

Connecticut Birth to Three System - Focused Monitoring Summary Report

Agency Name: First Partners

Visit Dates: March 7, 2011 - March 11, 2011

Program: Birth to Three

Final Report Date: April 8, 2011

Priority Area:

Families are more confident and gain new skills which, help their children develop and learn.

Selection Reason:

The child outcome data for outcome number 2 (acquisition and use of knowledge and skills including early language/communication) from the 2009-2010 fiscal year was analyzed using Summary Statement 1 - Percent of Children who "substantially increased their rate of growth" based on the State's Annual Performance Report (APR) to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). The results for this program were at least 2 standard deviations below the mean as compared to other small programs.

Components of Focused Monitoring

Desk audit. Program Director interview. Reviewed 22 records - representative sample of service coordinators, towns, DCF involvement, income levels. Interviewed 13 families by phone. Interviewed 17 staff by phone. End of day summary meeting and exit meeting on the last day.

Focused Monitoring Team

Team Leader: Alice Ridgway Parent Members: Pam Kelly, Deborah Pagano, Jo Rossi Peer: Deborah Mastronardi Other: Anna Hollister

Hypotheses:

- 1 Progress on the three Annual Performance Report (APR) child outcomes is different for programs that only support families of children with autism than for general programs that support families with children with a variety of delays and disabilities.
- 2 The point at which the child outcome entry ratings are completed had an impact on the ratings and therefore the progress categories.
- 3 Progress on child outcomes for this program is highly affected by the level of family involvement and family outcomes.
- 4 Assigning ratings for broad functional outcomes when children with autism may have very specific delays is challenging for staff at this program.

Results

- 1 An analysis of the entry and exit ratings, progress categories, and summary statements was completed for general programs, autism specific programs, and First Partners using data from 7/1/10 - 2/15/11. It was clear there was a higher percentage of children who made gains but not sufficient to catch up to same aged peers (a.k.a. category c). This, however, did not impact the summary statement that reports the percent of children who reduced the gap in their development since categories c and d are both included in the numerator. Just being an Autism Specific Program is not the reason for their variation from the mean.
- 2 For direct referrals to Easter Seals and First Partners, staff have been completing the initial evaluation, (Battelle or Mullen), the Preschool Language Scale, the MCHAT, the HELP, and the Child Outcome Summary Form (COSF) during their first visit when there was no prior diagnosis of autism. Some staff reported using the Battelle data for the COSF ratings and others reported general confusion with the COSF. The program was not consistently using the decision tree with families before the forms were combined in July 2010. The evaluators who completed the entry ratings usually not the home visitors who work with and get to know the child during the first months. Out of 22 records reviewed, 21 had entry ratings completed by a general program prior to the family transferring to the autism specific program and 5 were from different agencies. This isn't unique for autism specific programs in Connecticut.

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Results (cont.)

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|----------|---|
| 3 | <p>Since partnerships with families are so critical to success in early intervention questions were added to both the family interview and the staff interview regarding this hypothesis. It was noted that 83% of the families interviewed reported that they used strategies when the interventionists were not there. The records did not reflect this (14%). 71% of the records reflected that family outcomes were being identified and addressed and 82% of the families reporting this occurring as did 89% of staff. While there is clearly a relationship between child and family outcomes, it is not unique to this program. In more cases than not, records family and staff identified that family outcomes were not the priority and the child's progress was. Staff from the Waterbury area referred to Birth to Three as a "consultative model" while staff from the other offices used more family-centered language when describing Birth to Three.</p> |
| 4 | <p>The ratings as noted in the records matched those in the data system and they were quite varied. 18% (4) of the records selected for this review were for children who were younger than age one at entry and three of them had entry ratings of 6 or 7 (age level). Fourteen of the remaining records had ratings of 1-3 at entry on all 3 outcomes. As a result of interviews it was clear that most staff are struggling with understanding ratings vs. progress. The entry ratings for 16 of the 22 records were assigned by staff at the Easter Seals general program. A diagnosis of autism does not seem to be the source of the difficulty with this process. There was no evidence that staff were using the decision tree with families before the forms were combined in July 2010.</p> |

Strengths

The program clearly implements the Connecticut Birth to Three model of "coaching" families based on family and staff interviews. The program has plans to redesign the visit notes to better reflect this. In some case, the outcomes in the IFSP were very nicely written in a way that clearly indicated family's wording (YS, LF, JD, NB, JM). Families were clearly connected to community resources. While the transition plans were geared towards what the SC should do, the families and staff were both well informed regarding what to expect about transition to Part B. Most parents had positive feedback about the quality of their evaluation report and said that it described their child well.

Measures in need of improvement

| Measure Number | Measure | Target |
|----------------|---|--|
| 44 | Notes support child outcome data. | Alice will complete training at ESRC staff meeting. |
| NA | Timing COSF entry ratings | They were being completed during the initial evaluation visit. The program will revise their procedure to do the entry ratings after the initial IFSP meeting and initial HELP assessment have been completed. |
| 34 | Strategies in visit notes emphasize naturally occurring learning opportunities embedded into daily routines (57%). | 90% |
| 35 | Notes reflect families' use of strategies between visits (14%) | 90% |
| 11 | Report has individualized description of the child's strengths, areas of concern, and next steps in development (48%) | 90% |
| 9 | The report includes family's input and how they participated (55%) | 90% |
| 22 | All transition plans includes clear steps to prepare child and family for the next setting (67%) | 100% |