

Evaluation of Part C Child Find in Hawai'i: Children first identified after the age of 3.

The state Department of Education Special Education (SPED) eligibility criteria include evidence of substantial delay (usually equivalent to two years below age level) in two or more functional domains. Speech and language are not treated as separate domains in determining eligibility. Almost all children who meet this criterion should be identifiable before the age of three, but as a conservative criterion for Study 1 only SPED children whose school record indicated receipt of services in two or more therapy disciplines, or a condition such as deafness or Down Syndrome which is observable well before age three, were included in the study. Attention Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) was not counted as such a condition. The roster of SPED children in three cohorts was compared to the database of children from the same birth cohorts served by early intervention. When a study-eligible child was not found in the early intervention database, the child's school was asked to forward to his/her parents a request for an interview about their child's early development. A token incentive (\$1) was offered for any reply to this request. Dr. Shapiro contacted parents who agreed to participate, scheduled an interview (usually by phone) and arranged for an interpreter if indicated. The interviews were organized around a scripted set of questions, but frequently extraneous discussion was initiated by parents. Dr. Shapiro recorded detailed notes during each interview. Each author independently coded the notes to reflect answers to the scripted questions. Disparities were resolved by discussion to ensure consistency of coding. Data were summarized using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 6.1.

Evaluation questions	Population	Sample	Sample size
1a): Are all eligible children identified as early as possible?	Children residing in Hawai'i before the age of 2.5 (early residents) and eligible for early intervention (e.i.)	Children born 1/1/91 through 6/1/94 and enrolled in state public school special education (SPED) programs in 1997 (i.e. at ages 3-6) with diagnosis or related services indicating delay in 2 or more domains or conditions such as deafness identifiable before the age of 3.	265 SPED records 124 records not matched in e.i. database 90 children's parents (73%) interviewed.

Results

Effectiveness: Are children referred as early as possible? Of the 265 special education records examined, 124 were not matched by name and birth date to a record in the state e.i. database. However, of the children in this group of 124 whose parents were interviewed (N = 90) and who had lived in the state before the age of 2.5 years (N = 69, or 77%), 26 (38%) had actually been referred to early intervention (21 had been evaluated and received services; 5 were evaluated but not served for unknown reasons) although their names were not recorded in the

MIS (i.e. 43 (62%) were “missed” by early intervention). If these proportions of early residents, and those receiving services, apply to the 34 families who could not be contacted, did not respond to contact or refused to participate, then of the 124 non-matched children 77% or 95 were resident before the age of 2.5 years, and of these 95, 62% or 59 did not receive services. Clearly, all or almost all of the 141 children whose special education records were matched to an early intervention record were resident before age 2.5, as few children are enrolled in early intervention after that age. Thus of the total group of 265 children, $141 + (.77 * 124) = 236$ (89%) presumably were resident before the age of 2.5. Of these 236 sampled children who resided in the state from an early age, we estimate 60 (25%) were missed by early intervention although they had disabilities which should have been identified before the age of three.

Table 2. Numbers of children categorized by database, interview contact, residence, and early intervention contact

	N	Not matched in e.i. database	Resident in state before age 2.5 yrs.	Resident, not evaluated or served in early intervention
SPED records	265	124	236*	60*
Matched	141	NA	141	0
Interviewed	90	90	69	43
All unmatched	124	124	97*	60*

* Extrapolation from data for families interviewed.

If we consider only those not *served* in early intervention, assuming that those evaluated and not served represent system failure, we conclude that 68 or 29% of children were not served by early intervention although they had disabilities which should have been identified before the age of three. This would imply a very broad definition of system failure since it is very likely some parents refused services which were offered them.

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