nectac Evaluation Highlights

Client Feedback from March 2009 - March 2010

compiled April 2010

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BACKGROUND

The NECTAC Evaluation Unit collects and analyzes data to describe the quantity and nature of the technical assistance services provided by NECTAC staff. The Unit evaluates the quality and relevance of NECTAC services and products and whether TA recipients use the information and resources gained to improve state and local systems and services. In addition, in February 2010, a national survey was conducted by an independent external evaluator with all primary clients (Part C and Section 619 Coordinators from all states and jurisdictions) regardless of their level of participation in NECTAC TA. The highlights included in this report include data from both internal and external evaluation efforts from March 2009 to March 2010.

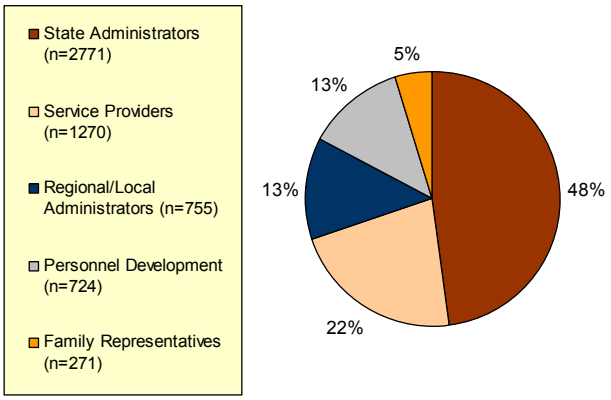
MAJOR FINDINGS - DOCUMENTATION

NECTAC staff provided more than 754 TA services to Part C and Section 619 programs in all 60 states and jurisdictions. Most of the staff time (70%) was spent on individualized TA where the TA was focused on a single state with a specific issue or TA request. The other 30% was spent on cross-state TA where the TA was designed for multiple states, such as the OSEP National Early Childhood 2009 Conference, the conference on Measuring Child and Family Outcomes, the Ninth National Early Childhood Inclusion Institute and others.

A total of 5791 individuals (duplicated count, by event) participated in NECTAC TA. Nearly half (48%) were state level administrators, typically Part C and 619 Coordinators and staff. Twenty-two percent (22%) were local teachers, service providers and therapists who directly serve young children with disabilities and their families. Other participants included local and regional administrators (13%), personnel development system staff (13%) such as State TA systems staff, family members and family organization representatives (5%).

Proportion of Participant Types Included in All NECTAC TA Services by System Level
Total Number of Participants = 5791

(percentages may not total 100 due to rounding)



NECTAC also provided TA to a variety of other participants including federal agency staff from various programs, professional organizations, national and regional TA providers, private consultants, and the media.

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

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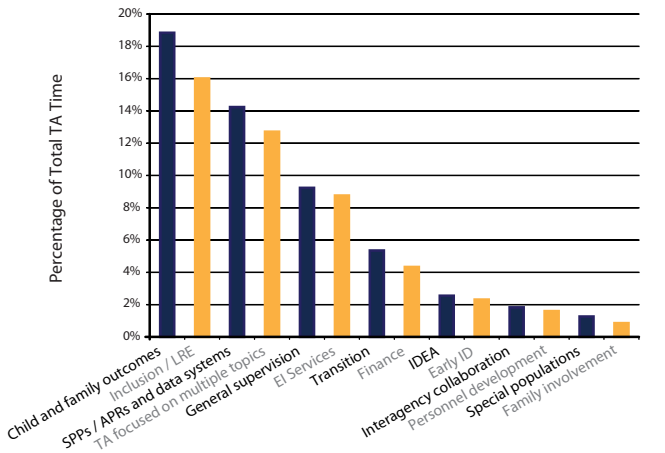
TA&D NETWORK

NECTAC provided TA on a variety of topics related to the implementation of IDEA. The greatest amount of time was spent supporting states in the areas of developing and implementing systems for measuring child and family outcomes (19%), expanding opportunities for children to receive services in inclusive environments/LRE with their peers (16%), and assisting with APR/SPPs and data systems (14%).

NECTAC TA Time by Topic Area



PUBLICATIONS

This year, NECTAC staff published a number of resources to benefit Part C and Section 619 staff and the entire TA&D network. Some key publications included:

- The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center Model for Long-Term Systems Change
- Evaluating SPP/APR Improvement Activities
- Section 619 Profile
- Queries: Screening and Early Identification of Autism Spectrum Disorders
- The Evolution of the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
- Thinking Points: A Synthesis of Ideas About the Change Process

In addition, NECTAC maintains an extensive website that provides products via downloads at over 15,000 per month and disseminates a weekly edition of eNotes to 1700 subscribers that is also archived online.

