

Parental Perceptions of Children's Developmental Needs and the Use of Early Intervention Services for Young Children Adopted from China

Dear Parents,

We would like to thank all the families that participated in this study about their children adopted from China. We would also like to acknowledge the adoption agencies that helped in recruiting parents for the study.



Parents were contacted through adoption agencies, yahoo discussion groups, and email list servs. Those who were interested in participating and had a child aged birth to six years adopted from China and had been in the U.S. for at least one month, were sent a survey.

We collected 307 surveys from families who have adopted a child from China. Of this group, 116 were surveys completed by families receiving early intervention services, and 191 surveys were completed by families who have not received EI services.

This newsletter contains some of the findings from the study. These results provide valuable information about the strengths, needs, and concerns of families who adopt a child from China.

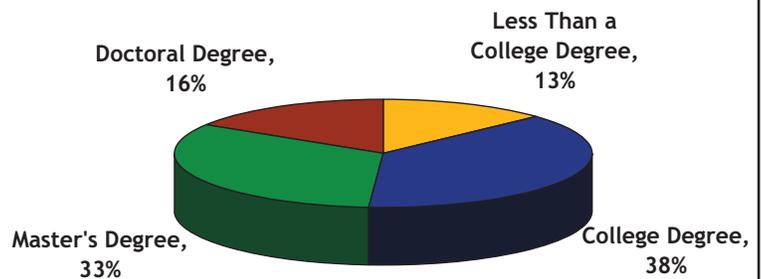
We hope that you benefited from the opportunity to share your unique experiences and feelings regarding the adoption of your child. The information you provided will enable personnel working in Early Intervention services to gain a better understanding of young children adopted from China.

Mary Beth Bruder

The study findings addressed the following questions:

Who are the families?

The average age of the parent who completed the surveys is 42. The majority are white (95%), almost half are Catholic (41%), and most are currently married (82%). The parents surveyed are highly educated: 16% have a doctoral degree, 33% have a master's degree, and 38% have a college degree.



What age was the child adopted?

The current age of the child who was adopted averaged 3 years old and almost all are female (98%). The average age of the child when they were adopted was 14 months. Nearly three-quarters (72%) of the families adopted one child from China, one-quarter (26%) adopted two children, and 2% adopted three children. Seventeen (5%) of the children were a waiting child. One third (31%) of the families with a child adopted from China have at least one biological child.



How did the skills and behaviors of the child differ from the expectations parents had before the adoption?

The child exceeded parental expectations for showing pleasure, expressing affection, facial expression, smiling/laughing, and showing interest in toys. The child also became more easily attached to the parent than expected, with less stranger anxiety towards the parent. The child was also more able to focus on things in the environment, control their behavior, eat, sleep, and grieve, better than their parents expected. The overall health of the child was higher than parents had expected prior to adoption.

What concerns did parents have about their child's development?

Most parents (67%) were concerned about their child's development. Of the 205 concerned with their child's development 107 (52%) received EI services.

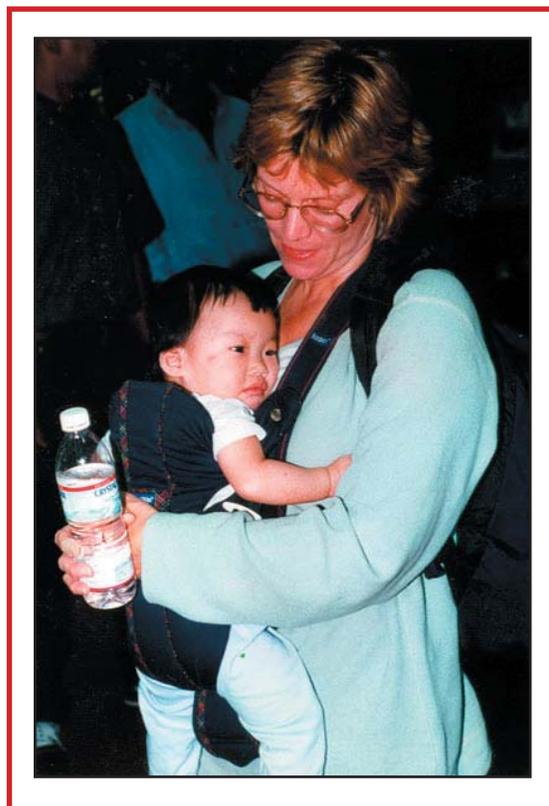
Of the entire group of 307 children, more than half had been seen by a developmental specialist (60%). The most frequent diagnosis was speech delay (17%), followed by physical disabilities (14%). Seventy-two percent of parents answered that their child had never been given a specific diagnosis associated with their health and development. One-third (32%) of the total group felt that it was difficult to find an expert on the development of children from China.

