

NCDB 2008 Early Childhood Needs Survey: Summary March 2008

The Early Childhood Identification and Intervention Workgroup would like to thank the state deaf-blind projects who participated in our *Early Childhood Identification and Intervention Needs Survey*. Thirty-six projects responded to the survey. The purpose of this summary is two-fold. First, NCDB is required to identify significant issues in the field of deaf-blindness in a report to be submitted to OSEP by October 2008. These survey findings will be used as one of the data sources for that report. Second, because the survey included questions related to early childhood technical assistance needs, collaboration with early childhood agencies, knowledge of early intervention practices, and potential model development activities, the results may be useful to state projects.

There are three components to this document: (1) survey findings on early childhood practices; (2) technical assistance needs identified by the survey; and (3) respondents' interest level in collaborating with NCDB on model development activities to improve early childhood practices.

Early Childhood Practices

The survey asked a number of questions about state deaf-blind project involvement in practices related to early identification, natural environments, child outcomes, transition, and preschool inclusion. These five categories are consistent with OSEP's Part C and Part B 619 State Performance Plan (SPP) indicators. For additional details, see tables 1 through 6.

Early Identification

Sixty-nine percent of respondents indicated that they do not believe their projects have adequately identified infants who are deaf-blind prior to 1 year of age and 53% do not believe they have adequately identified children prior to three years of age. It is difficult to determine whether under-identification of young children who are deaf-blind is due to lack of identification or lack of referral from other agencies, including state Part C agencies and state Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs. Of the state deaf-blind projects that responded to this survey, 100% had received a referral from their state's part C agency and 36% had received a referral from their state's EHDI program. Approximately 40% of respondents are involved in SPP efforts to improve early identification.

The need for earlier identification identified by survey respondents is confirmed by our own National Deaf-Blind Child Count. Figure 1 shows that there are almost twice as many children who are identified as deaf-blind in the 3- through 5-year-old category as in the birth through 2-year-old category. Figure 2 shows the number of children for each year of age from birth to 6. Additionally, we know from the child count data that many children who are deaf-blind have congenital vision and hearing loss or experience vision and hearing loss shortly after birth due to complications of prematurity.

