

Virginia Provider Implementation Survey Report

Practices and Professional Development of Early Intervention Providers

2020

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Background

The purpose of the Virginia Provider Implementation Survey is to assess how functional assessment, the child outcome ratings process, coaching and natural learning environment practices are being used in Virginia. First implemented in 2016, Virginia’s survey was modeled after the provider survey developed through the ENHANCE Project, a research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education to improve the quality of child outcome data. The most recent survey of early intervention administrators, service providers and service coordinators throughout Virginia was conducted in October 2020.

From the survey’s inception, Virginia’s Part C of IDEA Lead Agency—the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services (DBHDS)—has remained committed to using the information gathered annually to evaluate statewide improvement efforts and to identify needed resources and supports to further implement evidence-based practices. As 2020 marked the fifth year of survey implementation, DBHDS now has a wealth of data upon which to base decisions for ongoing and perhaps yet-to-be-envisioned efforts.

For those who agree a picture is worth a thousand words, the charts included with this report (see Appendix) will no doubt prove informative—both for what they illustrate and for what they do not. This accompanying narrative aims to spotlight items of interest and spark ongoing discussion about how best to strengthen Virginia’s implementation of evidence-based early intervention service delivery.

Information Specific to the 2020 Survey

About the Survey Respondents

- 607/900 providers and administrators responded to the survey (for a survey response rate of 67.4%).
- Respondents represented all 40 local Infant & Toddler Connection (ITC) systems and all ITC regions.
- 35% of respondents identified themselves as service coordinators—followed by speech-language pathologists (26%), developmental services providers (20%), physical therapists (17%) and occupational therapists (11%).
- 29/40 local system managers (LSMs) responded to the survey.
- All levels of experience were once again represented: 41% of respondents indicated that they have worked in early intervention for 11 years or more; 19% for 6-10 years; and 33% for 1-5 years.
- 48% of respondents are employed by local ITC lead agencies; others were either employed by local contracted agencies (44%) or self-employed (7%).

Highlights

- ❖ *Participation in the 2020 survey (607 respondents) was the second highest in the survey’s five-year history. 697 individuals responded in 2016 when the survey was first introduced.*
- ❖ *With only slight variation, the breakdowns above are representative of survey respondents in each of the five surveys conducted to date.*
- ❖ *Twenty-nine (29) LSMs took part in the 2020 survey—the same number as in 2019.*

Impact of COVID-19 and Teleintervention on Practice

COVID-19 necessitated a major and rapid shift in the way early intervention services were provided in Virginia. Practically overnight, early intervention professionals throughout Virginia transitioned from providing individualized family services in person to delivering those same supports almost exclusively via teleintervention.

DBHDS seized upon this unprecedented transformation to include five (5) additional statements that together became item 33 on the 2020 survey. Specifically, respondents were asked to indicate—using a scale of strongly agree, mostly agree, somewhat agree, agree a little, or do not agree at all—their agreement with each of the following statements:

- Teleintervention has strengthened my use of coaching practices. (S1)
- As a result of my experience with teleintervention, I will be more confident and consistent in using coaching practices during in-person intervention. (S2)
- Teleintervention has strengthened my use of functional assessment practices. (S3)
- As a result of my experience with teleintervention, I will be more confident and consistent in using functional assessment practices during in-person assessments. (S4)
- Families participating in teleintervention have reported positive impacts on their child and family. (S5)

Responses are presented in Chart A.

Highlights

Respondents...

- ❖ *Strongly (52.0%) or mostly (24.8%) agreed that teleintervention has strengthened their use of coaching practices (S1).*
- ❖ *Strongly (36.1%) or mostly (25.5%) agreed that teleintervention has strengthened their use of functional assessment practices (S3).*
- ❖ *Strongly (29.2%) or mostly (40.3%) agreed that families are reporting positive impacts as a result of teleintervention (S5).*

Evaluating Resources and Supports

A variety of tools and resources are available to Virginia's early intervention professionals to assist them as they learn about functional assessment and the child outcome ratings process (abbreviated from this point forward as FA-COS), coaching and natural learning environment practices (NLEPs). Each year the survey has asked respondents to identify those tools they most often use as well as those they find most helpful.

Responses collected between 2016 and 2020 are presented for comparison in Charts B, C, D and E.

- ❖ *The Child Indicators Booklet was cited as the most helpful and most often used resource for learning about FA-COS in each of the five surveys.*
- ❖ *Local staff/team meetings were consistently among the most often used and most helpful resource for learning about FA-COS, coaching and NLEPs.*
- ❖ *Reliance on online resources has and will likely continue to grow.*

Use of the Decision Tree

Beginning with the 2017 survey, participants have been asked to report on their use of the Decision Tree using an “always” to “never” scale.

Chart F presents data collected over the past four (4) years on use of the Decision Tree.

- ❖ *Overall, reported use of the Decision Tree 100% of the time (i.e., “always”) increased from 24.9% (2017) to 61.6% (2020) = ↑ 36.7%.*
- ❖ *Reported use of the Decision Tree slipped slightly between 2019 and 2020.*

Feedback and Support

Among the most valuable resources for any early intervention professional are other early intervention professionals. For both FA-COS and coaching and NLEPs, the survey has sought to identify the degree to which respondents agreed that feedback and support were both available and accessible.

For the Child Outcome Ratings Process

Using a scale of “yes”, “sometimes”, “no” or “I do not know”, respondents are asked whether or not someone in the local system or program:

1. Reviews IFSP assessment narratives, child outcome ratings and the team process used for determining the ratings (S1);
2. Provides feedback to those involved in the child outcome ratings process (S2);
3. Is available to provide ongoing support if requested (S3); and
4. Trains providers new to the child outcome rating process (S4).

Chart G presents the affirmative (“yes”) responses received to each statement between 2016 and 2020.

- ❖ *The “yes” responses to each statement above increased slightly between 2016 and 2019 but decreased in 2020, perhaps due to competing priorities during COVID.*
- ❖ *Despite the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, 91% of respondents reported someone was available to provide ongoing support if requested.*
- ❖ *There was relatively little variation in the percentage of “yes” responses for each statement over the five-year period.*
 - ◆ *S1: From a low of 58.8% (2017) to a high of 70.0% (2018) = ↑ 11.2%*
 - ◆ *S2: From a low of 47.1% (2017) to a high of 63.1% (2019) = ↑ 16%*
 - ◆ *S3: From a low of 89.0% (2018) to a high of 92.6% (2019) = ↑ 3.6%*
 - ◆ *S4: From a low of 69.4% (2017) to a high of 82.3% (2019) = ↑ 12.9%*

For Coaching and Natural Learning Environments

Again, using a scale of “yes”, “sometimes”, “no” or “I do not know”, respondents are asked whether or not someone in the local system or program:

1. Reviews intervention visit contact notes for documentation of coaching techniques and natural learning environment (S1);
2. Observes providers on an intervention visit at least once a year (S2);
3. Provides feedback to service providers on their use of coaching and natural learning environment practices (S3);
4. Is available to provide me with ongoing support if I ask for it (S4); and
5. Trains providers new to coaching and natural learning environment practices (S5).

Chart H presents the affirmative (“yes”) responses received to each statement between 2016 and 2020.

- ❖ *With one exception (statement S1 above) the percentage of those replying “yes” to each statement increased between 2016 and 2019.*
- ❖ *The percentages decreased slightly for all five statements between 2019 and 2020—perhaps due to competing priorities during COVID.*
- ❖ *Despite the challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, 94% of respondents reported someone was available to provide ongoing support if requested.*

Child Outcome Ratings Process

Assessment of the Process

Survey participants are presented with a series of seven (7) statements related to the child outcome ratings process both at entry and at exit and asked whether or not the statement applies to: all children (100%); most children (76%-99%); many children (51%-75%); some children (26%-50%); few children (1%-25%); or no children (0%). These seven statements are:

1. The family provided input about the child’s functioning for the entry ratings. (S1)
2. The entry ratings were decided by a team that included at least two professionals. (S2)

3. Information from the child’s functioning from multiple settings and situations was used in deciding the entry ratings. (S3)
4. Multiple sources of information, including an assessment tool, were used in deciding the entry ratings. (S4)
5. The family was present during the discussion and decision of the child outcome entry ratings. (S5)
6. I was confident that the entry ratings given were accurate. (S6)
7. The process for deciding the entry ratings matched my understanding of how it is supposed to be done. (S7)

Chart I compares the “for all children at entry” percentages for each statement from 2016 to 2020.

Chart J compares the “for all children at exit” figures.

