

What is Early Intervention and How to Communicate About It

Mary Lee Porterfield, PhD., SRI

Allison Pillmear-Martin, Iredell County
Partnership for Young Children



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Agenda

- High level overview of child find model demonstration project
- Review of referral and survey data related to ECE providers/programs
- Community team members' viewpoints:
 - What are the challenges?
 - What root causes are keeping those challenges in place?
 - What solutions might address the challenges – what have they tried?
- Group discussion/ brainstorming
 - What ideas do you have for addressing these challenges?
 - What related strategies have you implemented in your communities?

Who is in the Room?

- Work directly with children and families
- Work directly with ECE programs/
classrooms/ providers
- Work at a program or systems level (local,
regional, state)

Project Overview



Child Find ACCESS: National Model Demonstration Project

- Funded by Office of Special Education Programs
- October 2021--September 2025
- Three county sites: Iredell, Cumberland, and Hoke
- Focus is to improve child find for Part C (0-3) early intervention:
 - Referral, evaluation, tracking potentially eligible children
 - Includes programs, people who work with young families

What is "Part C"?

- Part C of IDEA provides for early intervention services and supports for children 0-3 with delays and disabilities and their families
- In NC – Part C is called the Infant Toddler Program with services delivered through Children's Developmental Services Agencies (CDSAs)
- Children qualify based on either an established condition or a delay identified through a comprehensive evaluation (some other states also serve children determined at risk)
- Anyone can make a referral, including ECE teachers, families, doctors, and social services providers.

Goals of Child Find ACCESS

- **Increase appropriate referrals** to Part C, especially for infants under one year of age
- **Increase coordination** of screening, tracking, and referrals, reducing duplication of effort and streamlining processes
- **Promote** access to and uptake of Part C early intervention services for families who are missed by current efforts



