Efforts to Increase Inclusion and Engagement of Young Children with Disabilities in ECE

Today's Objectives

- Introduce collaborative projects across DHHS and DOE in supporting the inclusion of young children with disabilities in early education and care programs.

- Discuss current research projects that align with these efforts.

- Discuss other local and state efforts to include young children with disabilities in early education and care programs.

EARLY CHILDHOOD FEDERAL POLICY STATEMENTS

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U.S. Department of Education

Office of Special Education Programs

Federal Policy Statements: A Dynamic Approach to High Quality Inclusion

- HHS and ED are taking a dynamic approach to ensuring that young children with disabilities have access to high quality early learning programs.

- In the last few years, HHS and ED released policy statements and early childhood initiatives to support high quality early learning.

- Together these Policy Statements help to ensure that comprehensive services along with family engagement leads to better outcomes for all young children and their families.

Purpose of Federal Early Childhood Policy Statements

- Raise awareness about high quality inclusion for infants, toddlers, preschoolers with disabilities and their families;

- Provide recommendations to States and local early childhood programs;

- Highlight early childhood workforce competencies and evidence-based interventions and approaches;

- Identify free resources to support States, programs, and providers; and

- Identify free resources to support families in enhancing young children's development.

Importance of Early Childhood Inclusion

- Being meaningfully included is the first step to equal opportunity, and is every person's right

- Research indicates that meaningful inclusion is beneficial to children with and without disabilities

- Meaningful inclusion in high-quality early childhood programs can support children with disabilities in reaching their full potential resulting in broad societal benefits

- Inclusion in early childhood programs can set a trajectory for inclusion across the course of an individual's life

Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

All young children with disabilities should have access to inclusive high-quality early childhood programs where they are provided with appropriate support in meeting high expectations

Early Learning Policy Statements and Initiatives

Joint Policy Statements
- ✓ **Inclusion of Young Children with Disabilities**
- ✓ Family Engagement
- ✓ Suspension/Expulsion Prevention
- ✓ Collaboration and Coordination of MIECHV and Part C Programs
- ✓ Dual Language Learners
- ✓ Early Childhood Career Pathways
- ✓ Monitoring
- ✓ Homelessness
- ✓ State Advisory Councils
- ✓ Data
- ✓ Technology Use

Other Initiatives
- ✓ Birth to Five: *Watch Me Thrive!*
- ✓ Caring for Our Children Basics

For more information, including free resources for States, local programs, providers, and families, visit *www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion* or *https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-childhood-policy-statements-and-initiatives*

Tools and Resources

- **Policy Statements**

  www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion

  www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-childhood-policy-statements-and-initiatives

- **Resources for States and local programs**

  www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/memosdcltrs/preschool-lre-dcl-1-10-17.pdf

  www.ed.gov/early-learning/inclusion

  www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/child-health-development/watch-me-thrive

Other Resources

- Early Learning Challenge Technical Assistance Center

elc.grads360.org/#Supporting

- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

www.ectacenter.org/topics/inclusion/default.asp

- Preschool Development and Expansion

Technical Assistance Program

pdg.grads360.org/#program

Questions?

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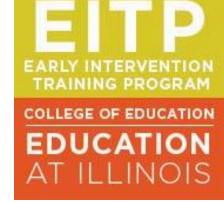
Project Collaborative Care: Experiences of Child Care and Early Intervention Providers In Serving Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities

Our Team

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Purpose of study

Describe how infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families are supported in child care.

⬇

Experiences of Early Childhood Professionals

Research Questions:

▪ What factors promote and hinder the inclusion of infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in child care settings from the perspectives of child care and EI providers?

▪ What factors promote and hinder collaboration among child care and EI providers?

▪ What are the similarities and differences between child care and early intervention providers in relation to these factors?

▪ What are the perceived needs (i.e., policy, training, other) of child care and EI providers to best serve infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in child care settings?

Method—Design

- Exploratory, non-experimental study

- Sequential, developmental mixed method design

Survey (quantitative) ⟶ Focus Groups (qualitative)

Topics of Survey and Focus Groups
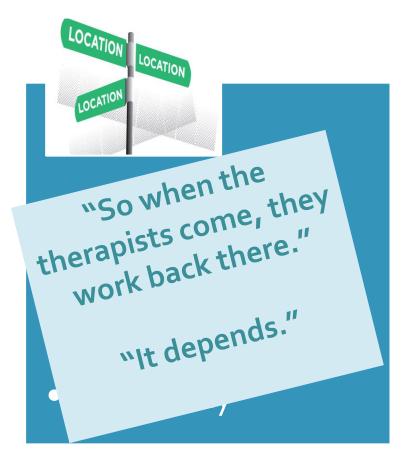
- Beliefs of inclusion (adapted from Bruns & Mogharrenban, 2007).

