

VIRGINIA PART C FAMILY SURVEY 2008

EXPLANATION OF RESULTS

In accordance with federal reporting requirements mandated by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Part C Lead Agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must report annually on 14 indicators related to early intervention services for children ages birth to three. This summary explains the results of a family survey conducted by the Commonwealth of Virginia to address Indicator #4, the percent of families participating in Part C who report that early intervention services have helped the family:

- a) know their rights,
- b) effectively communicate their children's needs, and
- c) help their children develop and learn.

A full analysis of the family survey data is presented in [Analysis of the Virginia Family Survey Data Addressing Part C SPP/APR Indicator #4: Final Report](#) (November 24, 2008), which was prepared by Randall D. Penfield, and is available at www.infantva.org.

The Survey Instrument

The Virginia family survey includes two rating scales developed and validated by the National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM). The 22-item Impact on Family Scale (IFS) measures the extent to which early intervention helped families achieve positive outcomes, including the

three outcomes (a, b, c) specified in Indicator #4. The 25-item Family-Centered Services Scale (FCSS) measures the quality of family-centered services provided to families.

The Sample

Surveys were returned by 1,883 families who were receiving early intervention services in May 2008. From these responses, a random sample of 1,280 families reflecting the distribution of race/ethnicity in the larger population was selected for data analysis.

Distribution of Child’s Race/Ethnicity in the Representative Sample		
Gender	N	Percentage
White	750	58.6%
Black or African-American	245	19.1%
Hispanic or Latino	140	10.9%
Asian or Pacific Islander	55	4.3%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	0.2%
Multi-racial	88	6.9%
Total	1,280	100.0%
Note. The distribution of race/ethnicity for the children receiving early intervention services in Virginia under Part C are: White = 58.5%, Black/African American = 19.9%, Hispanic = 10.7%, Asian/Pacific Islander = 4.2%, American Indian or Alaskan Native = 0.1%, Other/Multiracial = 6.5%.		

The following table displays the distribution of child’s gender in the sample.

Distribution of Child’s Gender in the Sample		
Gender	N	Percentage
Male	806	63.0%
Female	468	36.6%
Missing	6	0.5%
Total	1,280	100%

Based on established survey sample guidelines, a sample of 1,280 families is large enough to provide a high degree of confidence that the results of the survey accurately reflect the degree to which families have achieved the outcomes in Indicator #4.

Scoring the Survey

Each returned survey in the sample received an overall score (also called a measure) on the Impact on Family Scale based on that family’s responses to all 22 items. The score for each survey can range from 0 to 1000.

In order to report in the Annual Performance Report (APR) the *percent* of families who indicate that early intervention services helped them achieve the specific outcomes (a, b, c) in Indicator #4, it is necessary to establish a standard for each of the outcomes. The standard is set at a score (in that range of 0 – 1000) that provides a high degree of confidence that if a family’s score is at or above that standard for a given outcome, then the family has achieved the

outcome. Virginia chose to apply the Part C standards recommended by a nationally representative stakeholder group convened by NCSEAM. The standards for the three outcomes in Indicator #4 were set at the following scores:

- a) know their rights, at a score of 539;
- b) effectively communicate their children’s needs, at a score of 556: and
- c) help their children develop and learn, at a score of 516.

Major Findings

Statewide Percent on Indicators 4a, 4b, and 4c

The percentage reported is the number of families at or above the standard divided by the total number of families in the sample, multiplied by 100.

Percent of Respondents Meeting or Exceeding Each of the Standards for Indicator #4			
	Indicator 4A Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them know their rights	Indicator 4B Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them effectively communicate their children’s needs	Indicator 4C Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them help their child develop and learn
Percentage	66.1%	62.3%	77.5%

Agreement with Specific Items on the Impact on Family Scale (IFS)

The following table displays the percentage of families in the sample who agreed with the specific items on the IFS. Please note that the standards

described above generally require that the family strongly or very strongly agree with items. In the Rasch measurement framework, the statistical method used to analyze the family survey, an “agree” response is taken into account but receives less weight than a “strongly agree” or “very strongly agree” response (see [Analysis of the Virginia Family Survey Data Addressing Part C SPP/APR Indicator #4: Final Report](#) (November 24, 2008), available at www.infantva.org, for more information about the Rasch measurement framework). In order to be sure a family has achieved an outcome, more than a simple “agree” is needed in order to have a high degree of confidence that the response is truly an “agree” response and not simply a reflection of not disagreeing. If a family is asked whether early intervention helped them understand their child’s special needs and they respond “Yeah ... I guess so,” this would be considered an “agree” response (since they did not disagree). However, this response does not provide a high degree of confidence that early intervention really did help that family understand their child’s special needs.

