

EARLY INTERVENTION: ABILITY TO PAY

Follow-up Information from ATP Data Collection

Report for the VICC

September 8, 1999

In response to a request from the Part C Early Intervention Babies Can't Wait Office, the DMHMRSAS Office of Research and Evaluation provided further analysis of the data collected on localities' ability to pay mechanisms and sliding fee scales. The data was evaluated based on questions related to differences in what families indicated they were paying, reasons given by respondents for difficulty in paying fees and differences in income levels from one council to another with families who said they had difficulty paying for early intervention services. This report, representing all regions of the Commonwealth, offers additional information on local interagency coordinating councils (LICC's) ability to pay mechanisms and appeals processes with general findings.

General Findings and Analysis of ATP Survey Data:

Based upon each council's responses about whether there were differences in what families indicated they were paying that led them to say they were having difficulty paying for early intervention services, the data indicates that there were no clear differences; the percent of families indicating "difficulty" is rather evenly distributed across payment levels, and the number of families responding that they "don't know" how much they are paying is considerable. The findings support Old Dominion University's overall observation from the survey that monthly payment rates did not indicate what program adjustment was needed.

The data was further analyzed to determine if there were differences among the Councils for reasons families had difficulty paying for early intervention services. When viewed in the aggregate, the breakdowns are small in number and the distribution by reasons is inconclusive about families who indicated they had difficulty paying for early intervention services. The occurrence of reasons based on the number of respondents by locality should not be used for specific targeted intervention.

Around the question of were there differences in income from one council to another with families who said they had difficulty paying for early intervention services, with most councils having fewer than ten respondents, it is impossible to draw conclusions on differences. However, the data supports Old Dominion University's observation that household income does not associate with the likelihood that a family has difficulty paying for services.

In conclusion, given the sparse data, when broken down to the local council level, it would appear that reverting back to the previous analysis, i.e. identifying the councils with number and percentage of families indicating difficulty paying for services is the best approach to understanding the issue. In a simple review of the data, ODU's findings are supported; there is no consistency between income levels or payment amounts and the response of difficulty paying fees. This is true on the local as well as aggregated level. There is not enough data to develop a correlation between monthly payments, reason for difficulty paying fees, or income levels and local council responses. The most important findings relate to the data representing the percentage of families indicating difficulty in paying for services. Councils with a large percentage of families indicating difficulty paying for services would seem to indicate the need for addressing the issues directly with local councils.