

Improving outcomes for children and families is at the heart of all Part C programs, and using data for systems and practice-level improvements is key. All states collect and report information about how well Part C programs are serving families. States measure the percentage of families of children with delays or disabilities who received services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) who reported that early intervention had helped them:

- ◆ Know their rights
- ◆ Effectively communicate their children's needs
- ◆ Help their child develop and learn.

Having these data allows states to understand current systems and plan for improvement.

According to the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children, recommended practices with families have three themes. These are that practices are family-centered, build family capacity, and promote family-professional collaboration. These practices are essential to high-quality services in Part C early intervention. They promote active decision-making about children's assessment, planning, and interventions and support the creation of an agreed-upon plan for goals and services as well as the achievement of both child and family goals.

National Performance Data

Each year, the ECTA Center computes a national average based on data from Indicator 4 of states' Annual Performance Reports. Indicator 4 reflects the percentage of families reporting that early intervention services helped them with the three outcomes. For FFY 2015-16 (submitted in February, 2017), the national averages were as follows:

Early intervention has helped the family...

- *know their rights*: **89.5%**
- *effectively communicate their children's needs*: **90.0%**
- *help their children develop and learn*: **92.2%**

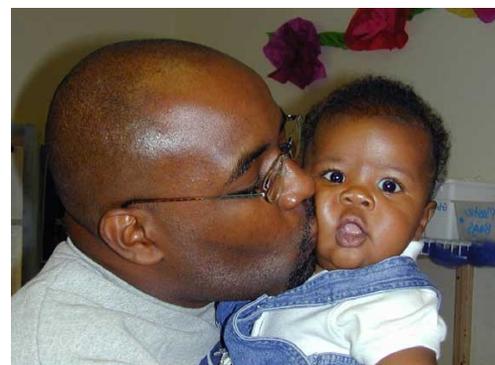
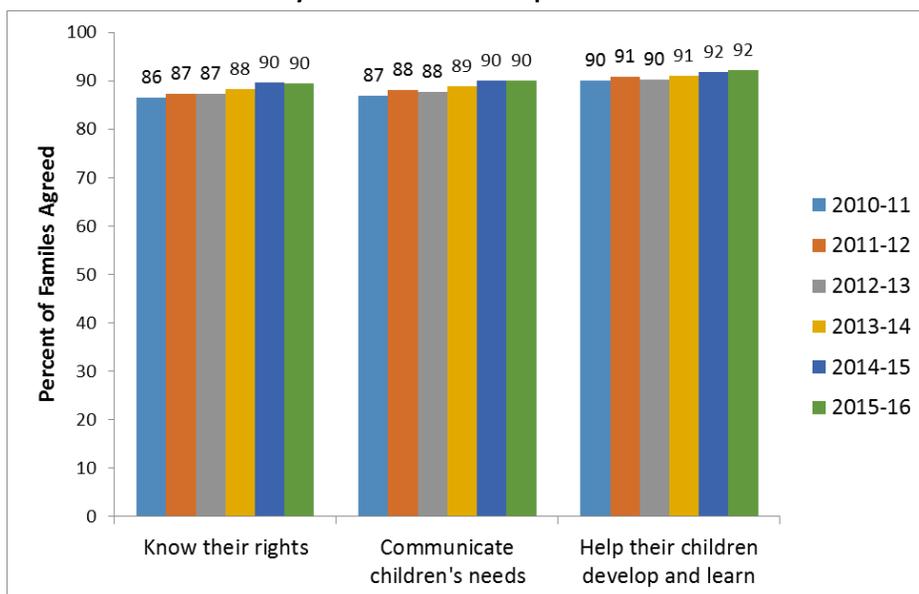


Figure 1: Part C Indicator 4 Trends Over Time
Early intervention has helped families...



Trends in Family Outcomes Data

Over time, the Indicator 4 data have been consistent and high. The highest area of performance continues to be in early intervention helping the family help their children develop and learn (Figure 1).

In the past six years, the national performance has remained steady and made small increases across the three outcomes.



Survey Methods

Although all states use survey methods to collect data for this indicator, the survey questions and processes vary. Three survey tools are commonly used by states to collect family data: the Family Outcomes Survey– Original, the Family Outcomes Survey– Revised, and the NCSEAM Survey. Some states have developed their own unique survey.

States distribute and collect the survey using different methods as well, including in-person, mail, online, or phone methods. Some states survey a sample or subset of families, while others survey all families in the program each year. Regardless of which approach a state uses, all states must collect this information with the greatest possible accuracy and completeness.



Survey Data Quality

Daily interactions are key to children's learning and positive outcomes for the child and family, and high-quality data are essential for demonstrating how programs are doing. Collecting data from families using practices that ensure high-quality data allows programs to identify and target program improvement needs, as well as showcase and learn from high-performing programs.

States have made progress in improving the quality of their family survey data, including implementing efforts to collect data from diverse and underrepresented families and improve response rates overall. Promising strategies states use include partnering with family organizations, improving inclusion of families in stakeholder groups at multiple levels, conducting ongoing data analyses, and regularly sharing results with families and providers.

DEC Recommended Practices

Developing and maintaining a high-quality service delivery system, using evidence-based practices, and implementing these practices with fidelity are all part of effective early childhood systems for young children with disabilities.

As programs continue to improve the collection, analysis, and use of data from families, they are also using data to improve their practices. One such set of practices are the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices (<http://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices>).

The DEC Recommended Practices are organized in the following seven quality strands. In all strands, there is an emphasis on evidence-based practices that respect and acknowledge the valuable role families play in early intervention.

- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Assessment
- ◆ Environment
- ◆ Family
- ◆ Instruction
- ◆ Interaction
- ◆ Teaming and Collaboration



Supporting the DEC Recommended Practices



To help families and practitioners understand and implement these evidence-based practices, free resources have been developed- checklists, video examples, and practice guides (<http://ectacenter.org/decrp/>).

As part of State Systemic Improvement Plans (SSIPs), many states have chosen to implement a subset of DEC and other evidence-based practices. Practice change is complex and can include infrastructure change, such as revisions to data systems, professional development systems, governance, and more. A useful tool for assessing infrastructure to support practice change is the ECTA Systems Framework and Self-Assessment available at <http://ectacenter.org/sysframe/>.

It is by identifying and putting systems in place to implement, support, and collect quality data on these and other research-based practices with families that states and programs can be positioned for improved outcomes for children with disabilities and their families.