Number of Children Birth through 5

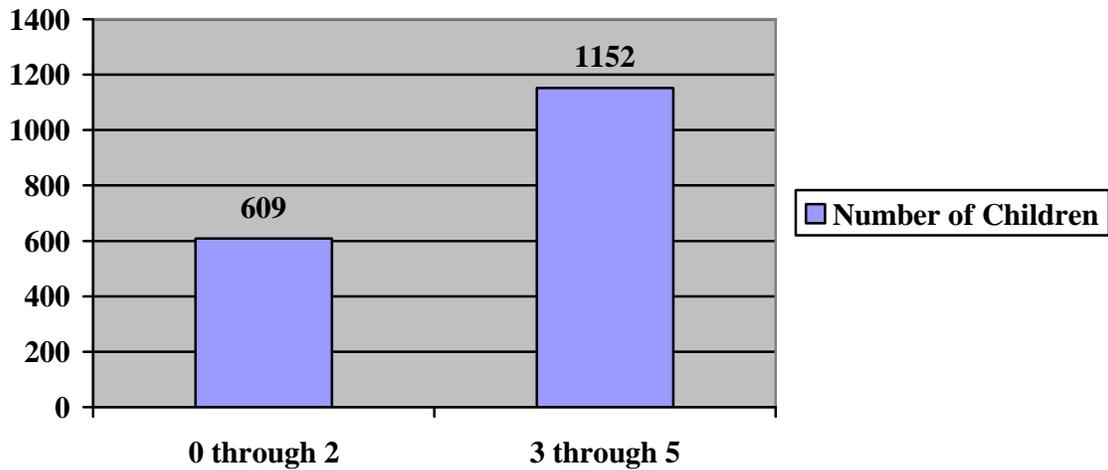


Figure 1

Number of Children Birth through 5

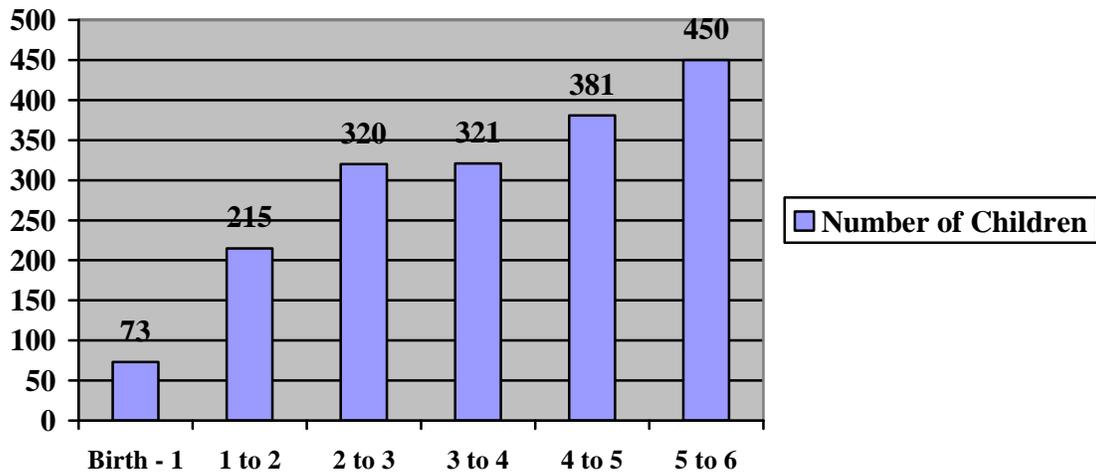


Figure 2

Research on the plasticity of the brain related to hearing and visual perception strongly supports the need for early identification and the early provision of services and has implications for intervention, including cochlear implantation (Mitchell & Maslin, 2007; Lee et al., 2005; Sharma, Gilley, Dorman & Baldwin, 2007). Research on both early intervention and cochlear implantation shows that age at identification is critical and “earlier is better.”

Natural Environment Practices

The survey results suggest that as a field we are doing much better at addressing early intervention in natural environments than the field of disabilities as a whole, as indicated by the following findings:

- 61% of respondents are aware of their states' SPP efforts related to natural environments and 30% are involved in these efforts;
- more than 80% report a high level of knowledge about intervention in natural environments;
- more than 94% report having observed children with deaf-blindness receiving services in natural environments; and
- 61% have received TA requests from Part C providers specific to training, implementation, and evaluation of natural environment interventions.

These findings are more positive than those for young children with other disabilities (Stremel & Campbell, 2007). Numerous studies indicate that provider-directed early intervention and contrived instructional practices remain prevalent in early intervention services (Campllell & Sawyer, 2007; Dunst et al., 2001; McWilliam, 2000).

Child Outcomes

Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported being involved in SPP efforts related to child outcomes.

Preschool Inclusion

Examination of survey data suggests positive outcomes related to preschool inclusion. More than 80% of respondents reported that they had observed a child with deaf-blindness in a regular preschool environment and had provided TA to assist in the inclusion of a preschool child with deaf-blindness. However, National Deaf-Blind Child Count data indicate that only 10% of children who are deaf-blind, aged 3 to 5 are included in the regular preschool classrooms (Figure 3). There is a tremendous need to increase preschool inclusion. This is also a major concern of DEC and the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Consortium, in which NCDB is involved. Over 80% of respondents feel that they have a good deal of knowledge about practices that promote preschool inclusion and four of the respondents indicated that they were involved in efforts to improve inclusion in their states.

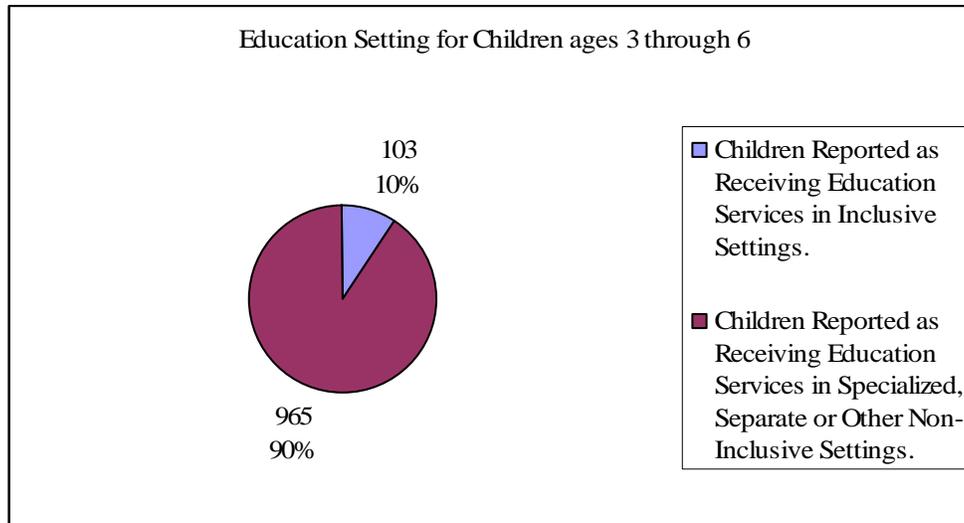


Figure 3

Transition

Forty-two percent of respondents reported involvement in SPP efforts related to early childhood transition. Eighty percent reported being knowledgeable or very knowledgeable about practices that promote effective transition from preschool to kindergarten.