Highlights

- ❖ *The percentage of respondents indicating the survey statement was true for all children at entry and exit, increased from 2016 to 2020 for all statements except that S1 decreased slightly at exit.*
 - ◆ *In 2016 respondents reported that 61.6% of families provided input about the child’s functioning for the entry ratings for all children. In 2020 the percentage was 62.9%. At exit, the percentage decreased from 44.7% in 2016 to 42.9% in 2020.*
 - ◆ *The percent of respondents reporting information about the child’s functioning in multiple settings and situations was used in deciding entry ratings for all children increased from 54.7% in 2016 to 74.3% in 2020. At exit, the percentage increased from 50.4% to 65.3% over that period.*
- ❖ *Slightly more than half (51.6%) of respondents in 2020 were confident that the entry ratings given were accurate for all children. At exit, that percentage was 44.1%.*

Perspectives on the Process

Survey participants are presented with a series of ten (10) statements related to the child outcome ratings process *overall* and asked whether or not they strongly agree, mostly agree, somewhat agree, agree a little, or do not agree at all with each statement. These ten statements are:

1. I understand the meaning of each of the three child outcomes. (S1)
2. I understand how to apply the criteria to choose the appropriate statement for the Child’s Development in Relation to Other Children the Same Age in the Team Assessment Narrative of the IFSP (or the 7 point rating scale). (S2)
3. The ratings given are higher than the child’s actual level of functioning. (S3)
4. Child outcome ratings are too subjective. (S4)
5. Ratings are more accurate when parents are present for the rating decision. (S5)
6. Ratings are more accurate when the Decision Tree is used to guide the rating decision. (S6)
7. The ratings given are lower than the child’s actual level of functioning. (S7)
8. It is difficult for individuals participating in child outcome ratings to reach consensus on one or more of the outcomes. (S8)
9. I understand the difference between functional behaviors and discrete skills. (S9)
10. I understand the annual results for my local system(s) on the three child outcomes. (S10)

Given the wording of each statement, one would hope to see more “agree-leaning” responses to items S1, S2, S5, S6, S9, and S10; conversely, more “disagree-leaning” responses would be expected to items S3, S4, S7 and S8.

Chart K presents the percentage of respondents who “strongly agree” with statements S1, S2, S5, S6, S9, and S10. **Chart L** presents the percentage of respondents who “strongly disagree” with statements S3, S4, S7 and S8.

Highlights

- ❖ Overall, each of the six items included in Chart K (the “agree-leaning” statements) have trended in the direction one would hope to see. For nearly each statement, the lowest “strongly agree” values were recorded in the 2016 survey. The highest “strongly agree” values were recorded more recently—some in 2019 and others in 2020.
- ❖ Also as anticipated, each of the four items included in Chart L (the “disagree-leaning” statements) have trended in a preferred direction, with more individuals disagreeing with each statement than the year before.
- ❖ Respondents who “strongly agree” with S1 — “I understand the meaning of each of the three outcomes”—increased from 54.3% (2016) to 75.8% (2020) = ↑ 21.5%

Coaching and Natural Learning Environments Practices

Assessment of the Practices

Survey participants are presented with a series of six (6) statements related to coaching and natural learning environment practices and asked whether or not the statement applies to: all children (100%); most children (76%-99%); many children (51%-75%); some children (26%-50%); few children (1%-25%); or no children (0%). These six statements—each prefaced by “I either did myself, or observed that the provider...”—include:

1. At the beginning of the visit, asked the parent/caregiver what had worked well or not well in implementing the joint plan we developed last session (S1);
2. Modeled a strategy or activity while the parent/caregiver observed (S2);
3. Gave the parent/caregiver the opportunity to practice a strategy or activity while (being) observed (S3);
4. Provided the opportunity for the parent/caregiver to reflect on their knowledge and/or skills related to potential or practices strategies (S4);
5. Developed a joint plan with the parent/caregiver (S5); and
6. Asked mostly open-ended questions of the parent/caregiver (S6).

Chart M compares the “for all children” percentages for each statement from 2016 to 2020.

- ❖ For all six statements, the percentage of respondents indicating that the practice occurred “for all children” decreased between 2016 and 2017.
- ❖ Using 2017 as a new basepoint, the percentage of respondents indicating that the practices occur “for all children” steadily climbed from 2017 to 2020 with one exception:
 - ◆ S1: From a low of 37.9% (2017) to a high of 55.1% (2020) = ↑ 11.2%
 - ◆ S2: The one exception; see below
 - ◆ S3: From a low of 34.0% (2017) to a high of 46.8% (2020) = ↑ 16.0%
 - ◆ S4: From a low of 26.8% (2017) to a high of 41.1% (2020) = ↑ 3.6%
 - ◆ S5: From a low of 53.0% (2017) to a high of 70.3% (2019) = ↑ 12.9%
 - ◆ S6: From a low of 33.9% (2017) to a high of 44.9% (2020) = ↑ 11.0%
- ❖ Like the other five statements, S2—“modeled a strategy or activity while the parent/caregiver observed”—trended upward from 2017 to 2019 but S2 then dropped between 2019 and 2020 (from 63.2% to 51.0% = ↓ 12.2%). In this age of COVID-19 and teleintervention, it has been anecdotally reported that individual service providers may be struggling with the definition or concept of “modeling” strategies or activities when not in person with the child and family.

Perspectives on the Practices

Survey participants are presented with a series of five (5) statements related to coaching and natural learning environment practices *overall* and asked whether or not they strongly agree, mostly agree, somewhat agree, agree a little, or do not agree at all with each statement. These five statements are:

1. I am able to explain to families/caregivers their role in early intervention visits as well as the provider’s (S1);
2. I am able to explain to families/caregivers the benefits of using everyday activities and routines as sources of child learning opportunities (S2);
3. The time and place for visits with families/caregivers are scheduled based on the activity/routine the family would like to work on with their child (S3);
4. Parent/caregiver is actively engaged in interacting with the child during visits (S4); and
5. Coaching and natural learning environment practices are effective in helping families/caregivers help their child develop and learn (S5).

Chart N presents the percentage of respondents who “strongly agree” with each statement.

- ❖ For all five statements, the percentage of respondents indicating “strong agreement” decreased between 2016 and 2017.
- ❖ Strong agreement with statement S4—“parent/caregiver is actively engaged in interacting with the child during visits”—grew from 32.8% (2017) to 48.9% (2020) = ↑ 16.1%.
- ❖ Strong agreement with statement S5—“coaching and natural learning environment practices are effective in helping families/caregivers help their child develop and learn”—grew from 60.9% (2017) to 78.2% (2020) = ↑ 17.3%.

Summary

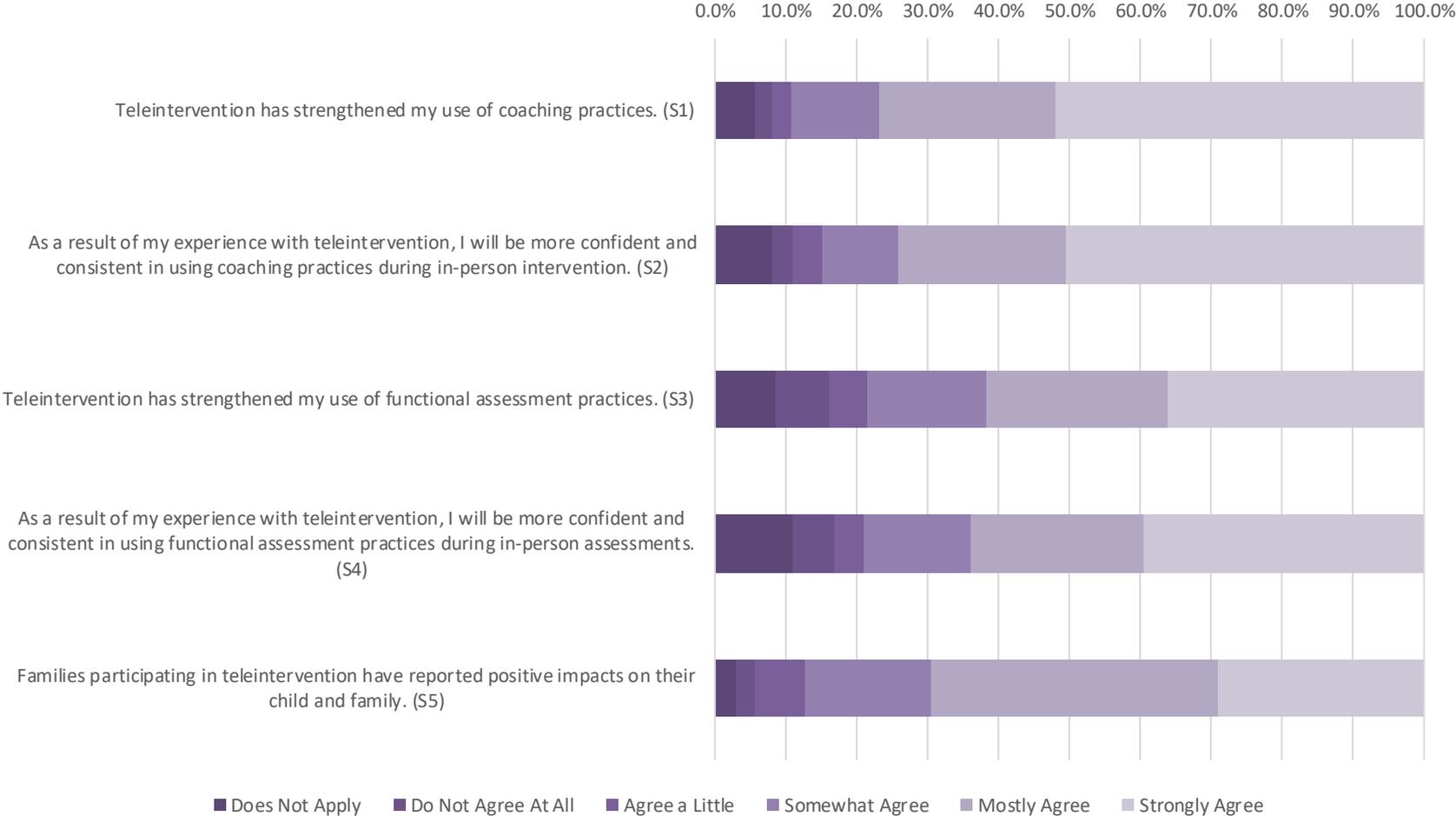
The data collected over the past five years suggest that early intervention administrators, service providers and service coordinators are becoming more confident in their application of functional assessment, the child outcome ratings process, coaching and natural learning environment practices. In nearly every instance, there were measurable positive gains—that is, the kinds of observable trends one might hope to see—from 2016 to 2020. Greater use of the Decision Tree, enhanced family engagement, gathering more types of information about each child’s development...these things and others are occurring now more than ever. Individual and team efforts to gain additional knowledge, to implement strategies that may feel uncomfortable at first, to trust themselves and others—these things *are* making a difference in Virginia’s early intervention service delivery system.