Item <i>Stem:</i> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:	% Strongly/ Very strongly agree	% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree
Participate in typical activities for children and families in my community.	32%	59%
Know about services in the community.	38%	72%
Know where to go for support to meet my family's needs.	42%	76%
Keep up friendships for my child and family.	45%	77%

Item <i>Stem:</i> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:	% Strongly/ Very strongly agree	% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree
Know where to go for support to meet my child's needs.	48%	84%
Be more effective in managing my child's behavior.	52%	88%
Find information I need.	51%	88%
Improve my family's quality of life.	50%	87%
Feel that I can get the services and supports that my child and family need.	56%	90%
Feel that my family will be accepted and welcomed in the community	55%	89%
Feel more confident in my skills as a parent.	56%	91%
Feel that my child will be accepted and welcomed in the community.	56%	90%
Communicate more effectively with the people who work with my child and family.	58%	91%
Understand how the Early Intervention system works.	57%	93%
Understand the roles of the people who work with my child and family.	57%	93%
Figure out solutions to problems as they come up.	54%	90%
Feel that I can handle the challenges of parenting a child with special needs.	57%	91%
Know about my child's and family's rights concerning Early Intervention services.	60%	93%
Be able to evaluate how much progress my child is making.	60%	93%
Understand my child's special needs.	64%	94%
Feel that my efforts are helping my child.	66%	95%
Do things with and for my child that are good for my child's development.	66%	95%

Note that the percent of families agreeing at any level (agree, strongly, very strongly) with the items decreases from the items at the bottom of the list to the items at the top of the list. This is a pattern that is very stable across families and across states and essentially provides a rank-ordered list of the items in the scale in terms of how readily families agree to each item.

The survey analysis indicates that, with a very high level of confidence, one can conclude for each of the three outcomes in Indicator #4, the majority of the responses were positive and above the stringent standards set and described in the Scoring the Survey section above. Further, the results indicate that the Virginia early intervention system is helping families to achieve many positive outcomes in addition to those specified in Indicator #4.

Setting Measurable and Rigorous Targets

OSEP requires that states set measurable and rigorous targets for improved performance on the SPP indicators. Virginia identified in its amended SPP (February 2007) annual target percentages that would result in statistically significant improvement on this Indicator by Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010. A gain that is statistically significant is much more likely to represent real change than to be due to random ups and downs in the measure. The target percentages for the three outcomes in Indicator 4 for FFY 2007 are as follows:

- a) know their rights = 66.2%;
- b) effectively communicate their children's needs = 62.2%; and
- c) help their children develop and learn = 78.0%.

The following table indicates the actual percentage for FFY 2007 and the target percentage for each of the three outcomes in Indicator #4:

Percent of Respondents Meeting or Exceeding Each of the Standards for Indicator #4			
	Indicator 4A Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them know their rights	Indicator 4B Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them effectively communicate their children's needs	Indicator 4C Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them help their child develop and learn
Actual Percentage for FFY 2007	66.1%	62.3%	77.5%
Target Percentage For FFY 2007	66.2%	62.2%	78.0%

Virginia exceeded the State target for 4b (early intervention services helped families effectively communicate their children's needs), fell 0.1% short of the target for 4a (early intervention services helped families know their rights) and failed to meet the target for 4c (early intervention services helped families help their children develop and learn).

When compared to data from FFY 2006 the percentage of respondents meeting or exceeding the target in FFY 2007 fell for indicators 4a (67.2% to 66.1%) and 4b (64.7% to 62.3%). The percentage for 4c remained the same

from FFY 2006 to FFY 2007. Although the percentages fell from last year on Indicators 4a and 4b, in both cases the difference is not outside of what one would expect by random fluctuation alone. The standard error of the percentage is about 1.25%, which means two random samples from the same population would be expected to differ by about 2.5% by random fluctuation alone. The two years' percentages for 4a and 4b are not statistically different. The small difference that occurred is explained, in terms of survey responses, by the fact that, although there was an increase in the number of families with very high scores (responding in the strongly and very strongly agree categories), there was also an increase in the number of families falling just below the standards set for 4a and 4b.