- Perceived supports and barriers to inclusion (adapted from Buysse, Wesley, & Keyes, 1998).

- Experiences and knowledge of infants and toddlers with disabilities

- Experiences of early intervention in child care

- Experiences in collaboration among professionals

- Training experiences and needs
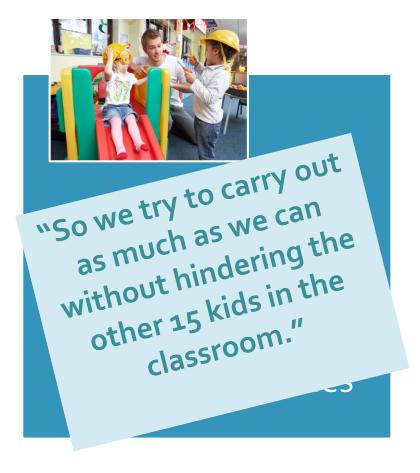
SURVEY PARTICIPANTS	Child Care Providers (N=620)	Early Intervention Providers (N=371)
Participant Roles	149 Director/Administration 273 Head Teachers 53 Co-teacher 63 Assistant teachers 78 Other	19 Administration 77 Special Instruction 51 Occupational Therapy 37 Physical Therapy 24 Service Coordinator 114 Speech/Lang Pathology
Age M (*SD*)	37 (*11*) years	40.7 (*11*) years
Education	115 (19%) Some college 142 (23%) Associate's 181 (29%) Bachelor's 150 (25%) Graduate work *63% EC-related degrees*	-- -- 73 (20%) Bachelor's 249 (67%) Master's 20 (5%) PhD
Experience M (*SD*)	10.8 (*7.1*) years *89% have cared for a child with a disability*	10.1 (*6.9*) years
Visits from/to EI to CC	71%	83.4%
Attended training on disability/EI/SPED **Attended training on CC**	71.3% --	-- 24.1%

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS	Child Care Providers (n=12)	EI Providers (n=12)
Roles	1 Assistant 6 Teachers 2 Directors 3 Owners 6 Center-based providers 6 Home-based providers	3 Developmental Therapists 1 Occupational Therapist 1 Physical Therapist 5 Speech and Language Pathologists 1 Social Emotional Consultant 1 Social Worker 5 Agency-based providers 7 Independent providers
Age M(SD)	43.42 (9.547)	47.83(14.51)
Education	3 Associates 8 Bachelors 1 Masters	-- Associates 3 Bachelors 9 Masters
Years of experience M(SD)	13.17 (8.54)	10 (7.61)

What EI looks like in child care

"You don't want to fall short on anything because that helps build the learning process, and it helps us become better teachers."

"So when the therapists come, they work back there."

"It depends."

"So we try to carry out as much as we can without hindering the other 15 kids in the classroom."

