

Examples of Improvements for Children and Families – December 2009

Thirty-five percent (**35%**) of state work plans showed **improved results for children and families**. Many of these impacts were the direct result of improved practices. State work plan impacts for families and children included:

- Improved timely access to services
- Increase in numbers of children being identified and served
- Improved access to services in natural environments
- Increase in numbers of children being served in inclusive settings
- Improved family capacity such as increased understanding of IFSP process and transition
- Increased understanding by family members of language development, reading more to their children, and using speech/language assessment to help them monitor their child's progress as a result of a state program for monitoring children at-risk of language delays
- Improved language development in children

Data that demonstrated improvements for children and families included results from local monitoring and state data systems such as the percent of children served in natural environments, family surveys about transition, and the number of children accessing services within the 45-day requirement. Additional data was collected from the comments of state and local administrators, providers, family members and family organizations:

- Improved *timely* access to services
"...for children and families, it's just they're getting better services in terms of timeliness. They're not waiting. They're not, in some instances, having to get two or three assessments or evaluations to determine eligibility. These are things that families now would say compared to families a year ago."
– State Part C Coordinator
- Increase in numbers of children being identified and served
"The Child Find numbers have increased and the numbers of children being served by the Infants and Toddlers Office have increased as well."
– State Part C Coordinator

"...our numbers are better in terms of kids enrolled birth to one and birth to 3 because of getting kids in a more timely manner, people were able to focus on identifying other children."

– State Part C Coordinator

- Improved access to services in natural environments

"We're helping them create a better bond with their child that's going to help them well after they leave our program as opposed to a family coming in and relying on the medical model. We have heard back from many families that this truly has been very helpful for them and they feel they are doing all this work, they're helping their child and they feel very proud of that....I think it is a huge positive change. Families are able to recognize that they are the primary teachers of their child and that is what we need to be set up to learn through your whole life with your child. The change is going to come from what they are doing with their child in between the therapy services."

– Service Provider

- Increase in numbers of children being served in inclusive settings

"We've actually tripled our number of students that we're working with in Head Start."

– Service Provider

- Improved family capacity such as increased understanding of the IFSP process, the transition process, and their child's language development

"We also hand out Family Packets at that first meeting and we tell them to go home and read through. Some parents bring that back and that is when they write out what their concerns are for their child and they understand what the IFSP is. They understand that better. This is given to them at the first meeting. Some parents come back and they use those ideas to write the IFSP themselves and they feel like they are actually a participant instead of us telling them this and that. I have seen a change in that since we have been doing the family packets."

– Service Provider

"I've noticed that when I go in and explain the IFSP process that they are understanding a little bit more. They are coming to the IFSP meeting a little bit more prepared, with possible goals and outcomes that they want their child to achieve. Whereas before hand, it was mostly me directing, it wasn't as much of a team effort."

– Service Provider

“Families now have a resource to help them understand the transition process. Staff are now better prepared to help families explore all the option available to them to ensure that intervention continues, either through accessing other service providers, or accessing resources in the community.”

– State Part C Coordinator

“I would try to talk to him as an adult before. Now, I really try to get down on his level and pull it out of him. Make sure he understands and stuff like that.”

– Family Member

- Increased understanding by family members of language development, reading more to their children, and using speech/language assessment to help them monitor their child’s progress as a result of a state program for monitoring children at-risk of language delays.

“Children and families have access to more resources to promote language development and early literacy. Families report positive results in reading more to their children and appreciate the book exchange in place with [the new program]. While there are few children in [the program], children enrolled in [the program] are making progress.”

– Part C Coordinator

The state conducted an evaluation of the program using evaluation forms and reviewing files that included family interviews. Overall, positive ratings and comments reflected improvement in children’s communication skills, expressive language, and speech; and useful resources, materials and ideas for families to use in working to improve children’s communication. Useful activities and materials that families reported included the children’s book and educational materials given to them by the providers; parent behaviors to support, elicit, and extend children’s language; texture/sensory box as language stimulus; and educational television programs.

Ratings and comments ranged (on a scale from “1 = strongly disagree” to “3 = neutral” to “5 = strongly agree”), but overall means do show that families learned new ways to enrich their child’s language development (mean = 3.8), families incorporated the suggested language enrichment activities into their daily lives (mean = 3.6), families felt supported by ongoing communication from their service coordinator (mean = 3.3), families benefited by involvement in the program (mean = 3.6), children made progress in language development (mean = 3.9), learning to use the MacArthur checklist made families more aware of their child’s language development (mean = 3.6).

- Improved language development in children

“He is a completely different child than he was a year ago. So it was a success. Now, was I quick to the gun and brought it up too quick? Maybe. Was I just too overly paranoid? I may have been. May he have developed anyway? Maybe. But the program has [given] him a jump-start. It helped develop him. I don’t think he would have gotten to this level without the program.”

– Family Member

“His pronunciation is better – and you understand him more all of the time.”

– Family Member

“His vocabulary is getting much better.”

– Family Member