Appendix A

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Chart A – Impact of COVID-19 and Teleintervention on Coaching and Functional Assessment

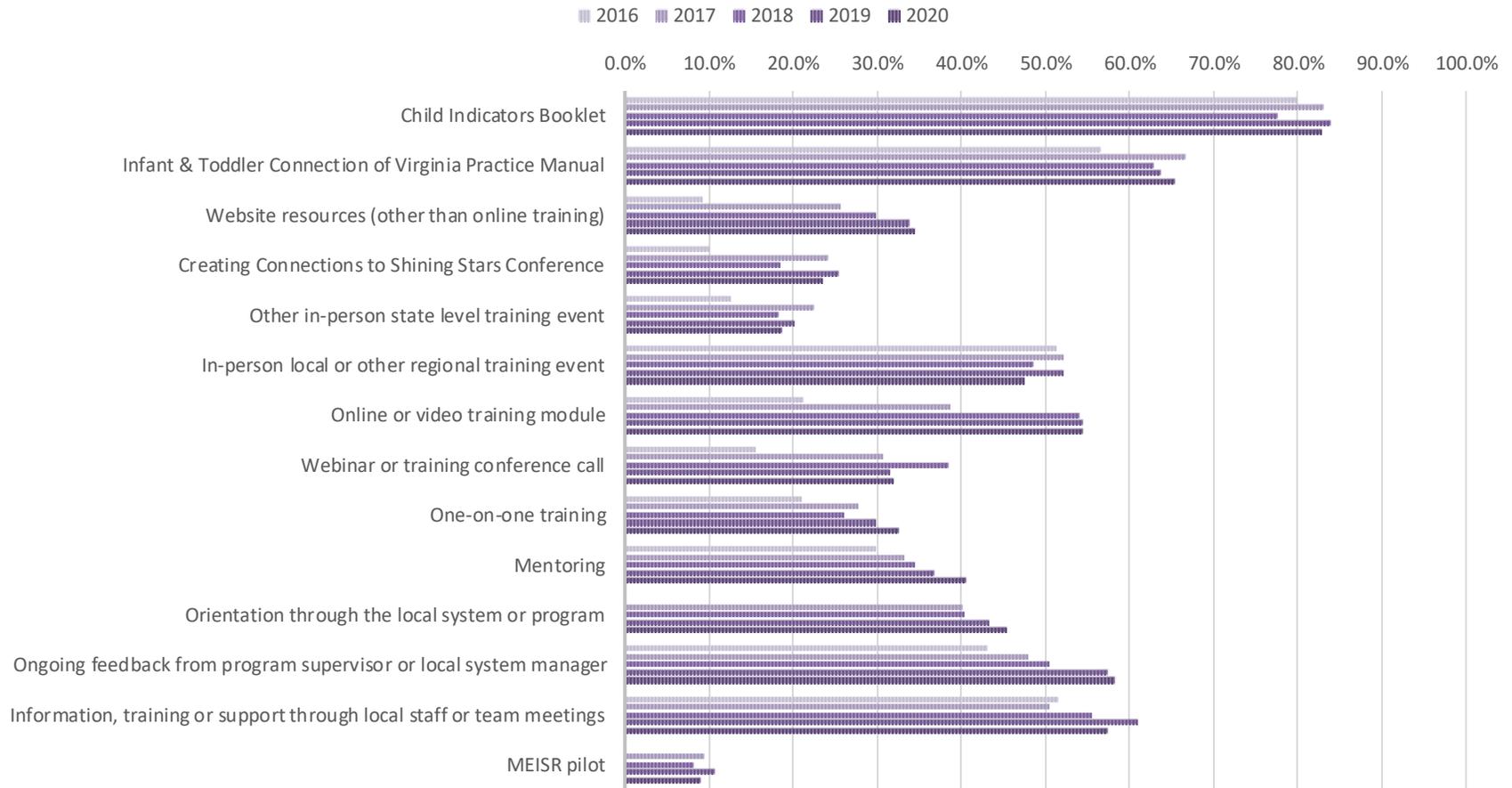
Impact of COVID-19 and Teleintervention on Coaching and Functional Assessment



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Chart B – Most Often Used for Learning About FA-COS

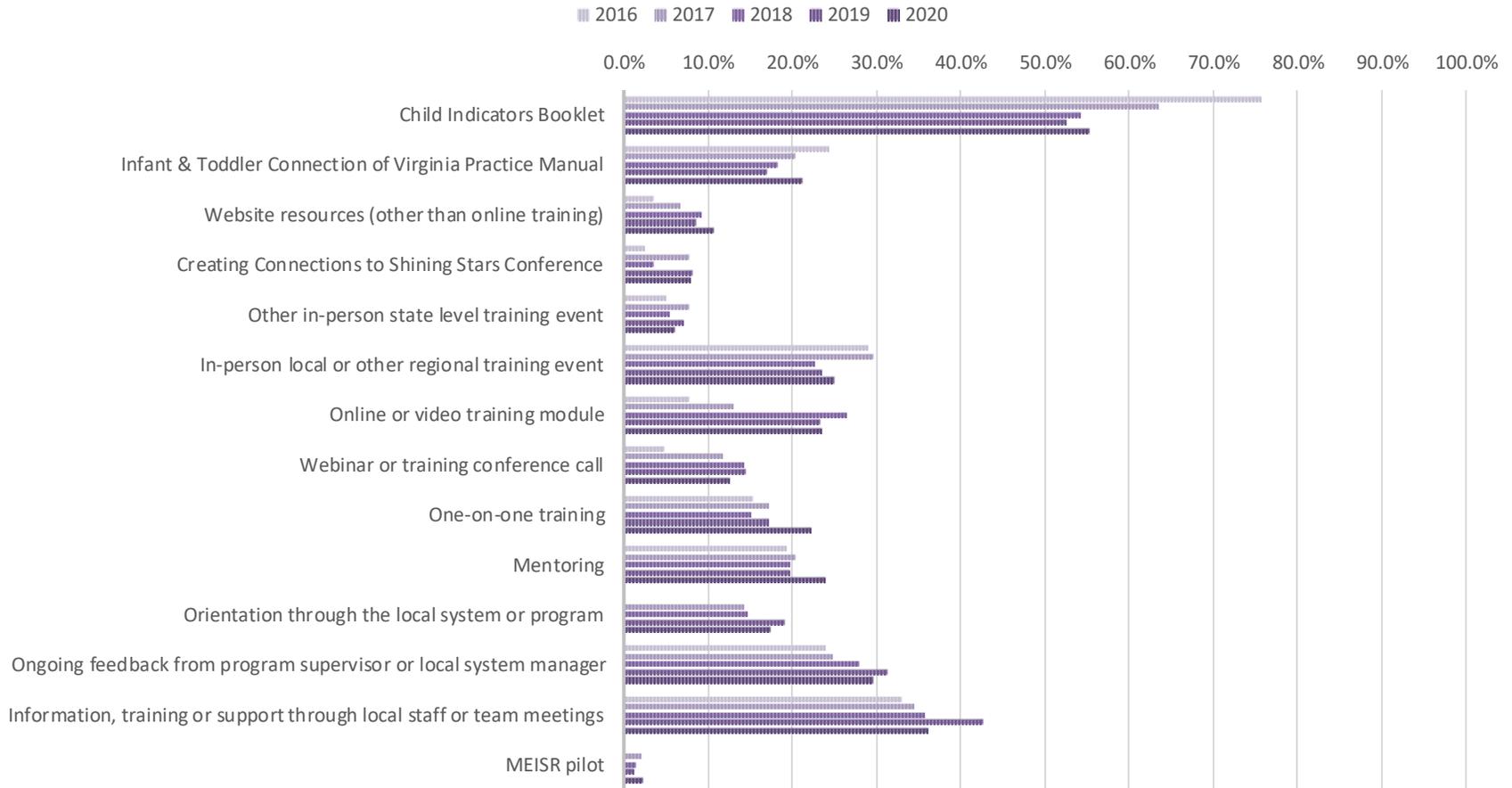
Most Often Used for Learning about Functional Assessment and the Child Outcome Ratings Process 2016-2020



