

Developing New Outcome Measures With Program Partners: Process, Procedures, Practicalities

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Three projects funded by ACYF collaborated with Head Start/Early Head Start programs to develop new measures specifically for use in Head Start/Early Head Start programs with the wide variety of children and families served by these programs. There were challenges in identifying relevant indicators to represent measurement constructs and in selecting appropriate samples to test indicators across a diversity of families served by these programs. There were also challenges in developing measurement procedures that will be appropriate and practical for program staff members. Finally, there were challenges in training practitioners to use the measure in a reliable way and ensuring that the measure will be meaningful to the program staff for intervention purposes. Meeting these criteria was facilitated by working together with program staff who would be using the measures and who were familiar with the range of children and families served by Head Start.

- **Developing PICCOLO: A Measure of Parenting Interactions With Children in a Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes**

Lori A. Roggman, Vonda K. Jump, Mark S. Innocenti, Gina A. Cook, Katie Christiansen

Parenting interactions are difficult to measure using currently available instruments that typically require extensive time and training for accurate observation. A need existed for an easy-to-use, reliable observational measure of strengths-based interventions to promote positive parenting. To meet this need, we are developing the Parenting Interactions with Children in a Checklist of Observations Linked to Outcomes (PICCOLO), a valid, reliable, easy-to-use observational measure. The PICCOLO is being developed with three program partners to make the measure easier and more reliable to use, promote positive parenting behaviors, and develop strategies for training practitioners to use the measure. Challenges included calculating various dimensions of reliability, deciding about the use of negative items, and ensuring cultural relevance for the major populations served by Head Start programs. Feedback from each partner program about experiences using the measure in the context of home visits has provided further guidance for refining the PICCOLO measure.

- **Using Partnerships With Early Head Start Programs to Develop Measures for Monitoring Children's Communication Growth and Improvement in Parent-Child Interaction**

Judith J. Carta, Dale Walker, Kathleen Baggett

Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs) were recently developed tools that provide information about children's growth toward outcomes or about changes in parent-child interaction. A distinction between IGDIs and more traditional early childhood assessments is that IGDIs measure the same set of key skill elements repeatedly over time allowing for depiction of growth toward identified outcomes. Two IGDIs are being developed: the Early Communication

Indicator (ECI) and the Indicator of Parent-Child Interaction (IPCI). In the case of the ECI, rates of children's communication are determined by scoring gestures, vocalizations, words, and multiple-words during a 6-minute play-based standardized situation. Research has been conducted on the ECI to document its reliability, validity, and utility for measuring children's performance (Carta et al., 2002). The IPCI examines changes in responsiveness and negativity that might occur in intervention. The IPCI involves observing the behavior of parents and children during four brief structured activities: free play, book reading, dressing, and a mild frustration/distraction task. Parents and children are rated on the relative frequency of occurrence of both positive and negative behaviors.

Reference

Carta, J. J., Greenwood, C. R., Walker, D., Kaminski, R., Good, R., McConnell, S. R., & McEvoy, M. A. (2002). References Individual Growth and Development Indicators (IGDIs): Assessment that guides intervention for young children. In M. Ostrosky & E. Horn (Eds.). *Assessment: Gathering meaningful information. The Young Exceptional Children Monograph Series #4*, 15-28.

• The Development of the Family Map: An Integrated Assessment of the Parenting Environment in Early Childhood

Leanne Whiteside-Mansell, Patti Bokony, Nicola Connors, Robert H. Bradley, Dee McLemore, Carol Lee

The Family Map is a new tool being developed to assess important aspects of the family and home environment as part of the required Head Start home visits. The goal of the Family Map is to systematically identify areas of concern and strength in families to enable appropriate interventions to reduce risk factors (e.g., family conflict, harsh parenting practices, parental depression) or enhance protective factors (e.g., increase availability of learning materials in the home, supervision, or home safety). The areas assessed by the Family Map are those most critical for healthy child development and are targeted by Head Start Performance Standards. The current version of the Family Map contains nine modules and includes structured, semi-structured, and observational/perception items. Data collectors and teachers have reported high reliability on observational/perception items.

Squires: There has been a paradigm shift during the last two decades regarding assessment practices for young preschool age children. First, we have seen a shift from child-centered to family-centered, or family-guided practices, in which families are true partners in the assessment and educational process. In addition to family-guided practices, a second shift has occurred in which children are assessed and educated in “natural” settings in their neighborhoods with their peers and families rather than in isolated, clinical settings. All three measures—Family Map, PICCOLO, and Indicator of Parent-Child Interaction—incorporate natural settings and environments as an assessment framework. Finally, the last shift in assessment practices is towards play-based, functional assessments that are designed to evaluate how the child is functioning in the context of his/her environment and demands. These outcome measures all place the child and family squarely in their environmental context in order to measure dimensions that appear to be important to changes in developmental outcomes.