

## VIRGINIA PART C FAMILY SURVEY 2012

### EXPLANATION OF RESULTS

In accordance with federal reporting requirements mandated by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), Part C Lead Agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act must report annually on 14 indicators related to early intervention services for children ages birth to three. This summary explains the results of a family survey conducted by the Commonwealth of Virginia to address Indicator #4, the percent of families participating in Part C who report that early intervention services have helped the family:

- a) know their rights,
- b) effectively communicate their children's needs, and
- c) help their children develop and learn.

A full analysis of the family survey data is presented in [Analysis of the Virginia Family Survey Data Addressing Part C SPP/APR Indicator #4: Final Report](#) (July 25, 2012), which was prepared by Randall D. Penfield, and is available at [www.infantva.org](http://www.infantva.org).

### The Survey Instrument

The Virginia family survey includes two rating scales developed and validated by the National Center for Special Education Accountability Monitoring (NCSEAM). The 22-item Impact on Family Scale (IFS) measures the extent to which early intervention helped families achieve positive outcomes, including the three outcomes (a, b, c) specified in Indicator #4. The 25-item Family-Centered Services Scale (FCSS) measures the quality of family-centered services provided to families.

**The Sample**

Surveys were returned by 995 families who were receiving early intervention services in January 2012. From these responses, a random sample of 514 families reflecting the distribution of race/ethnicity in the larger population was selected for data analysis.

<b>Distribution of Child’s Race/Ethnicity in the Representative Sample</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
White	298	58.0%
Black or African-American	104	20.2%
Hispanic or Latino	54	10.5%
Asian	20	3.9%
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.2%
Pacific Islander or Hawaiian Native	1	0.2%
Two or more races	36	7.0%
Total	514	100.0%
Note. The distribution of race/ethnicity for the children receiving early intervention services in Virginia under Part C are: White = 58.0%, Black/African American = 20.4%, Hispanic = 10.5%, Asian = 3.9%, American Indian or Alaskan Native = 0.1%, Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian = 0.1%, Two or More Races = 7.0%.		

The following table displays the distribution of child’s gender in the representative sample.

<b>Distribution of Child’s Gender in the Representative Sample</b>		
<b>Gender</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Male	322	62.6%
Female	190	37.0%
Missing	2	0.4%
Total	514	100%

Based on established survey sample guidelines, a sample of 514 families is large enough to provide a high degree of confidence that the results of the survey accurately reflect the degree to which families have achieved the outcomes in Indicator #4.

**Scoring the Survey**

Each returned survey in the sample received an overall score (also called a measure) on the Impact on Family Scale based on that family’s responses to all 22 items. The score for each survey can range from 0 to 1000.

In order to report in the Annual Performance Report (APR) the *percent* of families who indicate that early intervention services helped them achieve the specific outcomes (a, b, c) in Indicator #4, it is necessary to establish a standard for each of the outcomes. The standard is set at a score (in that range of 0 – 1000) that provides a high degree of confidence that if a family’s score is at or above that standard for a given outcome, then the family has achieved the outcome. Virginia chose to apply the Part C standards

recommended by a nationally representative stakeholder group convened by NCSEAM. The standards for the three outcomes in Indicator #4 were set at the following scores:

- a) know their rights, at a score of 539;
- b) effectively communicate their children’s needs, at a score of 556: and
- c) help their children develop and learn, at a score of 516.

**Major Findings**

Statewide Percent on Indicators 4a, 4b, and 4c

The percentage reported is the number of families at or above the standard divided by the total number of families in the sample, multiplied by 100.

<b>Percent of Respondents Meeting or Exceeding Each of the Standards for Indicator #4</b>			
	<b>Indicator 4A Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them know their rights</b>	<b>Indicator 4B Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them effectively communicate their children’s needs</b>	<b>Indicator 4C Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them help their child develop and learn</b>
<b>Percentage</b>	72.3%	70.3%	81.9%

Agreement with Specific Items on the Impact on Family Scale (IFS)

The following table displays the percentage of families in the sample who agreed with the specific items on the IFS. Please note that the standards described above generally require that the family strongly or very strongly agree with items. In the Rasch

measurement framework, the statistical method used to analyze the family survey, an “agree” response is taken into account but receives less weight than a “strongly agree” or “very strongly agree” response (see [Analysis of the Virginia Family Survey Data Addressing Part C SPP/APR Indicator #4: Final Report](#) (July 25, 2012), available at [www.infantva.org](http://www.infantva.org), for more information about the Rasch measurement framework). In order to be sure a family has achieved an outcome, more than a simple “agree” is needed in order to have a high degree of confidence that the response is truly an “agree” response and not simply a reflection of not disagreeing. If a family is asked whether early intervention helped them understand their child’s special needs and they respond “Yeah ... I guess so,” this would be considered an “agree” response (since they did not disagree). However, this response does not provide a high degree of confidence that early intervention really did help that family understand their child’s special needs.