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Chart C – Most Helpful for Learning About FA-COS

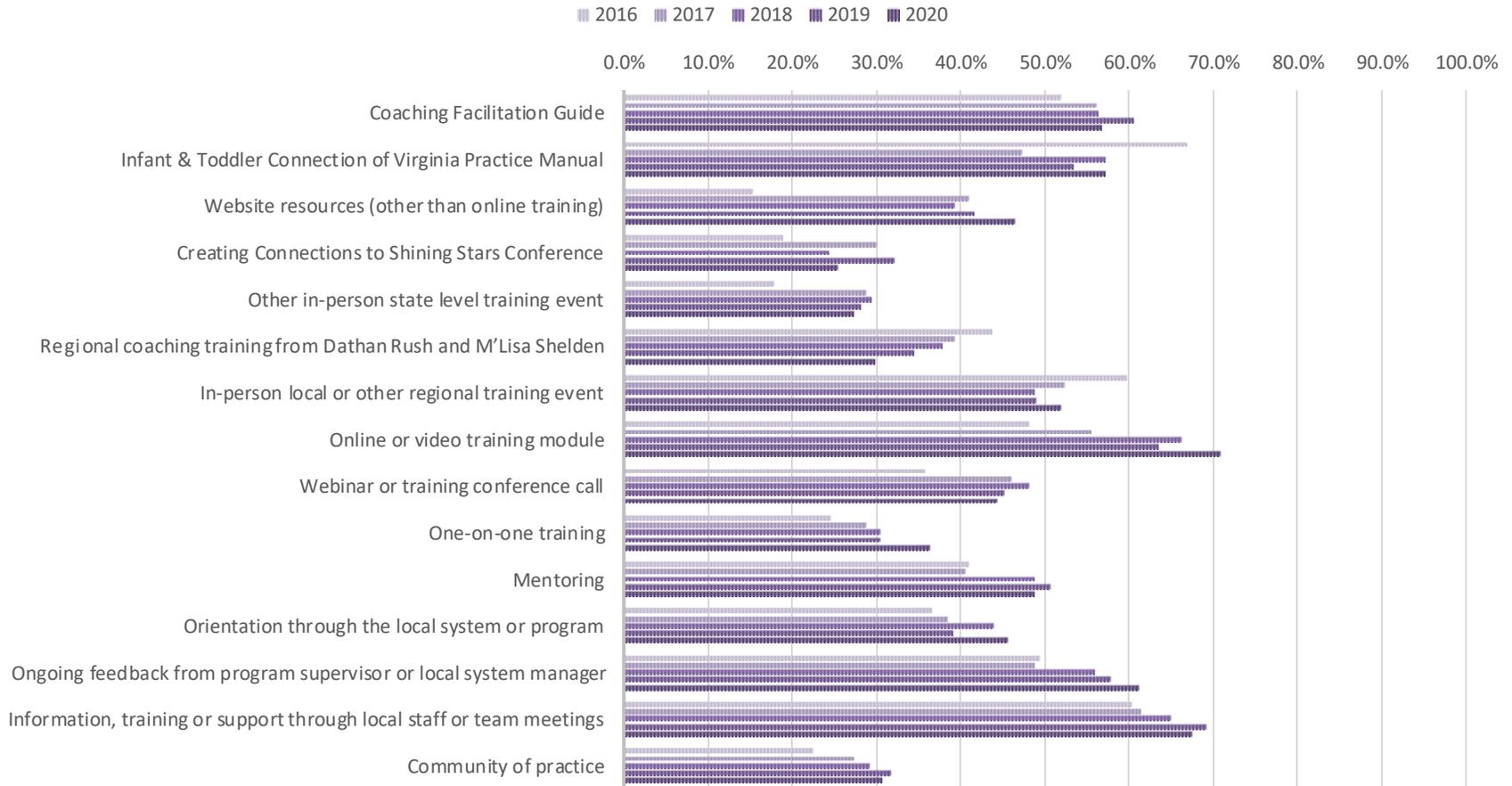
Most Helpful for Learning about Functional Assessment and the Child Outcome Ratings Process 2016-2020



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Chart D – Most Often Used for Learning About Coaching and NLEPs

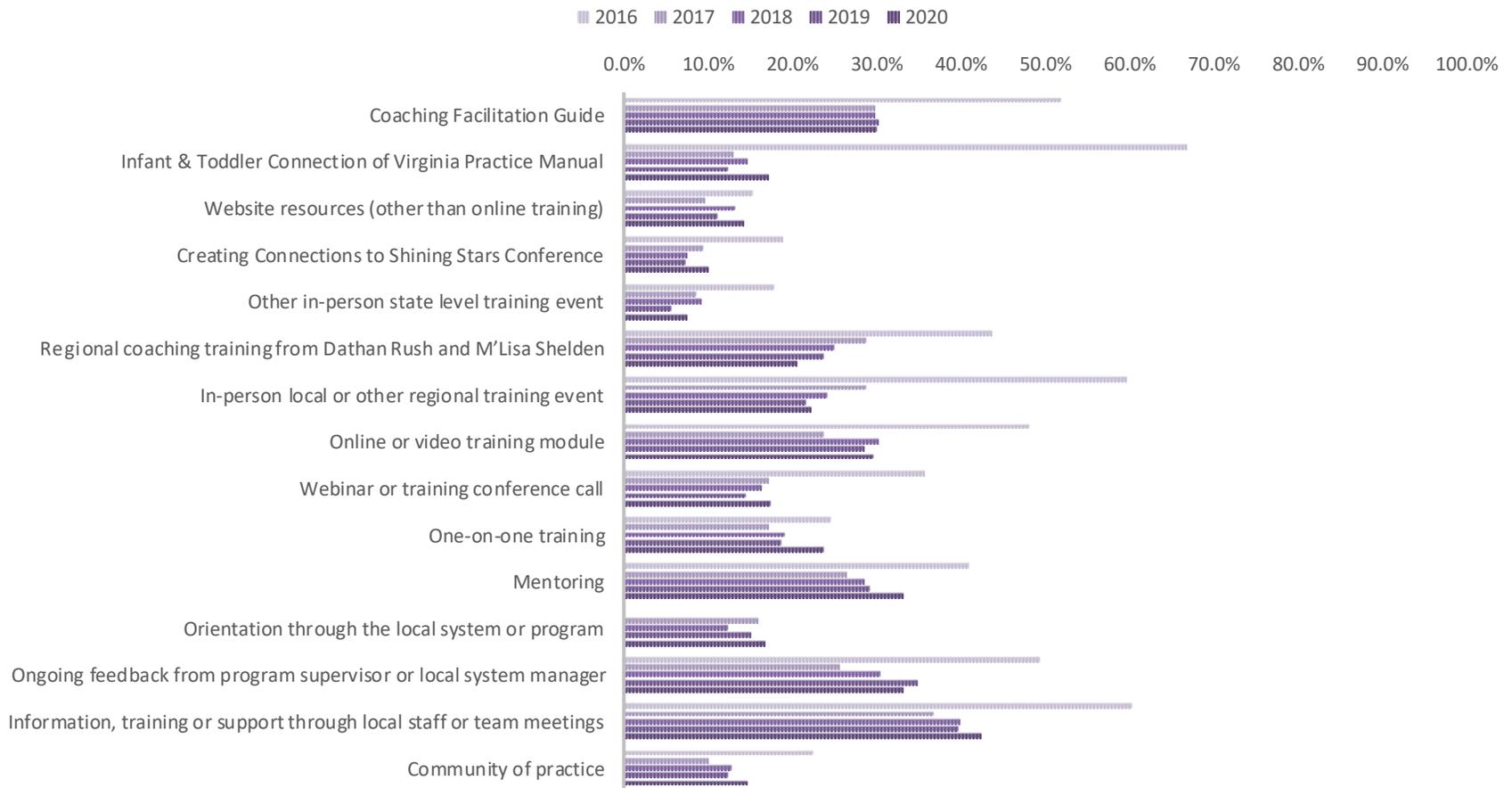
Most Often Used for Learning about Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices 2016-2020