Statewide Results on the Family-Centered Services Scale (FCSS)

The 25-item Family-Centered Services Scale (FCSS) measures the quality of family-centered services provided to families. There is no federal requirement to report families' perceptions of the quality of early intervention services, so no standard was set for this scale. The following table presents the percentage of families in the sample who agreed with the specific items on the FCSS.

<p style="text-align: center;">Item <u>Stem:</u> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">% Strongly/ Very strongly agree</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree</p>
Someone from the Early Intervention program went out into the community with me and my child to help get us involved in community activities and services.	22	38
My family was given information about opportunities for my child to play with other children.	35	63
My family was given information about ways of connecting with other families for information and mutual support.	35	67
My family was asked whether other children in the family needed help in understanding the needs of the brother or sister with a disability.	42	68
My family was given information about how to advocate for my child and my family.	44	79
My family was given information about where to go for help or support if I feel worried or stressed.	46	79
My family was given information about community programs that are open to all children.	47	77
I was offered help I needed, such as child care or transportation, to participate in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting(s).	47	77
Someone from the Early Intervention program asked if I was having any problems getting the services I needed.	49	81
My family was given information about what my options are if I disagree with a decision about my child's services.	50	85
Someone from the Early Intervention program asked whether the services my family was receiving were meeting our needs.	55	86
My family was given information about the public school system's programs and services for children age three and older.	55	85
I was given information to help me prepare for my child's transition.	60	88
The IFSP is keeping up with my family's changing needs.	64	92
My service coordinator is available to speak with me on a regular basis.	65	92
I know who to call if I have problems with the services and supports my child and family are receiving.	66	93
The Early Intervention service provider(s) that work	69	94

Item <i>Stem:</i> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:	% Strongly/ Very strongly agree	% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree
with my child do what they say they are going to do.		
My family's daily routines were considered when planning for my child's services.	70	94
My family was given information about activities that I could do with my child in our everyday lives.	71	94
My service coordinator is knowledgeable and professional.	71	95
Written information I receive is written in an understandable way.	70	96
My family was given information about the rights of parents regarding Early Intervention services.	71	96
The Early Intervention service provider(s) that work with my child show a willingness to learn about the strengths and needs of my child and family.	72	95
I have felt part of the team when meeting to discuss my child.	74	96
The Early Intervention service provider(s) that work with my child are easy for me to talk to about my child and my family.	73	95

Note that the percent of families agreeing at any level (agree, strongly, very strongly) with the items decreases from the items at the bottom of the list to the items at the top of the list. This is a pattern that is very stable across families and across states and essentially provides a rank-ordered list of the items in the scale in terms of how readily families agree to each item.

Relationship Between IFS and FCSS

Research indicates that, in general, as the FCSS score increases, so does the IFS Score. That is, having a higher endorsement of the quality of family-centered services is associated with a higher level of positive impact on the

family (but note that this does not necessarily mean that the relationship is causal).

Improvement Planning

As explained previously, the items in each of the scales are essentially rank-ordered by how readily families agree with them. When looking at the tables above that list the specific items on the IFS and FCSS, the items that are lower on the list build toward the items that are higher on the list. In other words, a family who strongly agrees with the statement that they “Feel that I can handle the challenges of parenting a child with special needs” most likely strongly or very strongly agreed with the 5 items below that on the list of IFS items (i.e., know rights, able to evaluate progress, understand child’s special needs, feel my efforts are helping my child, do things that are good for child’s development). Therefore, when we are looking to improve on one of the outcomes in Indicator 4 or on some aspect of family-centered services, we can look to the items below the one we want to improve in order to identify possible improvement strategies. In particular, it is helpful to understand the following when using the survey results for improvement planning:

- The items lowest on the list are about the relationship between the family and their child.
- As you move up the table, the items are about the relationship between the family and their service provider(s).

- Finally, at the top of the table, the survey items reflect the relationship between the family and their community.

In addition, while performance percentages on the outcomes in Indicator #4 are derived from the IFS, the FCSS provides information about where improvements may be needed in order to improve the family outcomes.