COLLABORATION WITH TA PARTNERS

NECTAC collaborates with a variety of partners to ensure the quality of NECTAC TA, to increase the quality of others' TA, and to reduce duplication of efforts. In this reporting period, 70% of Major TA services documented involved collaboration with TA partners. The most common TA partners are the Early Childhood Outcomes Center (ECO), the Regional Resource Centers Program (RRCP), and the Data Accountability Center (DAC). Feedback from a recent TA partners survey showed some very positive results. All partners who responded to the survey agreed that in their collaborative work with us, NECTAC has consistently provided a high quality contribution. All responding partners also agreed that collaboration with NECTAC had benefitted their organizations' work on behalf of young children with disabilities and their families. Types of collaborative work conducted in this reporting period included:

- Collaboratively planned and/or implemented TA
- Participated in planning others' conferences, meetings, and webinars
- Presented at others' conferences and workshops
- Invited others to present at NECTAC conferences and workshops
- Convened two and participated in six OSEP priority teams
- Participated in other projects' advisory boards
- Invited others to participate in the NECTAC Advisory Board

EVIDENCE OF CLIENT SATISFACTION

Participants rated the quality and relevance of the TA on a scale of 1-5 with 4 being "agree" and 5 "strongly agree." Results showed 94% of evaluated TA services had a quality mean rating of 4.0 or higher and 97% had a relevance rating of 4.0 or higher. A national survey conducted by an independent external evaluator in February 2010 showed similar results where 97% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that NECTAC provides high quality services and products, and 99% "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that NECTAC services are relevant to EI/ECSE policies and practices.

EVIDENCE OF PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

Both internal and external evaluation efforts measured the extent to which participants used NECTAC TA to improve state systems, local systems and practices. NECTAC follow-up evaluations asked TA participants to report whether NECTAC TA had contributed to improvements in their states and, if so, examples of improvement. As seen in the table below, most respondents (76-99%) reported improved state and local infrastructure and/or improved practices.

% of Participants Reported NECTAC TA Impacted State and Local Systems and Practices		
—NECTAC Follow-up Evaluation Results—		
	Improved Infrastructure	Improved Practices
Major Individualized TA	**99%**	**92%**
Major Cross-State Events	**76%**	**77%**
Systems Change Initiatives	**99%**	**86%**

State and Local Systems Changes

Ninety-eight percent (98%) of external evaluation respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their state level infrastructure had been improved because of the services and/or products received from NECTAC. Those who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" were asked to indicate the area(s) in which they had made improvements. The top three areas of change were:

- State Guidance (74%)
- Policies and procedures (73%)
- General supervision and monitoring (55%)

The external evaluation of NECTAC also showed that 96% of respondents "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that their local level infrastructure had been improved because of the services and/or products received from NECTAC. Those who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" were asked to indicate the area(s) in which they had made improvements. The top three areas of change were:

- Local Guidance (57%)
- Policies and procedures (57%)
- General supervision and monitoring (45%)

Some examples of client feedback related to state and local systems changes as a result of NECTAC TA:

"Our state is moving towards trans-disciplinary team approach and the multi-faceted aspects of this are complex. NECTAC staff has helped us brainstorm pros/cons and challenges/strengths to ensure the steps we are taking are insightful and thorough in order to be successful."

"NECTAC assisted with the revision of our monitoring system which has streamlined monitoring at the state and local program level, helped align with the APR requirements and made more manageable at the state and local level."

"Our Part B and C staff are meeting on a regular basis. We are in the final stages of completing our updated interagency agreement and identifying needed training."

In this reporting year, NECTAC worked intensively with 16 states to support Long Term Systems Change Initiatives related to Transition, Finance, Measuring Child Outcomes, EI Services, and General Supervision. NECTAC is working closely with a number of states' Expanding Opportunities initiatives for increasing inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities. These initiatives, along with the support of NECTAC staff and other TA partners, have produced some key resources and materials, including extensive strategic plans, revised guidance documents, online training modules, public awareness pieces, etc. The Year 4 Evaluation Report provides state examples of systems change with links to evidence.