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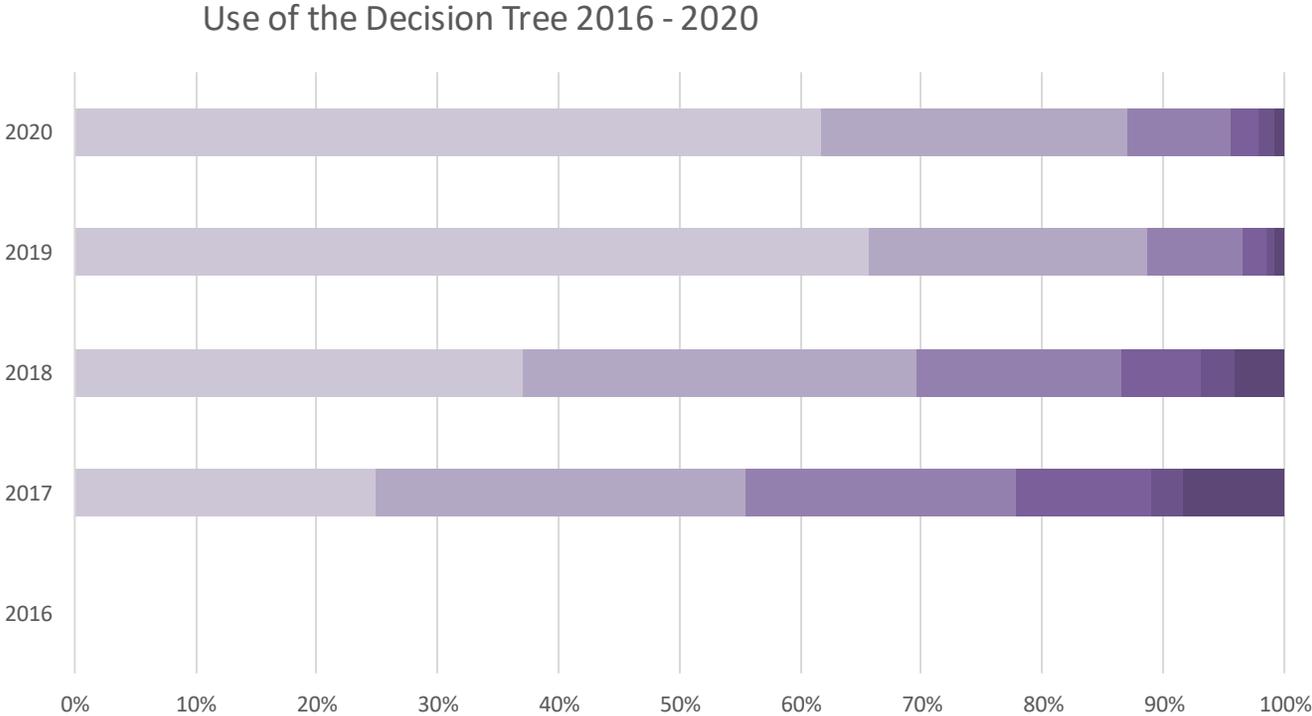
Chart E – Most Helpful for Learning About Coaching and NLEPs

Most Helpful for Learning about Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices 2016-2020



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Chart F – Use of the Decision Tree 2016-2020

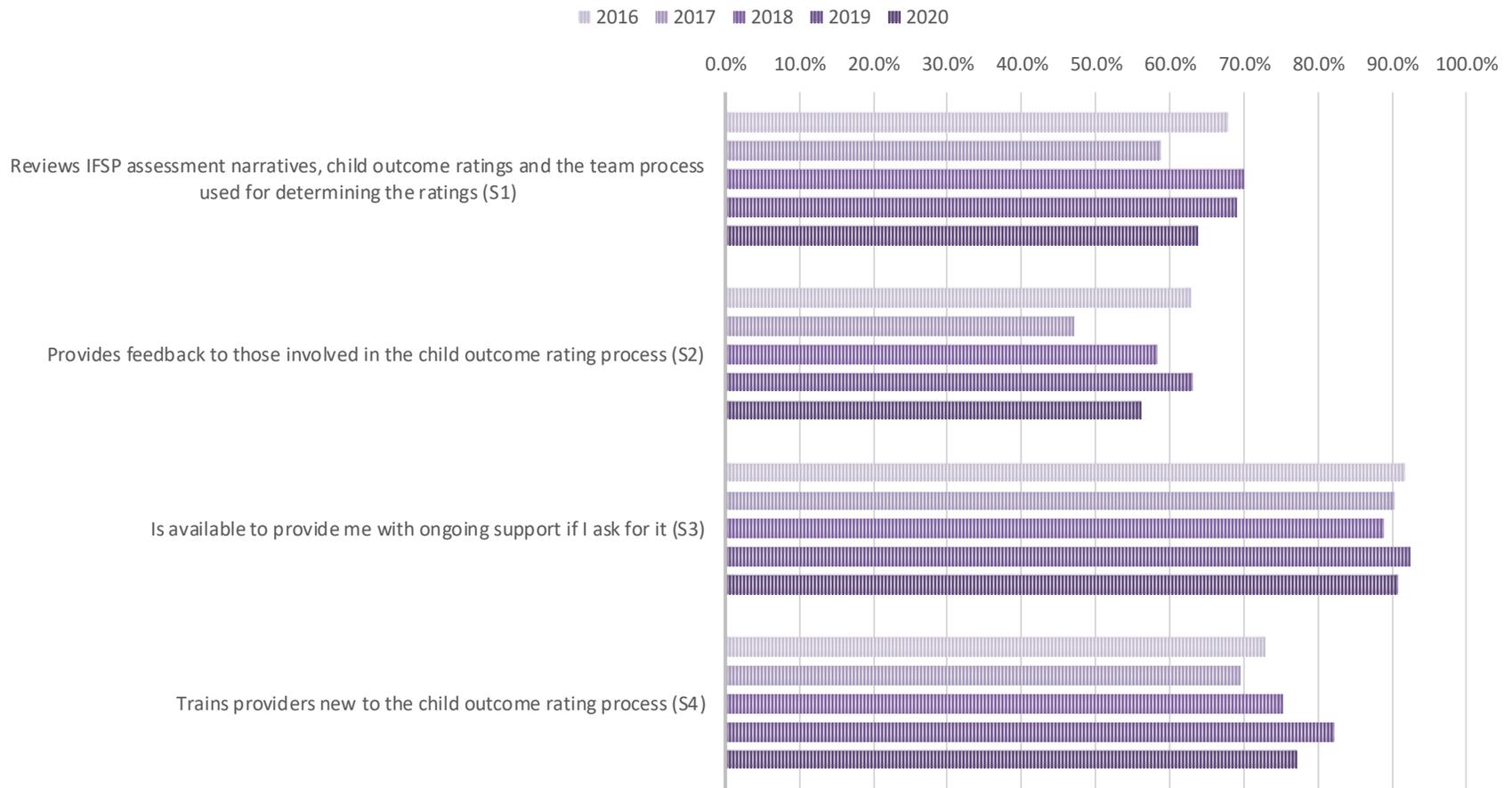


	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Always	0.0%	24.9%	37.1%	65.6%	61.6%
Almost always (at least 75% of the time)	0.0%	30.5%	32.5%	23.1%	25.4%
Sometimes (25% - 74% of the time)	0.0%	22.4%	17.0%	7.8%	8.6%
Rarely (up to 25% of the time)	0.0%	11.1%	6.6%	2.0%	2.3%
Never	0.0%	2.8%	2.9%	0.8%	1.3%
I don't know what the Decision Tree is	0.0%	8.3%	4.0%	0.8%	0.8%

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Chart G – Feedback and Support for the Child Outcome Ratings Process

