



National Service Coordination Leadership Institute
 Summary of National Data from the Service Coordination Feedback Survey

Overview

In preparation for the *National Service Coordination Leadership Institute*, an online survey was sent to early intervention (EI) stakeholders (e.g., service coordinators, other service providers, administrators, others) in participating states via state representatives. The survey was designed to solicit input about strengths, challenges, and areas for improvement related to the provision of service coordination to families of infants and toddlers receiving Part C early intervention (IDEA, 2004). The survey was open for approximately 7-10 days, depending on the state.

The survey included five items designed to gather information about perceptions related to the work of service coordination, including perceived strengths, challenges, areas for improvement, and how the provision of service coordination could be improved. Quantitative data was analyzed for all participants and for participants who identified as service coordinators. A thematic analysis was conducted on qualitative responses to open-ended questions to identify trends. Data from the survey was summarized and shared during the *Institute* and used when prioritizing needs and developing a national action plan for preparing, empowering, and supporting service coordinators across the country.

Demographics

In total, 764 respondents completed the survey from eight states. These states were chosen to participate because each state had representatives who had committed to attending the *National Service Coordination Leadership Institute* and engaging in ongoing activities as part of the National Service Coordination Workgroup.

| State | Number of Respondents |
|-------------------|-----------------------|
| Colorado | 74 |
| Delaware | 46 |
| Illinois | 88 |
| Iowa | 84 |
| Kentucky | 74 |
| New Mexico | 204 |
| Texas | 88 |
| Virginia | 106 |
| TOTAL | 764 |

| Role | Percentage of Respondents |
|---|---------------------------|
| Service Coordinator | 61.93% (n=475) |
| Service Provider | 29.34% (n=225) |
| Administrator/Supervisor | 26.34% (n=189) |
| Training and Technical Assistance Provider | 5.48% (n=42) |
| State/Lead Agency Representative | 2.87% (n=22) |
| Family Member/Caregiver | .91% (n=7) |
| Other | 10.43% (n=80) |

Respondents were asked to indicate their role(s) in early intervention and could check all options that applied to their work. Respondents identified themselves primarily as service coordinators, followed by service providers and administrators/supervisors. Since respondents could indicate multiple roles, it is likely that some checked multiple roles.



Perceptions Data

Respondents were asked to indicate which service coordination activities were a strength and which needed improvement in their state. Choices included the nine service coordination activities specifically described in the federal law (Part C of IDEA). Respondents rated each activity using a 5-point likert scale from *Needs significant improvement* (1) to *Very strong* (5). For each activity, respondents also were provided the opportunity to comment on how to strengthen the activity in their state. Data from all respondents who completed this item ($n=650$) indicate that respondents perceived the following activities as relative strengths: 1) informing families of their rights and procedural safeguards; 2) coordinating evaluation and assessment; 3) assisting parents with accessing services on the IFSP; and 4) coordinating EI services. No items were scored below an average of 3.43 on the Likert scale. Data from service coordinators ($n=475$) suggest the same perceived trends.

| Service coordination activities | All ($n=650$) | SC only ($n=475$) |
|---|-----------------|---------------------|
| Assisting parents accessing services on the IFSP | 3.96 | 4.0 |
| Coordinating EI services | 3.96 | 4.0 |
| Coordinating evaluation and assessment | 3.99 | 4.07 |
| Facilitating developing, reviewing & evaluating IFSPs | 3.88 | 3.95 |
| Conducting referrals & identifying EI providers | 3.77 | 3.8 |
| Coordinating, facilitating & monitoring delivery of EI services in a timely manner | 3.81 | 3.87 |
| Informing families of their rights/safeguards | 4.37 | 4.39 |
| Coordinating funding sources for services under Part C | 3.43 | 3.5 |
| Facilitating transition | 3.85 | 3.87 |

Note: Items scores reflect weighted averages on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from Needs Significant Improvement (1) to Very Strong (5).

Respondents offered many comments when asked how these activities could be improved. The following themes were identified from these comments:

- Decrease the number of families served by each service coordinator or decrease workload
- Improve compensation and increase reimbursement rates
- Increase the number of qualified providers
- Retain qualified staff
- Have a digital scheduling/data system to streamline paperwork, timelines, collaboration
- Have more training and more consistent training available
- Increase outreach/communication/collaboration across systems

To gather information about the work of service coordination beyond these federal activities, respondents were asked to imagine that they had a “magic wand” and could make service coordination in their state be the national standard. Respondents were asked what they would do to “prepare, empower, and support service coordinators as they carry out service coordination responsibilities...”

Examples of strategies were provided, such as preservice preparation, ongoing professional development, and guidance for helping service coordinators balance their workloads.

The following themes, listed in order of activities mentioned most often, were noted:

1. Balancing the workload by decreasing number of families served and paperwork
2. Offering more training opportunities, including better and more frequent training, specifically for new and seasoned service coordinators
3. Improving compensation and funding, including increased pay to better reflect workload requirements and to attract and retain high quality staff
4. Offering more networking opportunities to learn from and support each other and share ideas and strategies for what works
5. Increasing the respect for service coordinators as professionals and valuable team members
6. Having adequate time to support families, which is affected by paperwork/timelines which interfere with quality and individualization
7. Addressing technology needs, including needing hardware and software/data systems for documentation, scheduling, and managing timelines

Summary

Input was gathered via online survey from service coordinators and other EI personnel in eight states regarding strengths, challenges, and areas where improvement is needed in the provision of service coordination. An analysis of the data from the survey suggests that the provision of service coordination is perceived as strong by those who provide this service and/or interact with those who provide it. Respondents perceived strengths in service coordination activities such as informing families about their rights and safeguards and coordinating EI services, including evaluation, assessment, and service delivery.

Areas for improvement were noted in feedback provided by respondents, including: 1) the need for a reduction in the number of families' services per service coordinator; 2) the need for increased compensation; 3) retaining qualified staff; and 4) the need for more and better professional development. When asked how they would "magically" change their systems, respondents provided a great deal of feedback, focusing primarily on similar themes, including: 1) balancing the workload through better time management, more manageable distribution of families served per service coordinator, and using technology to meet documentation and timeline demands; 2) increasing training and networking opportunities specifically related to service coordination; and 3) elevating the professional value of and respect for service coordination.