

Assessing Needs Related to Early Identification During COVID-19

A National Needs Assessment



The purpose of the assessment was to describe the **impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on early identification of children with developmental delays and disabilities**. The assessment **identified current and emerging needs, barriers, strengths, and opportunities** for early recognition of developmental delay and disability among children from birth to age 5 years during the pandemic.

Methods

Two web-based surveys were conducted in Fall 2020 with early childhood programs and systems: one survey with grantees and one survey with grantees' early childhood partners in their states/territories.



Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Early Identification



of respondents indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic "highly impacted" early identification of developmental delays and disabilities in young children from birth to age 5 years.



of respondents reported the number of children served by early childhood programs and systems overall has decreased since the COVID-19 pandemic started.

Further, data collected from programs and systems indicate that the decrease in children served is likely to lead to a negative impact on early identification.

Multilevel Impacts on Early Identification and Service Delivery



Reduced allocation of resources for this work (staffing, funding, and time)



Poor service delivery coordination



Communication challenges between families and providers



Misconceptions about service availability



Competing priorities as families struggle to meet basic needs

Future Strategies to Support Children and Families



Leverage existing strengths and recognize opportunities to support more families comprehensively.



Strategies for improving early identification will need to address both new and existing, and now worsened, challenges.



Prioritize multi-level system change to improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities among young children.



For additional information on the needs assessment:
<https://go.usa.gov/xzTmm>