One-hundred ninety-four children had a developmental assessment, and of these 46% performed below age level in gross motor skills, 48% in receptive language skills and 68% in expressive language skills. The 111 children who received EI services scored below age level in gross and fine motor skills (56%), receptive language skills (59%), and expressive language skills (82%).

How much progress has the child made since coming home from China?

Children made more progress than parents expected after coming home in the following areas:

- Overall affect (93%)
- Smiling/laughing (75%)
- Communicating with parent (72%)
- Able to show pleasure (70%)
- Expressing affection towards parent(s) (69%)
- Following instructions at daycare/school (68%)
- Using speech to express wants (67%)
- Attachment to parent (67%)
- Overall health (66%)
- Communicating with others (65%)
- Getting along with adults (63%)
- Showing interest in toys (61%)
- Getting along with other children (60%)
- Crawling and walking (60%)



What are parenting experiences like?

As a group, parents felt they knew their child better than anyone else (99%), and that they were able to calm their child when he/she is upset (97%). Parents reported spending many happy moments together with their child (99%) and they really enjoy holding and snuggling with their child (98%).

All parents felt that they are good at showing their child how much they love them (100%) and expressed that playing and doing things with their child was a lot of fun (97%).

However, half of the parents (48%) reported their parenting experiences have been more challenging than they expected before adoption.

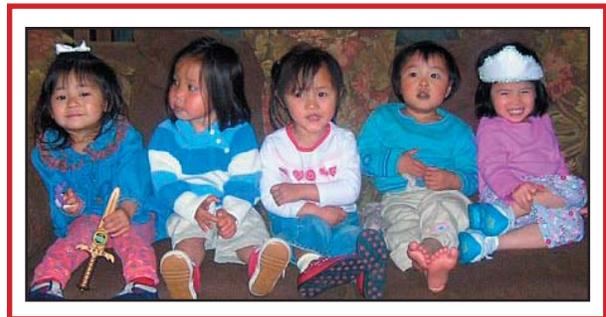


What is the child like today?

Parents reported that their child fusses and cries (75%), gets upset and frustrated (79%), and tries to get other peoples attention (80%). Parents also reported that their child is still having problems sleeping (42%), and napping (40%), gets anxious separating from them (65%), and tends to cling to them (75%). However, parents also responded that their child is extremely happy, he/she smiles and laughs often (96%), tries very hard to do new things (98%), gets excited about learning new things (100%), and enjoys being around people (98%).

What is life like today?

Ninety-five percent of parents responded that their child is healthy most or all of the time, and 81% felt that they are the person most responsible for their child's progress. Almost all of the parents felt that their child will progress in their development (99%). Most parents knew where to go for information about cultural heritage of children adopted from China (89%), and 74% of parents reported that they knew where to go for information on the health and development of children adopted from China.



How is quality of life?

Overall, everyone rated their quality of life highly with an average score of 7.92 where 9 was the highest score. However, parents of children receiving EI services rated their quality of life significantly lower with a mean of 7.81 compared to those who were not receiving EI services (7.99 $p < 0.05$).



Questions only asked of those families receiving Early Intervention Services

Who received EI services?

Of the entire 307 sample 122 (40%) were recommended for EI services by a professional. Of those families 116 reported having received EI services.

What types of services did the child receive?

The most commonly provided service was speech and language therapy, followed by occupational therapy, physical therapy, special education, social and emotional or mental health services, attachment therapy, nutritional therapy, other services, and nursing care. Most of these services were provided once a week. The majority of children had been receiving services for 3-6 months.



How much choice did parents have in how services were provided?

Forty-four percent of parents reported they had little say in who provided intervention services. Twenty-four percent had very little choice about where intervention took place, but 87% responded they had a choice over how and when intervention staff worked with their child. Twenty-eight percent of parents responded having little choice regarding how often their child received services.

Where does service provision take place?

The majority of parents answered that typical everyday environments were never used for early intervention. Parents reported that EI services were never or rarely provided during: family meal times (57%), playing outside in the yard (59%), taking walks around the house or neighborhood (67%), dressing and undressing (71%), community playground (72%), library/bookstore story hours (80%), bath time (83%), a visit to a pond/lake or park (86%), food shopping (90%), and family picnics or gatherings (90%).