Changes in Practices

Ninety-six percent (96%) of external evaluation respondents agreed or strongly agreed that practices at the local level had been improved because of the services and/or products received from NECTAC. The top three areas of change were:

- Data collection and monitoring participation (70%)
- Direct service or teaching strategies (47%)
- IFSP/IEP development (40%)

Some examples of client feedback related to practice changes as a result of NECTAC TA:

"The local practices have utilized the assessment information towards improving how they assess communication delays. The locals have also utilized the IFSP family centered materials to revise the IFSP and improve family centered practices."

"Conference calls with NECTAC staff when planning endeavors aimed at improving local services; direct training of local staff at summer institutes in the state; helping to develop and participate in taping of material for access on the web by local service providers."

"I have really used the information on inclusion to assist the LEA's in our state on developing more inclusive programs and classrooms."

CONCLUSION

In Year 4, NECTAC provided TA services to all states and jurisdictions and met all its performance objectives. Services have been reported by participants as high quality and relevant to their policies and practices. Evaluation data show that NECTAC has strengthened service systems to ensure that children with disabilities (birth through 5 years) and their families receive and benefit from high quality, culturally appropriate and family-centered supports and services.

Keep the feedback coming!

NECTAC appreciates all the time and thoughtful answers our clients contributed to our evaluation. Client feedback is used regularly to improve our knowledge and TA services. Visit our website at http://www.nectac.org

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) is supported by cooperative agreement H326H060005 with the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), U.S. Department of Education (ED). NECTAC is a part of OSEP's Technical Assistance and Dissemination Network.

Project Officer: *Julia Martin Eile*
Project Director: *Lynne Kahn*

This report is online at:
http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/nectac_eval_highlights_2010.pdf

ALSO AVAILABLE FROM NECTAC

NECTAC TA Collaborations

Diefendorf, M.

This paper highlights several current collaborative activities of the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC). There are many specific examples of TA collaborations that take place on a regular basis; the seven examples presented here were selected to represent different types of collaboration. The descriptions were developed for the OSEP/OESE Leveraging Resources Meeting, Washington, DC, April 13-14, 2010 and were included in handouts at the Improving Early Learning Workgroup sessions at that meeting.

NECTAC, (May 2010), 8 pp. Available from:
http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/nectac_ta_collaborations.pdf

Expanding Opportunities: An Interagency Inclusion Initiative

Prepared by NECTAC

Research has shown that both young children with disabilities and their peers benefit from participating together in quality programs and community activities. However, inclusive opportunities for young children with disabilities are often not systematic, comprehensive or necessarily of high quality. Four federal agency partners recognized the need to promote collaborative efforts in states that would result in high quality inclusive opportunities for all children and families. They created the Expanding Opportunities Initiative and supported it through the coordinated efforts of their technical assistance (TA) resources. This interagency inclusion initiative began in 2005 and has continued to be supported by the federal partners each year.

NECTAC, (March 2010), 2 pp. Available from:
http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/nectac_eval_expopps.pdf

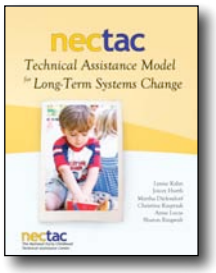
Evaluation Highlights: Client Feedback September 2006 - October 2009

Kasprzak, C., Marshall, J., Terrell, A., & Jones, E.

The NECTAC Evaluation Unit collects and analyzes data to describe the quantity and nature of the technical assistance services provided by NECTAC staff. The Unit determines the quality and relevance of NECTAC services and products and whether clients use NECTAC Technical Assistance (TA) to improve state and local systems and services. An external evaluation was conducted with all primary clients (Part C and Section 619 Coordinators from all states and jurisdictions) regardless of their level of participation in NECTAC TA. The highlights included in this report include data from October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2009.

NECTAC, (December 2009), 4 pp. Available from:
http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/nectac_eval_highlights_report.pdf

NECTAC Technical Assistance Model for Long-Term Systems Change



Kahn, L., Hurth, J., Diefendorf, M., Kasprzak, C., Lucas, A., & Ringwalt, S.

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (NECTAC) was charged by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) from 2001-2006 to develop, implement, and evaluate an approach to technical assistance that would result in sustainable systems change in state Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education programs served under the early childhood provisions of IDEA. Even with the individualized nature of the systems change work with states, and with the variation across plans on a number of dimensions, NECTAC was able to determine the most effective strategies relating to the development and implementation processes for producing better results. The most important lessons learned are incorporated into the description of the model in this paper and can be applied to future technical assistance with states on system change initiatives.

NECTAC, (June 2009), 26 pp. *Available* from:
http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/tamodel.pdf