<b>Item</b> <b><i>Stem:</i> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:</b>	<b>% Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b>	<b>% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b>
Participate in typical activities for children and families in my community.	32%	59%
Know about services in the community.	41%	74%
Know where to go for support to meet my family's needs.	49%	77%
Keep up friendships for my child and family.	50%	79%
Know where to go for support to meet my child's needs.	55%	84%
Be more effective in managing my child's behavior.	61%	89%
Find information I need.	57%	90%

<b>Item</b> <b><u>Stem:</u> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:</b>	<b>% Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b>	<b>% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b>
Improve my family's quality of life.	58%	91%
Feel that I can get the services and supports that my child and family need.	62%	92%
Feel that my family will be accepted and welcomed in the community	60%	92%
Feel more confident in my skills as a parent.	64%	94%
Feel that my child will be accepted and welcomed in the community.	60%	91%
Communicate more effectively with the people who work with my child and family.	64%	92%
Understand how the Early Intervention system works.	63%	94%
Understand the roles of the people who work with my child and family.	65%	95%
Figure out solutions to problems as they come up.	62%	93%
Feel that I can handle the challenges of parenting a child with special needs.	61%	91%
Know about my child's and family's rights concerning Early Intervention services.	67%	95%
Be able to evaluate how much progress my child is making.	69%	95%
Understand my child's special needs.	71%	95%
Feel that my efforts are helping my child.	77%	96%
Do things with and for my child that are good for my child's development.	75%	97%

Note that the percent of families agreeing at any level (agree, strongly, very strongly) with the items decreases from the items at the bottom of the list to the items at the top of the list. This is a pattern that is very stable across families and across states and essentially provides a rank-ordered list of the items in the scale in terms of how readily families agree to each item.

The survey analysis indicates that, with a very high level of confidence, one can conclude for each of the three outcomes in Indicator #4, the majority of the responses were positive and above the stringent standards set and described in the Scoring the Survey section above. Further, the results indicate that the Virginia early intervention system is helping families to achieve many positive outcomes in addition to those specified in Indicator #4.

Setting Measurable and Rigorous Targets

OSEP requires that states set measurable and rigorous targets for improved performance on the SPP indicators. Virginia identified in its SPP annual target percentages that would result in statistically significant improvement on this Indicator by Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2010. A gain that is statistically significant is much more likely to represent real change than to be due to random ups and downs in the measure. In its amended SPP (February 2011), Virginia revised its targets for FFY 2010 and added targets for FFY 2011 and FFY 2012 to drive continued improvement. The target percentages for the three outcomes in Indicator 4 for FFY 2011 are as follows:

- a) know their rights = 71.5%;
- b) effectively communicate their children’s needs = 68.8%; and
- c) help their children develop and learn = 81.3%.

The following table indicates the actual percentage for FFY 2011 and the target percentage for each of the three outcomes in Indicator #4:

<b>Percent of Respondents Meeting or Exceeding Each of the</b>
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<b>Standards for Indicator #4</b>			
	<b>Indicator 4A Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them know their rights</b>	<b>Indicator 4B Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them effectively communicate their children’s needs</b>	<b>Indicator 4C Percent of families who report that early intervention services helped them help their child develop and learn</b>
<b>Target Percentage for FFY 2011</b>	71.5%	68.8%	81.3%
<b>Actual Percentage For FFY 2011</b>	72.3%	70.3%	81.9%

The actual percentages exceeded the State targets for 4a, 4b, and 4c.

Statewide Results on the Family-Centered Services Scale (FCSS)

The 25-item Family-Centered Services Scale (FCSS) measures the quality of family-centered services provided to families. There is no federal requirement to report families’ perceptions of the quality of early intervention services, so no standard was set for this scale. The following table presents the percentage of families in the sample who agreed with the specific items on the FCSS.