How does the service delivery staff interact and treat families?

Not surprisingly, the most common therapist parents reported working with was a speech and language therapist, followed by a physical therapist and an occupational therapist.

Parents reported that the staff member working with their family is never or very rarely knowledgeable about:

- the development of attachment in children adopted from China (63%)
- medical issues related to children adopted from China (53%)
- language development for children learning English as a second language (30%)



How much progress do parents think their child has made as a result of early intervention services?

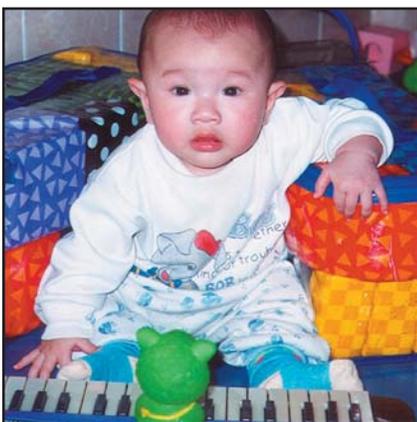
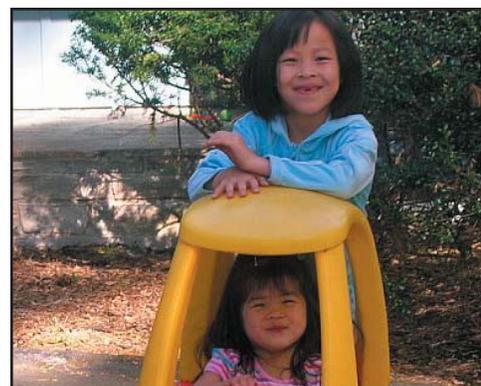
Parents indicated that their child made as much, or more, progress than they expected because of EI services in the following domains:

- Overall health (99%)
- Crawling and walking (98%)
- Smiling and laughing (98%)
- Following instructions at school (96%)
- Able to show pleasure (96%)
- Showing interest in toys (95%)
- Stranger anxiety with parent (95%)
- Overall affect (94%)
- Getting along with adults (94%)
- Able to focus on things in the environment (94%)
- Grieving behaviors (94%)
- Following instructions at home (93%)
- Expressing emotions to parents or others (93%)

- Height/weight (93%)
- Showing sympathy (93%)
- Attachment to parent(s) (93%)
- Getting along with other children (91%)
- Being able to dress themselves (91%)
- Controlling their emotions (88%)
- Eating and feeding (88%)
- Crying episodes (86%)
- Controlling their behavior (86%)
- Stranger anxiety with others (86%)
- Understanding other peoples emotions (85%)

A few parents reported less progress than they expected in the areas seen below:

- Sleep patterns (33%)
- Using speech to express wants (29%)
- Communicating with others (21%)
- Coping with frustrations (20%)
- Communicating with parent(s) (15%)



How do early intervention services change how parents feel about themselves as a parent?

Early intervention services improved parent perceptions in the following areas as a result of EI:

- Knowledge of how their child learns (43%)
- New ways of helping their child learn (40%)
- Improved their ability to provide their child with effective learning opportunities (37%)
- Encouraged them to see the good things they do as a parent (34%)
- Encouraged them to find more ways to spend quality time with their children (30%)
- Taught them games and /or songs to do when playing with their child (30%)
- Influenced the amount of intervention services their child receives (30%)
- Helped them feel better about how they do everyday parenting activities (30%)
- Helped them have more fun playing together (28%)
- Helped them figure out what their child likes to do (26%)
- Increased their confidence in being a good parent (25%)
- Encouraged them to spend time doing activities they enjoy with their child (24%)
- Helped them enjoy being with their child more (24%)
- Improved their sense of being a good parent (23%)
- Made them feel like a better parent (21%)
- Made it easier to get their child to play or interact with them (20%)

If the child is older than 3, are they continuing to receive services?

There were 71 children (23%) over the age of 3, and 33 (46%) reported that they were continuing to receive intervention services. Of those that were continuing to receive services 62% were receiving special education through the public school system and 38% were receiving services from private therapists.



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If you would like to know more about the findings please access the Data Report on our web site: <http://www.uconnucedd.org/Projects/adoption/projecthome.html>

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