

Research and Training Center on Service Coordination

Division of Child and Family Studies



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The Research and Training Center has completed five studies on service coordination. To read what we are learning, see our complete data reports, available in PDF downloadable formats, on our Web site at <http://childandfamily.uhc.edu>.

SPOTLIGHT: PARENT LEADER SURVEYS

In this issue we spotlight what we've learned from two surveys of parent leaders on service coordination.

Parent Leader Survey

The first parent leader survey explored families' perceptions of their statewide systems of service coordination. Over 800 surveys were distributed to parent leaders in each state and territory. Three hundred nineteen surveys were returned for a response rate of 40%. A parent leader was defined as someone who 1) had a child with disabilities who received Part C services; 2) could provide information on other families' experiences with Part C services and supports; and 3) was perceived by other parents or state system staff as having an understanding of the statewide system of service coordination. We asked:

Is service coordination effective in developing an IFSP that is responsive to the needs of the child and family? Only 38% of parent leaders stated that service coordination was extremely effective in developing an IFSP that was responsive to the needs of child and family. Forty eight percent claimed it was somewhat effective, and 14% stated it was ineffective.

To what degree was service coordination helpful in providing the services and supports that families needed once the IFSP was signed? Only 36% of parents indicated that service coordination was very helpful in providing

services after the IFSP was signed, while 60% said it was fairly helpful to somewhat helpful, and 4% stated it wasn't helpful at all.

How effective is the family-professional collaborative process? Thirty percent of parent leaders rated the collaborative process between service coordinators and families as extremely effective, 49% rated it as somewhat effective, and 20% stated that it was somewhat to completely ineffective.

Parent ICC Telephone Survey

Data from the initial Parent Leader survey indicated that service coordination was an area of considerable concern to families. However, the data also illustrated that a significant number of parents did not have key information about how service coordination works in their state. To examine this issue further, a telephone survey was conducted of parent representatives from each of the 50 state Interagency Coordinating Councils (ICCs). Fifty representatives took part in the survey; one from each state. We asked:

How familiar are families with the federal regulations related to service coordination? A majority (72%) of these parents were familiar with the role of the service coordinator according to federal regulations. However, 40% of parent ICC members were unfamiliar or unsure of the regulations, including qualifications and expectations, for service coordinators.

How familiar do you believe the service coordinators in your state are with the federal regulations related to service coordination? Sixty-four percent of parents believed the coordinators were familiar with the regulations, 14% felt they were unfamiliar, and 22% were unsure of the coordinators' familiarity.

Does your state have a specific model for conducting service coordination? Only 38% of parents said yes, 14% said no, and 48% were unsure. Service coordination had multiple definitions for families, with expectations ranging from organizational and logistical tasks to facilitating connections for families in their communities.

Does your state ICC discuss service coordination? Sixty-two percent of the parents stated that service coordination was discussed as a general topic, and of this percentage, 62% claimed financing or funding of service coordination was discussed and 34% stated financing of service coordination was not discussed.

If service coordination was of the highest quality for children, families, and systems, how would you know it? Sixty-eight percent said the best indicator of high quality service coordination would be that children and families got the services and supports they needed and were satisfied with those services. Thirty-eight percent mentioned families would be aware of services and empowered to seek them out, and 14% responded that an easier transition to Part B related services was an indicator.

Summary. Data from these surveys revealed that service coordination is a concern to these parent leaders. However, a high percentage of the parents were unsure if their state even had a specific model for conducting service coordination, and an almost equal number of parents were unfamiliar with the federal regulations related to service coordination. In order to realize the potential for high quality service coordination, more accelerated and in-depth involvement of families in all aspects of service delivery and policy development is needed.

WHAT'S COMING UP?

Our first round of focus groups resulted in the following set of outcomes of high quality service coordination in response to the question "If service coordination were of the highest quality for children, families, and systems, how would you know it?"

1. Children receive appropriate services and supports
2. Children reach their full potential
3. Children are healthy
4. Children's development is enhanced
5. Children have successful transitions
6. Each individual family and child's needs are met
7. Families are involved in decision-making
8. Families are informed about resources and services
9. Family and child supports are provided
10. People work together as a team

We are currently in the process of conducting a second round of focus groups to identify recommended practices that will lead to those outcomes. Our next newsletter will focus on the Delphi studies of outcomes and recommended practices.

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