<b>Item</b>	<b>% Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b>	<b>% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b>
<b><u>Stem:</u> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:</b>		

<p><b>Item</b>  <b><u>Stem:</u> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:</b></p>	<p><b>% Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b></p>	<p><b>% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b></p>
Someone from the Early Intervention program went out into the community with me and my child to help get us involved in community activities and services.	25%	41%
My family was given information about ways of connecting with other families for information and mutual support.	37%	64%
My family was given information about opportunities for my child to play with other children.	37%	62%
My family was asked whether other children in the family needed help in understanding the needs of the brother or sister with a disability.	46%	69%
My family was given information about where to go for help or support if I feel worried or stressed.	49%	79%
My family was given information about community programs that are open to all children.	50%	76%
I was offered help I needed, such as child care or transportation, to participate in the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting(s).	50%	76%
My family was given information about how to advocate for my child and my family.	51%	80%
Someone from the Early Intervention program asked if I was having any problems getting the services I needed.	57%	83%
My family was given information about what my options are if I disagree with a decision about my child's services.	55%	86%
My family was given information about the public school system's programs and services for children age three and older.	59%	86%
Someone from the Early Intervention program asked whether the services my family was receiving were meeting our needs.	62%	88%
I was given information to help me prepare for my child's transition.	63%	88%
My service coordinator is available to speak with me on a regular basis.	68%	92%
The IFSP is keeping up with my family's changing needs.	71%	93%
I know who to call if I have problems with the services and supports my child and family are receiving.	71%	94%
My family's daily routines were considered when planning for my child's services.	74%	94%
My family was given information about activities that I could do with my child in our everyday lives.	75%	94%
Written information I receive is written in an understandable way.	73%	96%
My service coordinator is knowledgeable and professional.	74%	95%
The Early Intervention service provider(s) that work with my child do what they say they are going to do.	75%	96%
The Early Intervention service provider(s) that work with my child show a willingness to learn about the strengths and needs of my child and family.	77%	95%
My family was given information about the rights of parents regarding Early Intervention services.	77%	96%

<p align="center"><b>Item</b></p> <p><b><u>Stem:</u> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>% Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b></p>	<p align="center"><b>% Agree/ Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b></p>
<p>I have felt part of the team when meeting to discuss my child.</p>	<p align="center">79%</p>	<p align="center">96%</p>
<p>The Early Intervention service provider(s) that work with my child are easy for me to talk to about my child and my family.</p>	<p align="center">79%</p>	<p align="center">96%</p>

Note that the percent of families agreeing at any level (agree, strongly, very strongly) with the items decreases from the items at the bottom of the list to the items at the top of the list. This is a pattern that is very stable across families and across states and essentially provides a rank-ordered list of the items in the scale in terms of how readily families agree to each item.

## Relationship Between IFS and FCSS

Research indicates that, in general, as the FCSS score increases, so does the IFS Score. That is, having a higher endorsement of the quality of family-centered services is associated with a higher level of positive impact on the family (but note that this does not necessarily mean that the relationship is causal).

## **Improvement Planning**

As explained previously, the items in each of the scales are essentially rank-ordered by how readily families agree with them. When looking at the tables above that list the specific items on the IFS and FCSS, the items that are lower on the list build toward the items that are higher on the list. In other words, a family who strongly agrees with the statement that they “Feel that I can handle the challenges of parenting a child with special needs” most likely strongly or very strongly agreed with the 5 items below that on the list of IFS items (i.e., know rights, able to evaluate progress, understand child’s special needs, feel my efforts are helping my child, do things that are good for child’s development). Therefore, when we are looking to improve on one of the outcomes in Indicator 4 or on some aspect of family-centered services, we can look to the items below the one we want to improve in order to identify possible improvement strategies. In particular, it is helpful to understand the following when using the survey results for improvement planning:

- The items lowest on the list are about the relationship between the family and their child.

- As you move up the table, the items are about the relationship between the family and their service provider(s).
- Finally, at the top of the table, the survey items reflect the relationship between the family and their community.

In addition, while performance percentages on the outcomes in Indicator #4 are derived from the IFS, the FCSS provides information about where improvements may be needed in order to improve the family outcomes.

### **Exploring Use of a Modified Survey**

In order to ensure the results of the family survey provide accurate and meaningful information about the impact of the early intervention system on families, a revised survey is under consideration. The new survey adds a “Does Not Apply” response option for each survey question and includes revised wording for four of the Impact on Families Scale questions. In addition, the Family-Centered Services Scale was eliminated on the new survey in order to shorten the amount of time needed to complete the survey. Four new questions, which are separate from the Impact on Families Scale, address “your family’s experience in early intervention.”

Since there are differences between the old and new surveys, an experimental study consisting of 1,983 families was conducted in 2012 to determine whether the old and new survey forms are equivalent in how they measure outcomes related to indicators 4a, 4b, and 4c. By random assignment, half of the families receiving early intervention services in January 2012 received the old survey, and the other half

received the new survey. Of the 1,983 respondents, 995 had completed the old survey and 988 had completed the new one.