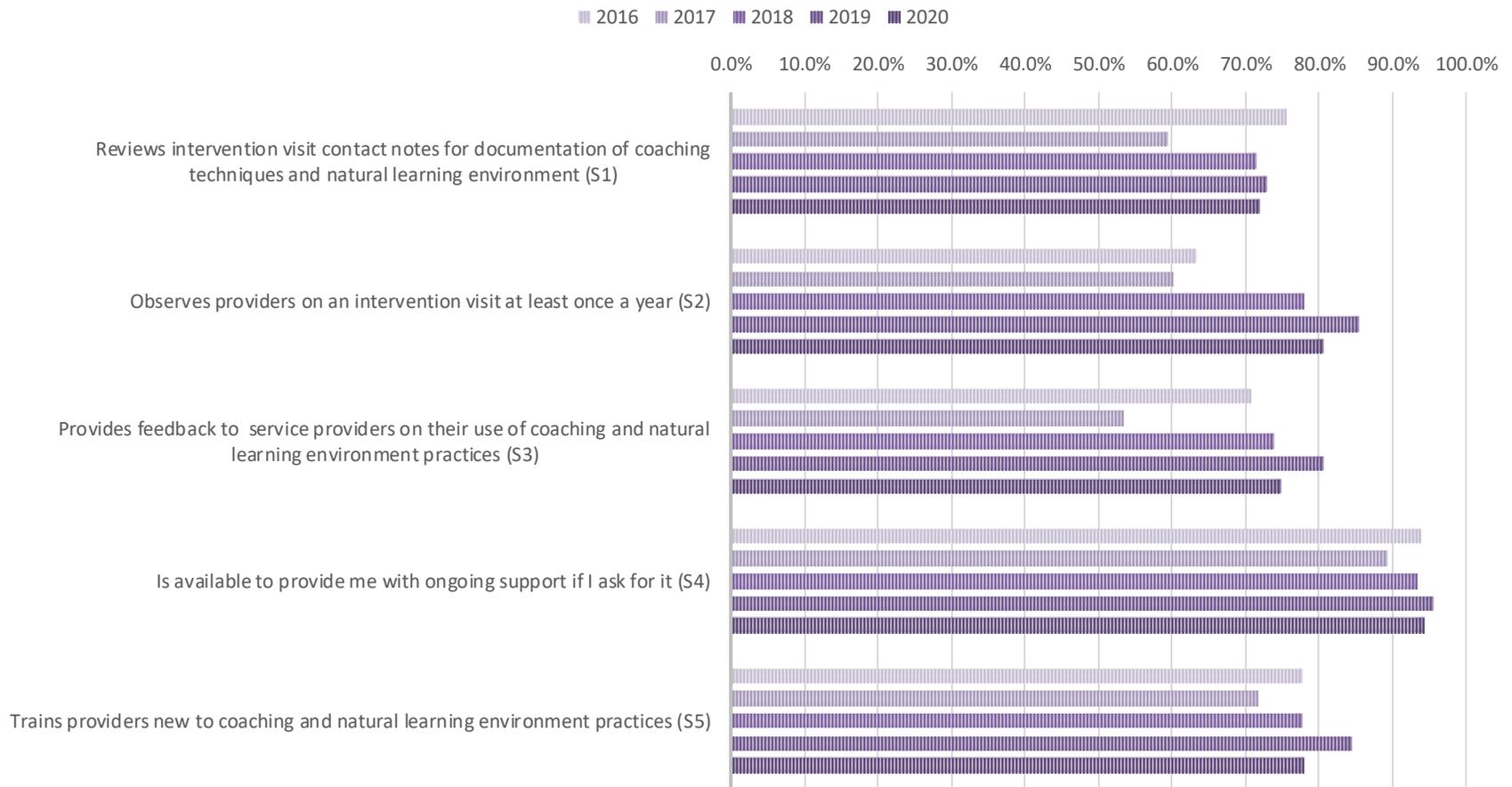
Feedback and Support for the Child Outcome Ratings Process
 Percentages = "Yes" Responses 2016-2020



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Chart H – Feedback and Support for Coaching and NLEPs

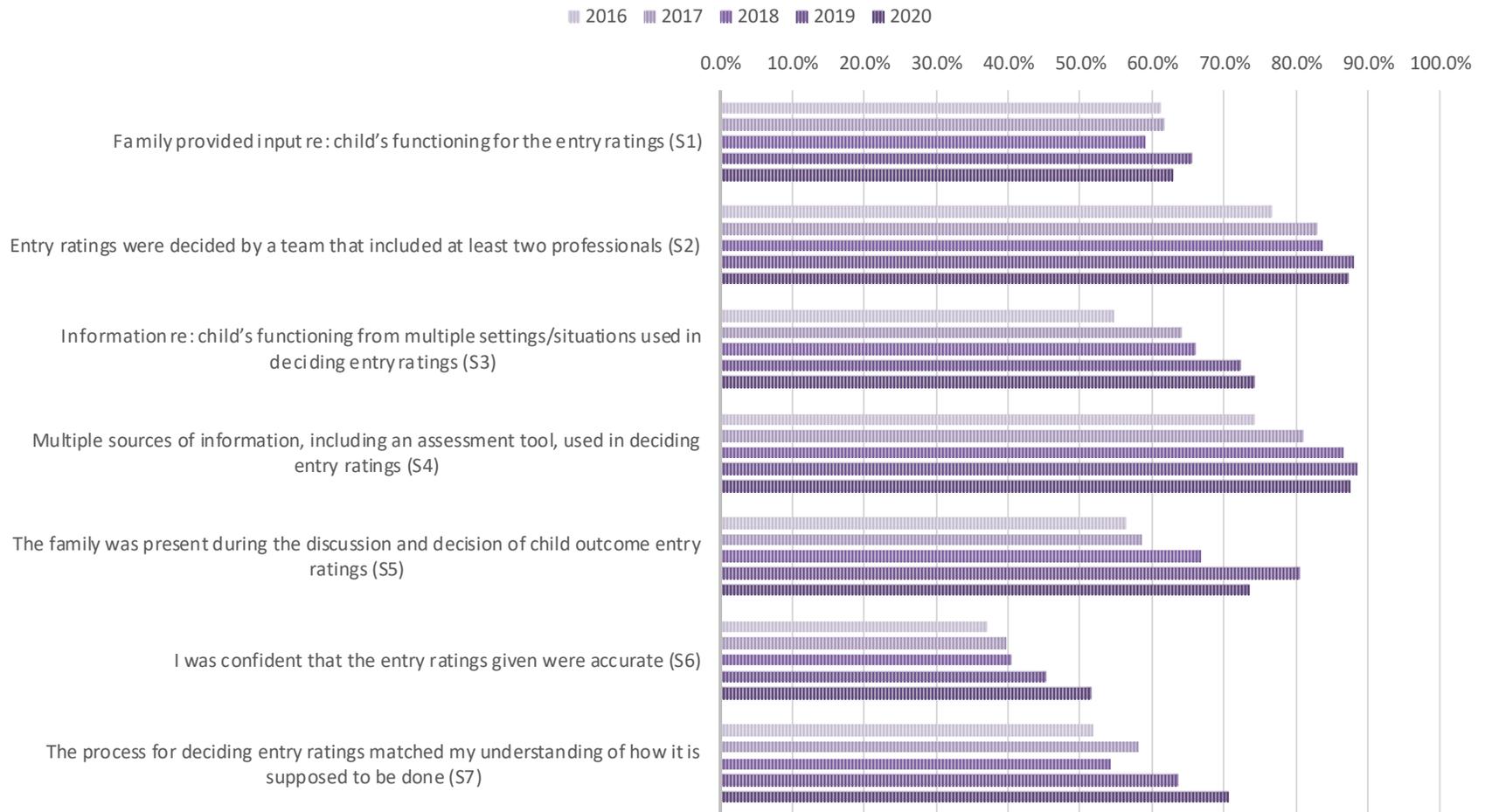
Feedback and Support for Coaching and NLEPs
Percentages = "Yes" Responses 2016-2020



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Chart I – Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Entry

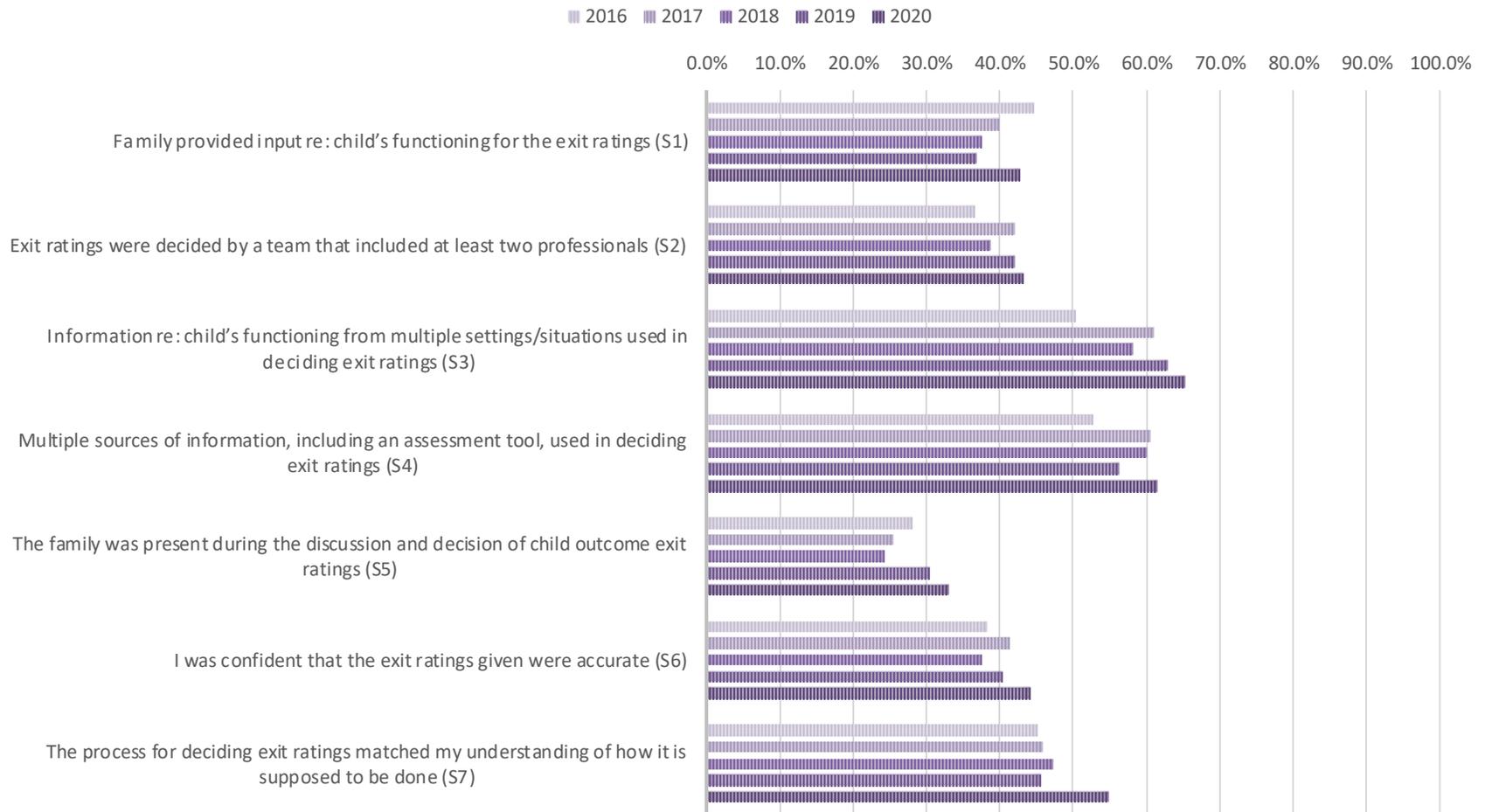
Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Entry for ALL Children 2016-2020