Roles of Providers when EI is delivered in child care settings

- ## Child care providers
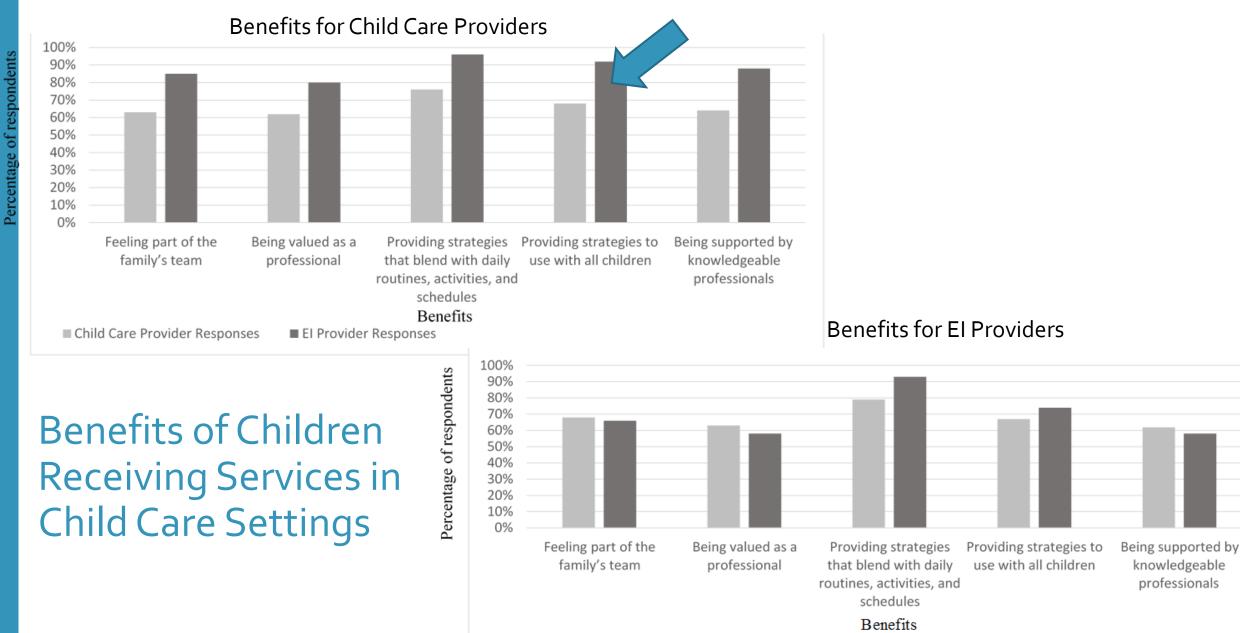
  - Difficulty defining the role of child care providers in the EI process

  - Uncertain how to formally including child care providers in the EI process

  - Need to train child care providers appropriately to care for children with disabilities, support their families, and collaborate with EI providers

- ## EI providers

  - Understanding of the demands of child care providers

  - Perceived more communication and collaboration than child care providers

  - Child care providers learn about EI through EI providers

- ## Administrators

  - Act as gatekeepers to information and participation of staff

  - Dictate and disseminate program philosophy and mission statement

  - Control budget and staffing

Benefits of Children Receiving Services in Child Care Settings

Benefits for Child Care Providers

Percentage of respondents (y-axis: 0% to 100%)

Benefits (x-axis):
- Feeling part of the family's team
- Being valued as a professional
- Providing strategies that blend with daily routines, activities, and schedules
- Providing strategies to use with all children
- Being supported by knowledgeable professionals

Legend: Child Care Provider Responses / EI Provider Responses

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Legend: Child Care Provider Responses / EI Provider Responses

Role of families when EI is delivered in child care settings

- Challenges to providing family-centered practices when children receive services at child care

- Families' involvement impacts collaboration efforts

- Families may not understand the possible role of child care providers in the EI process

Other Factors that Impact Collaboration

Systemic Structures
- Program Procedures
- State Regulations
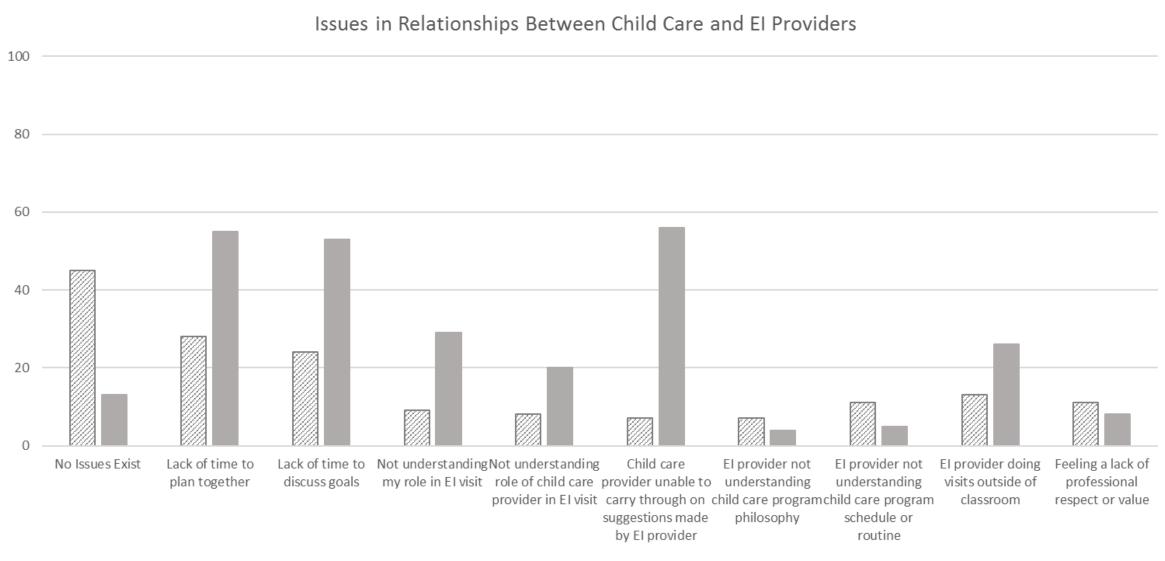- Budget and Funding Impact