In comparing the responses to the old and new survey forms, the following differences were noted:

- For most items, the percentage of questions left blank on the old form was less than combined percentage of questions left blank and the percentage marked “Does Not Apply” on the new form. This suggests that some families were responding to questions on the old form even if the question did not apply to them. In this respect, the new survey is providing better data.
- The inclusion of the “Does Not Apply” option appears to have decreased the use of the “Very Strongly Agree” response. On the old form, there were many more instances where families went straight down the right-hand side of the survey, responding with “Very Strongly Agree” to every item. Having the option of “Does Not Apply” appears to result in families more carefully considering their response to each survey item. This observation reinforces the suggestion that the results of the new survey are more valid.

There were also some differences between the old and new surveys in terms of the mean, the standard deviation and the percentage of respondents meeting the three OSEP family outcome indicators. Some of the differences were statistically significant; others were not. The following table shows the difference in the percentage of families meeting the family outcomes related to indicators 4a, 4b, and 4c on the new survey compared to the old survey:

<b>Comparing the Outcomes for 4A, 4B, and 4C for Representative Samples</b>
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<b>Using Old and New Survey Forms</b>			
	<b>4A</b>	<b>4B</b>	<b>4C</b>
<b>New</b>	75.4%	72.2%	84.2%
<b>Old</b>	72.3%	70.3%	81.9%

When the new survey was developed, the goal was to have the results of the new survey be comparable to the results of the old survey. Given that, the full report, Analysis of the Virginia Family Survey Data Addressing Part C SPP/APR Indicator #4: Final Report (July 25, 2012), suggests two options for addressing the measurement differences observed in the 2012 experiment: (1) make the case that there is not conclusive evidence that the two surveys are different, leave the standards the same, and consider that the two surveys are equivalent; or (2) equate the two surveys to account for any differences by setting the standards on the new survey so that they result in the same percentage of families meeting indicators 4a, 4b and 4c on the new survey as met it on the old survey. In a follow-up consultation with those who implement and analyze our family survey each year, Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia staff discussed whether the original goal of ensuring the two surveys were equivalent was still the right goal given the evidence indicating that the results of the new survey are more valid than the results of the old survey. Since the reason for revising the old survey form in the first place was to ensure valid family survey data, staff and consultants determined that the increase in validity that is evident with the new form is more important than any potential lack of equivalency between the old and new

form. In other words, the best approach to ensuring valid survey results moving forward is to start fresh with the new survey, using this year's results as the baseline from which to plan new targets for continued improvement, rather than worrying about a potential small loss in continuity and equivalence from the old form to the new form. Virginia will use only the new survey beginning in 2013.

The following table presents the percent of families who agreed with the specific items on the new family survey.

<b>Item</b> <b><i>Stem:</i> Over the past year, Early Intervention services have helped me and/or my family:</b>	<b>% Strongly/ Very strongly agree</b>	<b>% Agree in any category</b>
...participate in typical activities for children and families in my community.	41%	79%
...know about services in my community.	45%	87%
...know where to go for support to meet my family's needs.	46%	85%
...keep up friendships for my child and family.	47%	82%
...know where to go for support to meet my child's needs.	56%	90%
...find information I need.	54%	90%
...improve my family's quality of life.	56%	91%
...feel that I can get the services and supports that my child and family need.	59%	93%
...feel more confident in my skills as a parent.	64%	92%
...feel that my child will be accepted and welcomed in the community.	61%	92%
...know how to make changes in family routines that will benefit my child.	62%	93%
...communicate more effectively with the people who work with my child and family.	60%	92%
...feel more confident in finding ways to meet my child's needs.	61%	94%
...understand how the Early intervention system works.	59%	93%
...feel that I can handle the challenges of parenting my child with his/her needs.	64%	93%
...understand the roles of the people who work with my child and family.	59%	93%
...figure out solutions to problems as they come up.	58%	91%
...know about my child's and family's rights concerning Early Intervention services.	61%	94%
...be able to evaluate how much progress my child is making.	63%	93%
...understand my child's needs.	68%	95%

...feel that my efforts are helping my child.	70%	95%
...do things with and for my child that are good for my child's development.	73%	95%
What I say about my child and family is understood and respected.	72%	95%
The people who work with my child and family answer our questions.	75%	96%
I can easily get in touch with my service coordinator.	70%	93%
The services provided to my child and family help reach the outcomes/goals that are important to my family.	72%	94%
<b>Your Family's Experience in Early Intervention</b>		
What I say about my child and family is understood and respected.	72%	95%
The people who work with my child and family answer our questions.	75%	96%
I can easily get in touch with my service coordinator.	70%	93%
The services provided to my child and family help reach the outcomes/goals that are important to my family.	72%	94%

Based on this data, it is clear that most responses were positive, above the standards set for meeting the outcomes specified in Indicator #4, and indicative of positive outcomes for families beyond just those outcomes identified by OSEP.