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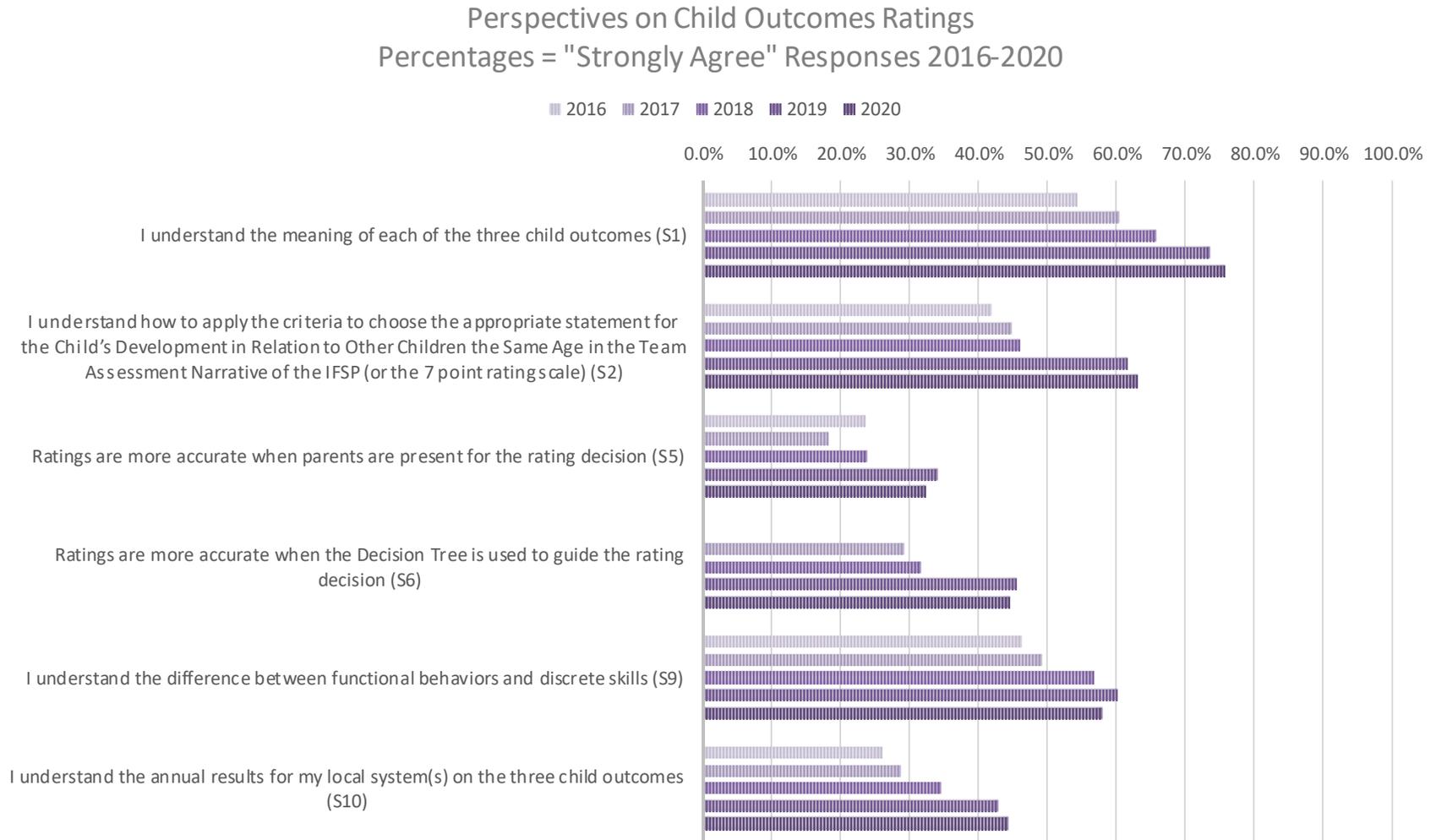
Chart J – Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Exit

Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Exit for ALL Children 2016-2020



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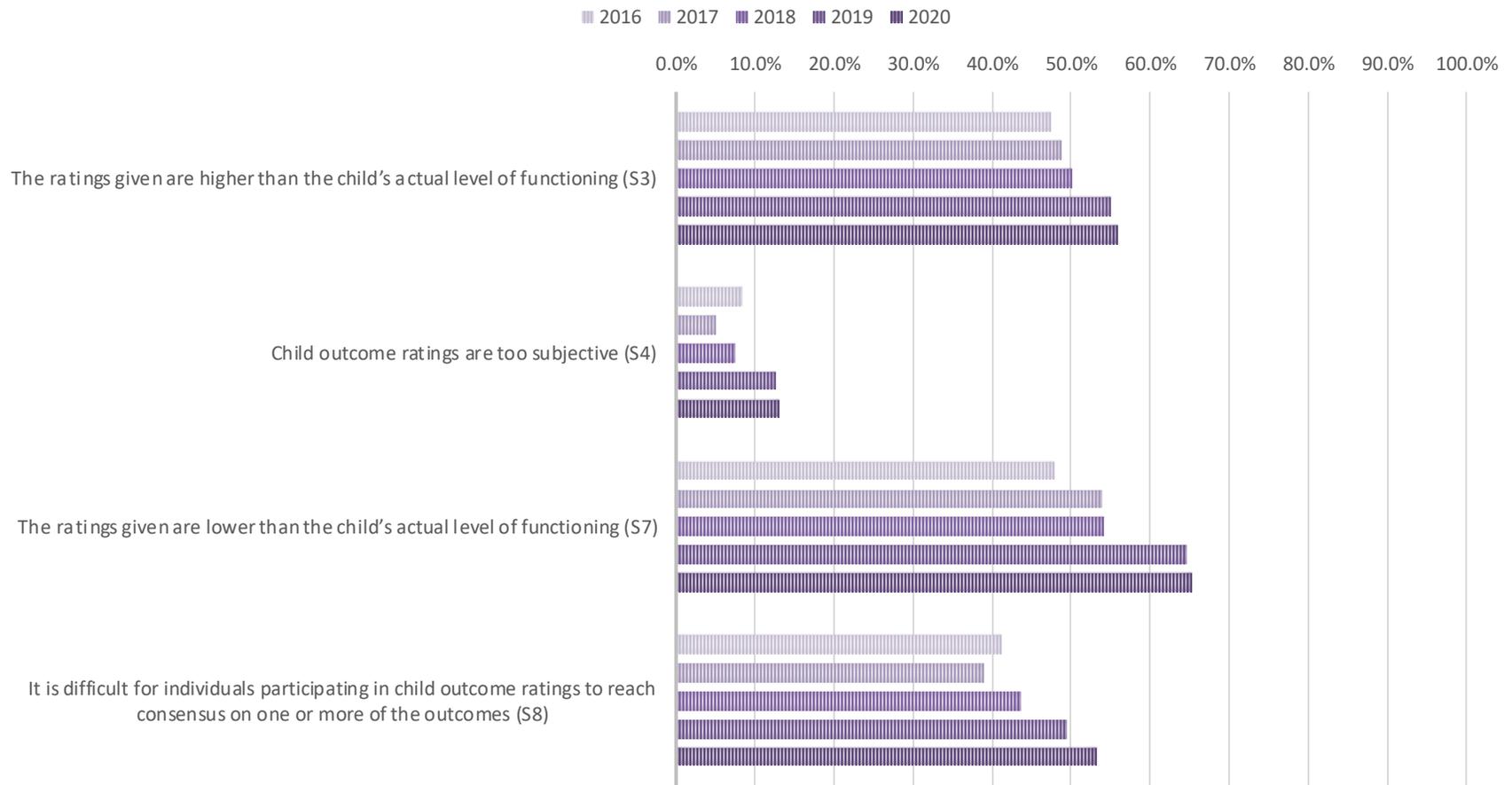
Chart K – Perspectives on Child Outcome Ratings (AGREE Statements)



