Virginia Provider Implementation Survey Report
Practices and Professional Development of Early Intervention Providers

2021
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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/November 2021.

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.

The charts included with this report (see Appendix) are once again 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 2021 Survey

About the Survey Respondents

- 468/959 providers and administrators responded to the survey (for a survey response rate of 49%).
- Respondents represented all 40 local Infant & Toddler Connection (ITC) systems and all ITC regions.
- 39% of respondents identified themselves as service coordinators—followed by speech-language pathologists (24%), developmental services providers (21%), physical therapists (14%) and occupational therapists (12%).
- 22/40 local system managers (LSMs) responded to the survey.
- All levels of experience were once again represented: 43% of respondents indicated that they have worked in early intervention for 11 years or more; 18% for 6-10 years; and 27% for 1-5 years.
- 55% of respondents are employed by local ITC lead agencies; others were either employed by local contracted agencies (40%) or self-employed (5%).

Highlights

- Participation in the 2021 survey (468 respondents), while still very high for a survey, was the lowest in the survey’s six-year history—a 33% decrease compared to when the survey was first introduced in 2016.
- With only slight variation, the breakdowns above are representative of survey respondents in each of the six surveys conducted to date.
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 2021 are presented for comparison in Charts B, C, D and E.

- The Child Indicators Booklet has been cited as the most helpful and most often used resource for learning about FA-COS in each of the six 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 five (5) 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 62.1% (2021) = ↑37.2%.
- Reported use of the Decision Tree was highest in 2019 (65.6%). It declined in 2020 (61.6%) and increased only very slightly in 2021.

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 2021.

- The "yes" responses to each statement above increased slightly between 2016 and 2019 but decreased in 2020—perhaps due to competing priorities during COVID—and remained relatively unchanged in 2021.
- Despite the ongoing challenges posed by the COVID pandemic, 90% 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 six-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 2021.

- With one exception (statement S2 above) the percentage of those replying “yes” to each statement was lower in 2021 than in 2016, with some fluctuation in interim years.
- The percentages decreased slightly for all five statements between 2020 and 2021—continuing a pattern first noted in 2019-2020.
- 92% of respondents reported someone was available to provide ongoing support if requested—a 2% drop from 2020.

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 2021. Chart J compares the “for all children at exit” figures.

- The percentage of respondents indicating the survey statement was true for all children at entry and exit, increased from 2016 to 2021 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 2021 the percentage was 62.7%. At exit, the percentage decreased from 44.7% in 2016 to 39.7% in 2021.
  - 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 75.4% in 2021. At exit, the percentage increased from 50.4% to 69.3% over that period—4% higher than in 2020.
- 53% of respondents in 2021 were confident that the entry ratings given were accurate for all children—a slight increase from 2020. At exit, that percentage was 49.8%—a greater than 5% jump over 2020.

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.

- 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 all recorded in 2021 with the exception of S10.
- 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. This trend continued in 2021.
- 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) and remained constant in 2021.

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 2021.
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 percentages of respondents indicating that the practices occur “for all children” were higher in 2021 than in 2017, with slight fluctuations from year-to-year.

- S1: From a low of 37.9% (2017) to a high of 55.1% (2020) = ↑11.2%
- S2: From a low of 56.8% (2017) to a high of 63.2% (2019) = ↑6.4%
- 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 43.5% (2021) = ↑16.7%
- S5: From a low of 53.0% (2017) to a high of 70.3% (2019) = ↑17.3%
- S6: From a low of 33.9% (2017) to a high of 45.7% (2021) = ↑11.8%

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”—decreased from 48.9% (2020) to 43.6% (2021).
- 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 81.1% (2020) = ↑20.2%.
Summary

The data collected over the past six 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, and 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 2021. 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.
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Chart A – NOT INCLUDED/ASKED IN 2021 SURVEY
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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 2016-2021

- Child Indicators Booklet
- Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia Practice Manual
- Website resources (other than online training)
- Creating Connections to Shining Stars Conference
- Other in-person state level training event
- In-person local or other regional training event
- Online or video training module
- Webinar or training conference call
- One-on-one training
- Mentoring
- Orientation through the local system or program
- Ongoing feedback from program supervisor or local system manager
- Information, training or support through local staff or team meetings
- MEISR pilot
- I provide supervision, training or mentoring on the child outcome rating process...
- None
- Other (please describe)
Chart C – Most Helpful for Learning about FA-COS