Understanding Each Other
- Program Purpose and Philosophy
- Professional Respect for Each Other
- Emotional Responses to Collaboration

Implementation of Recommended Practices

- **Delivering services in natural environments with peers without disabilities**
  - Location of services
  - Outside of classroom
  - Without peers
  - Without parents or other primary caregivers

- **Embedding interventions into meaningful, daily routines**

- **Supporting caregivers in supporting children's development**
  - Not including parents or other primary caregivers in EI visits
  - Desired coaching and consultation for individualized supports

Issues Related to Collaboration

Issues in Relationships Between Child Care and EI Providers

Ongoing work:

- Identifying specific factors (e.g., education, experience, geographic area, program role) that impact:
  - Beliefs of inclusion
  - Perceived barriers and supports
  - Experiences in collaboration
- Case studies of successful collaborations
- Translation into policy implications

Questions?

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Would You Like to Hear a Story? Exploring Photo Elicitation as a Means of Engaging Families of Young Children with Disabilities in Head Start

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Start

- Funding from OSEP, ACF/OPRE

Head Start Program Performance Standards

Head Start programs are to work collaboratively with families to "establish mutual trust and to identify family goals, strengths, and necessary services and other supports."

Purpose of study

- To understand how Head Start professionals can support families experiencing multiple risk factors, namely caring for a young child with a disability.

Photo Elicitation

- A qualitative strategy that utilizes photographs to support or enhance interviews.

- Used in disciplines such as sociology, education, anthropology, and healthcare.

- Assists with establishing rapport, extends conversations, shifts "power" from the researcher to the participant, and facilitates personal reflection

"Breaking the Frame"

Photo elicitation provides participants with the power to make meaning of their reality using their own voice.

Research Questions

- What strategies do families report their Head Start Family Service Workers use to learn about what it is like to care for a young child with a disability?

- What strategies do Head Start Family Service Workers report that they use to engage families in "telling their story" about caring for a child with a disability?

- What are families' perceptions regarding the use of photo elicitation as a way to "tell their story" to Head Start Family Service Workers?

- What do Head Start Family Service Workers perceive are the benefits and barriers to using photo elicitation as a strategy to learn families' stories?
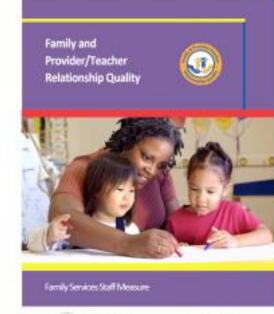
Data Collection

Photo
Elicitation
Interviews
& Focus
Groups

Surveys

Implications

- Focus on families and Head Start professionals' perceptions of facilitators and barriers to building such relationships

- Examine the impact of photo elicitation on empowering families to tell their story

- Identify the feasibility of Head Start professionals using photo elicitation to enhance effective, collaborative relationships with the families they serve

Questions?

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Discussion

The Path Ahead:
Partnering to Build a Nationwide Culture of Inclusion

- Celebrate diversity of all forms and in all facets of society;

- Talk to neighbors, community members, and State and local leaders about the importance of inclusion; highlight the universal benefits of inclusion for children with and without disabilities; and counter myths, misconceptions, and stereotypes about children with disabilities;

- Co-create inclusion strategic plans, at the State, LEA, school and program levels; and

- Strongly communicate inclusion as a shared responsibility and a top priority, and demonstrate a commitment to inclusion through policy changes and appropriate resource allocation at all levels.

Where do we go from here?

Practice

- Include families
- Seek out professional development
- Embed goals into routines
- Build relationships
- Develop leaders in all levels

Policy

- Support providers
- Integrate professional development systems
- Provide consultation and coaching
- Improve qualifications for providers and program quality

Research

- Gain an understanding of most significant and consistent factors
- Conduct case studies of successful collaborations
- Develop models of intervention

We know the barriers.
We have clear policy and recommended practices.
We know the supports.
We have motivated and interested professionals.

We need systemic support and leadership to bring supports into action.