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Chart L – Perspectives on Child Outcome Ratings (DISAGREE Statements)

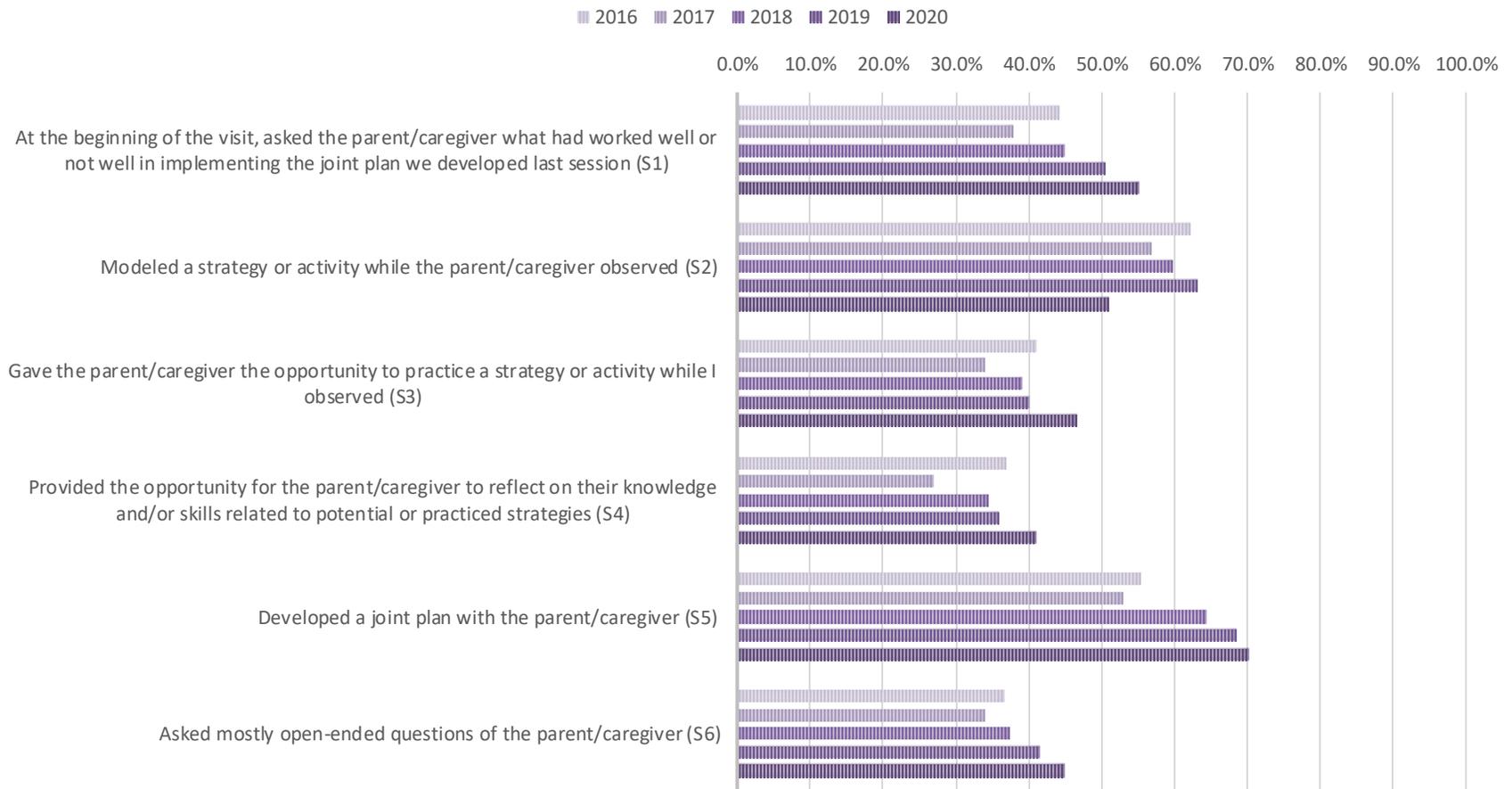
Perspectives on Child Outcome Ratings
 Percentages = "Strongly Disagree" Responses 2016-2020



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Chart M – Assessment of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices

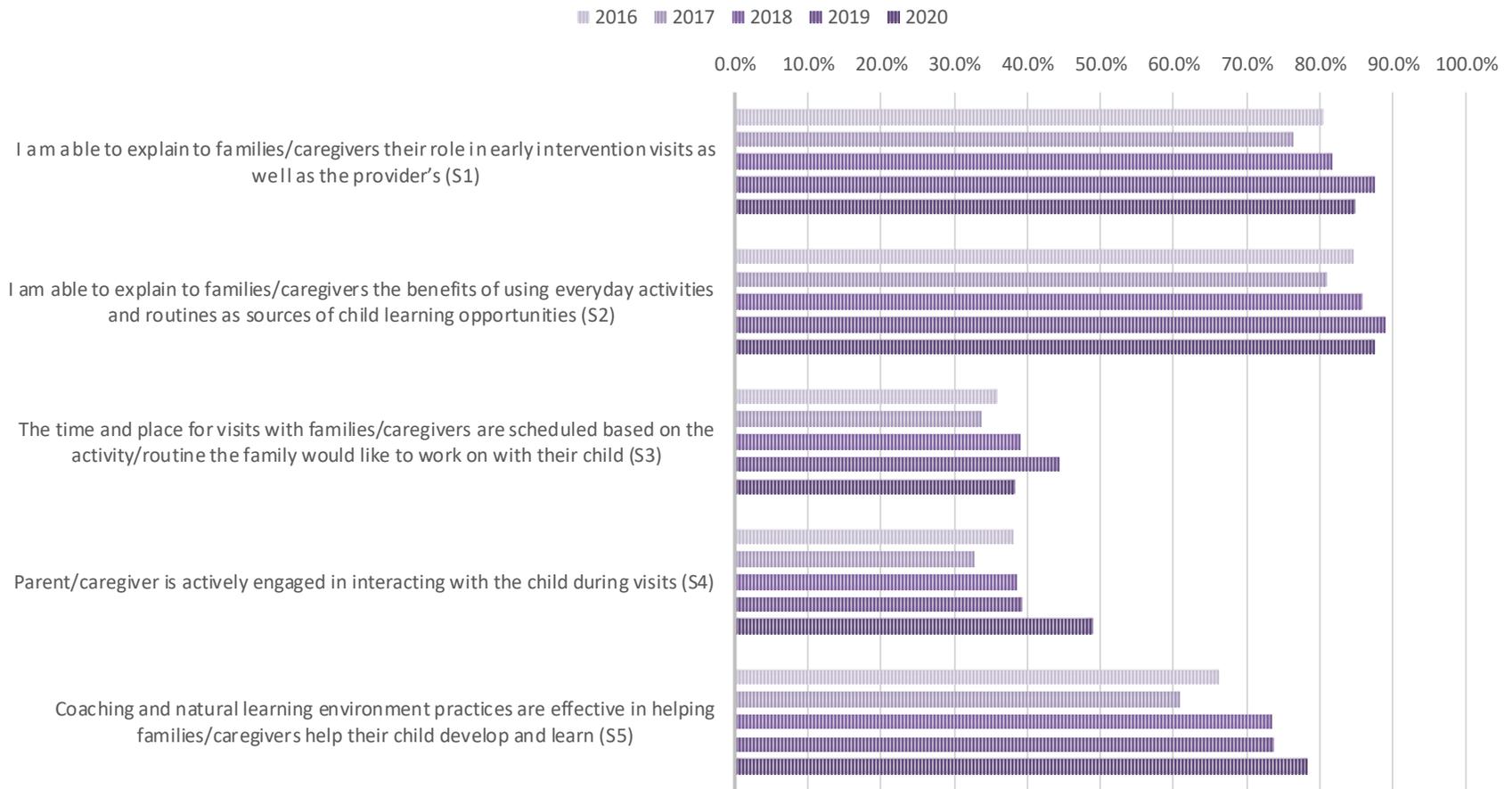
Assessment of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices
 Percentages = "For All Children" Responses 2016-2020



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Chart N – Perspectives of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices

Perspectives of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices
 Percentages = "Strongly Agree" Responses 2016-2020



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