measuring Family Outcomes in Early intervention*.

Why are family outcomes measured (as point in time data) at the end of early intervention versus (measuring change) by determining progress from entry to exit like the child outcomes?

Actually family outcomes could be measured at any point in the family's participation in early intervention. Having multiple measures over time could provide important information about where families are in these areas at the beginning of services and how much they have changed. But some people have suggested that having families complete the survey at program entry would not provide a realistic assessment, since families might not have enough experience with early intervention or their child's disability to know how to rate themselves. And it is possible that after early intervention, some parents could actually rate themselves lower on the scale, having witnessed the complexity of the service system or their child's needs. The real question from an accountability perspective is, at the end of early intervention, to what extent have families attained the five outcomes that have generally been recognized as central to the purpose of early intervention. If families are consistently not attaining certain outcomes, or if certain groups of families are not attaining outcomes as well as others, something needs to change.

How might the Family Outcome Survey be used with families before they exit?

One suggestion would be to use the survey to create a framework or guide for a home visit, telephone call, or other interaction with the family. This could even be done in the context of an IFSP meeting. Instead of giving parents the survey to complete, you could use the major sections of the survey as the source for some semi-structured questions. For example, "Last year we gave you some information about your rights in early intervention. Are you feeling comfortable with your knowledge of these rights? Should we have a refresher or are you OK with things right now?" Since the outcomes are important in and of themselves, this is not a case of "teaching to the test!" Instead, you are using your knowledge of what early intervention should be accomplishing to find out from families whether you need to make a change in the nature or focus of services.

Continuing Education for KIT Readers

The Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) is offering a continuing education opportunity for KIT readers.

In line with the focus on Measuring Family Outcomes in Early Intervention, readers are invited to receive continuing education contact hours for reading the monthly KIT publications (September 2010 through December 2010) and completing a multiple-choice exam about the content covered in these KITs.

If you are interested, take the exam online at www.edis.army.mil and upon successful completion, you will receive a certificate of non-discipline specific continuing education contact hours.

Please send your Consultation Corner questions and KIT ideas via email to ediscspd@amedd.army.mil

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