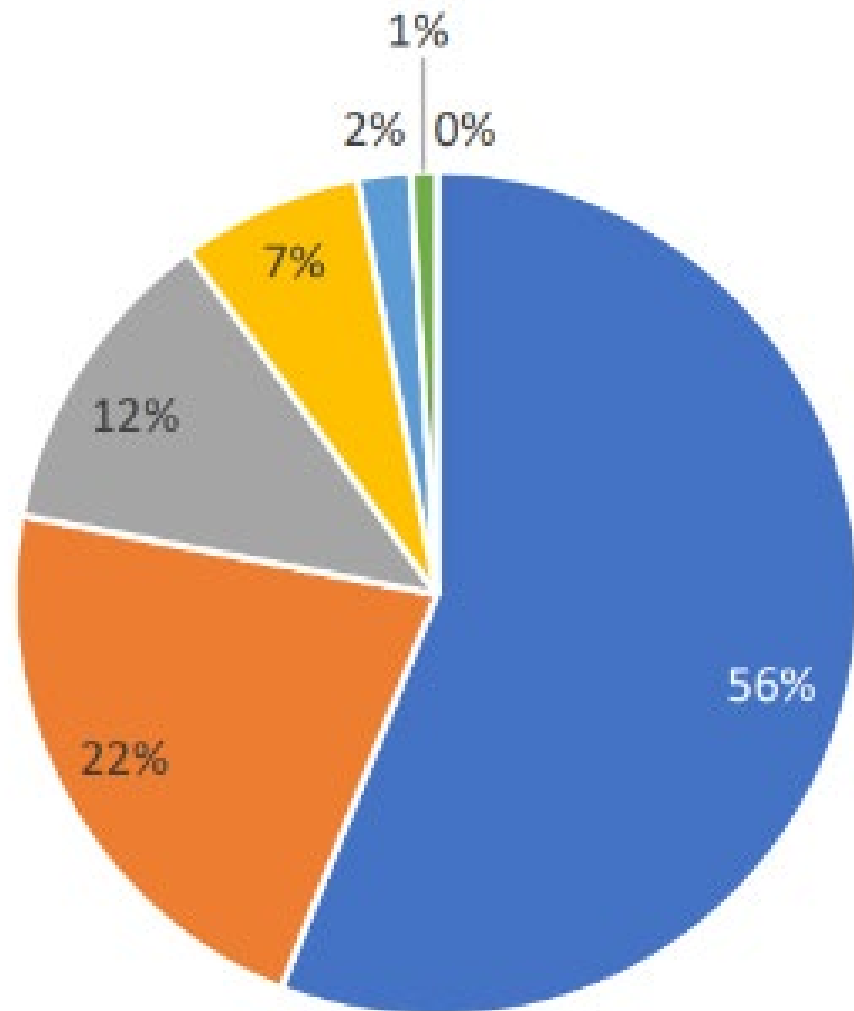
Project Structure and Processes

- **Community Leadership Teams (CLTs)**
 - Local EI program, family members (family workgroup), healthcare providers, health dept, HS/EHS, local Smart Start Partnership, home visiting, ECSE, DSS, OSEP-funded Parent Centers
 - Examine local referral data and family interview data, to identify challenges, plan improvements
- **State Leadership Team (similar membership but at state level)**
 - Addresses state- or system-level barriers and opportunities
- **In the model but not yet implemented: Family Navigators**
 - Support families in referral process, provide feedback to CLTs about how to improve messaging, process, etc.

ECE Providers and Child Find



Referrals by Referral Source



56%: Physicians

22%: Parents/caregivers

12%: Hospitals (non-NICU)

7%: Local Health Departments

2%: Community Agencies

1%: Childcare/ECE programs

0%: DSS (2 referrals)

ECE Referrals and Root Cause Analysis

- Lack of referrals from ECE providers (1% of all referrals from ECE)
- ECE programs frequently requesting training and materials from CDSA
- ECE programs referring to therapy providers rather than to the EI program
- Hypothesized root causes include limited:
 - awareness of the EI program and referral process
 - access to screening tools
 - confidence in discussing developmental concerns with families
 - time to focus on developmental milestones and trajectories (workforce turnover, staffing crisis)
- Does this resonate with your experiences?

ECE Survey – to check hypotheses

- Survey launched in 3 counties
- Asked about:
 - familiarity with EI program
 - screening/assessment practices
 - related communication with families
 - how they handle concerns about development

ECE Survey Results

- 50 respondents, (teachers, directors, family child care home providers)
- 58%: at least somewhat familiar with the CDSA or EI program
- 84%: monitor children's learning and development
- 19% had ever referred a child to EI
- Many barriers re: screening, discussing concerns with families, and referral

Family Perspectives



Thoughts, Reactions?

- Did this video spark any ideas?
- Did it connect with work you are already doing?



Family Perspectives

- Families experience significant challenges finding and keeping ECE placements for young children with delays or identified needs
- Families experience a lot of stress raising very young children, and developmental concerns add to that
- Wide variation in ECE workforce experience, understanding of development, and comfort discussing children's progress/ concerns with families - high turnover adds to these issues

Family Recommendations

- Families need support, understanding, positivity, and hope from ECE professionals
 - Provide strengths-based updates on children's achievements
 - Share developmental milestones with all families
 - Make a variety of resources available to families – in a variety of ways



More Family Recommendations



- ECE workforce need:
 - Supports to increase their understanding of development
 - Strategies for discussing children's progress/ concerns with families
 - Knowledge of referral option/process

Recap

- Referral data showed very few referrals from ECE programs
- Surveys showed there was a lack of awareness about the CDSA but that ECE professionals do seem to monitor development
- Families noted a need for ECE professionals to better understand and communicate about children's progress
- The binders addressed some of these needs, connecting ECE professionals to resources and increasing their awareness



Your Thoughts?

- How do these issues and strategies resonate with you in your work?
- How have you supported ECE providers in monitoring development, discussing concerns with families, making referrals?
- What ideas do you have for addressing barriers?
- How can you improve child find practices with ECE programs in your community?

Resources

- Some solutions to family workgroup recommendations were woven into the Iredell County LICC Website: <https://sites.google.com/view/iredell-county-licc/start-here>
- Learn the Signs Act Early: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>
- Printable milestones checklist: <https://pathways.org/print/milestone-checklist>
- Infant Toddler Program Publications (milestones in many languages): <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/child-and-family-well-being/north-carolina-infant-toddler-program-nc-itp/about-nc-itp#Publications-4451>

Thank you!

Mary Lee Porterfield (marylee.porterfield@sri.com)

Allison Pillmear-Martin (amartin@icpyc.org)

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