Technical Assistance Needs

The survey results clearly reflect that state deaf-blind projects are interested in receiving TA on strategies to improve early identification (Table 7). Fifty-four percent of respondents indicated interest in TA on collaboration with the medical community to improve early identification and 34% would like TA on collaboration with Part C and EDHI programs for the same purpose. TA related to adapting and modifying the assessment and outcome process for children who are deaf-blind was also highly rated (46%).

Potential technical assistance needs are likely to be influenced by upcoming state Part C and Part B Annual Progress Reports. These reports were recently submitted to OSEP and are being analyzed to determine technical assistance needs specific to each indicator. The results will be disseminated to Part C and Part B agencies in June 2008 and will be publicly available in August 2008.

Interest in Collaborating with NCDB on Model Development Activities

OSEP's conceptual framework supports model identification, development, replication, and evaluation as critical practices in technical assistance and dissemination. The survey asked respondents about their level of interest in working with NCDB and other national partners on activities to improve early childhood identification and intervention (Table 8). Three-quarters of respondents reported that early identification is an area of interest and approximately one-quarter are already involved in efforts to improve early identification. Many respondents also expressed an interest in collaborations focusing on the other topical areas.

Tables

Table 1

Do you believe that your project has adequately identified infants who are deaf-blind prior to one year of age?		
Yes	11	31%
No	25	69%
Total	36	100%

Table 2

Do you believe that your project has adequately identified young children who are deaf-blind prior to three years of age?		
Yes	17	47%
No	19	53%
Total	36	100%

Table 3

Have you observed young children who are deaf-blind receiving services in natural environments?		
Yes	34	94%
No	2	6%
Total	36	100%

Table 2

Have you received TA requests from Part C providers related to training, implementation and/or evaluation of natural environment interventions?		
Yes	22	61%
No	14	39%
Total	36	100%

Table 3

Have you observed children who are deaf-blind in a regular preschool environment?		
Yes	30	83%
No	6	17%
Total	36	100%

Table 4

Has your project provided TA to assist in the inclusion of a preschool child who is deaf-blind?		
Yes	30	83%
No	6	17%
Total	36	100%

Table 5

Involvement in state's State Performance Plan efforts.		
	Aware of state efforts	Involved in state efforts
Transition	16 48%	14 42%
Outcomes	16 48%	13 39%
Early Identification	18 53%	13 38%
Natural Environments	20 61%	10 30%
Preschool Inclusion	18 55%	10 30%

Table 6

Level of knowledge in areas.					
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	No knowledge	2	Some knowledge	4	Very knowledgeable
Intervention in natural environments	0 0%	2 6%	5 14%	11 31%	18 50%
Practices that promote effective transition from Part C services to preschool	0 0%	2 6%	6 17%	15 42%	13 36%
Practices that promote preschool inclusion	1 3%	1 3%	4 11%	17 47%	13 36%
Practices that promote effective transition from preschool to kindergarten	0 0%	2 6%	5 14%	17 47%	12 33%

Table 7

Interested in receiving technical assistance from NCDB		
Collaborating with the medical community to improve early identification	19	54%
Adapting and modifying the assessment and outcome process for access by children who are deaf-blind in collaboration with Part C agencies	16	46%
Collaborating with Part C and Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs to increase child referrals for your child count	12	34%
Increasing knowledge and skills to provide TA to Early Intervention teams for effective preschool inclusion	10	29%
Increasing knowledge of effective early transition planning and implementation	9	26%
Collaborating with Part C and EHDI programs to increase Requests for TA	7	20%
Increasing skills to train providers to implement natural environment interventions	5	14%
Increasing knowledge about natural environment interventions	2	6%

Table 8

Level of interest in collaborating with NCDB and other national partners in model development or replication activities.		
Top number is the count of respondents selecting the option. Bottom % is percent of the total respondents selecting the option.	Yes, as we are currently involved in efforts in this area	Yes, this is an area we have identified as important
Early Identification	8 23%	19 54%
Preschool Inclusion	4 12%	13 38%
Natural Environment Interventions	3 9%	11 34%
Outcomes in Part C and Part B (619) Services	2 6%	16 47%
Transition	2 6%	17 49%

References

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