Most Helpful for Learning about Functional Assessment and the Child Outcome Ratings Process 2016-2021

- Child Indicators Booklet
- Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia Practice Manual
- Website resources (other than online training)
- Creating Connections to Shining Stars Conference
- Other in-person state level training event
- In-person local or other regional training event
- Online or video training module
- Webinar or training conference call
- One-on-one training
- Mentoring
- Orientation through the local system or program
- Ongoing feedback from program supervisor or local system manager
- Information, training or support through local staff or team meetings
- MEISR pilot
- I provide supervision, training or mentoring on the child outcome rating process...
- None
- Other (please describe)
Chart D – Most Often Used for Learning about Coaching and NLEPs

Most Often Used for Learning about Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices 2016-2021

- Coaching Facilitation Guide
- Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia Practice Manual
- Website resources (other than online training)
- Creating Connections to Shining Stars Conference
- Other in-person state level training event
- Regional coaching training from Dathan Rush and M'Lisa Shelden
- In-person local or other regional training event
- Online or video training module
- Webinar or training conference call
- One-on-one training
- Mentoring
- Orientation through the local system or program
- Ongoing feedback from program supervisor or local system manager
- Information, training or support through local staff or team meetings
- Community of practice
- I provide supervision, training or mentoring on coaching and related practices to...
- I am a trained Master Coach
- None
- Other natural environment / coaching resources (please describe)
Chart E – Most Helpful for Learning about Coaching and NLEPs

Most Helpful for Learning about Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices 2016-2021

- Coaching Facilitation Guide
- Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia Practice Manual
- Website resources (other than online training)
- Creating Connections to Shining Stars Conference
- Other in-person state level training event
- Regional coaching training from Dathan Rush and M’Lisa Shelden
- In-person local or other regional training event
- Online or video training module
- Webinar or training conference call
- One-on-one training
- Mentoring
- Orientation through the local system or program
- Ongoing feedback from program supervisor or local system manager
- Information, training or support through local staff or team meetings
- Community of practice
- I provide supervision, training or mentoring on coaching and related practices to...
- I am a trained Master Coach
- None
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Chart F – Use of the Decision Tree

Use of the Decision Tree 2016 - 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
<td>37.1%</td>
<td>65.6%</td>
<td>61.6%</td>
<td>62.1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Almost always (at least 75% of the time)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>30.5%</td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>23.1%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sometimes (25% - 74% of the time)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>22.4%</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rarely (up to 25% of the time)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
<td>6.6%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>1.3%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I don’t know what the Decision Tree is</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
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Chart G – Feedback and Support for the Child Outcome Ratings Process

Feedback and Support for Child Outcome Ratings
Percentages = "Yes" Responses 2016-2021

- Reviews IFSP assessment narratives, child outcome ratings and the team process used for determining the ratings (S1)
- Provides feedback to those involved in the child outcome rating process (S2)
- Is available to provide me with ongoing support if I ask for it (S3)
- Trains providers new to the child outcome rating process (S4)
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Chart H – Feedback and Support for Coaching and NLEPs

Feedback and Support for Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices
Percentage = "Yes" Responses 2016-2021

- Reviews intervention visit contact notes for documentation of coaching techniques and natural learning environment (S1)
- Observes providers on an intervention visit at least once a year (S2)
- Provides feedback to service providers on their use of coaching and natural learning environment practices (S3)
- Is available to provide me with ongoing support if I ask for it (S4)
- Trains providers new to coaching and natural learning environment practices (S5)
Chart I – Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Entry

Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Entry 2016-2021 for ALL Children

- Family provided input re: child’s functioning for the entry ratings
- Entry ratings were decided by a team that included at least two professionals
- Information re: child’s functioning from multiple settings/situations used in deciding entry ratings
- Multiple sources of information, including an assessment tool, used in deciding entry ratings
- The family was present during the discussion and decision of child outcome entry ratings
- I was confident that the entry ratings given were accurate
- The process for deciding entry ratings matched my understanding of how it is supposed to be done

Appendix A-19
Chart J – Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Exit

Use of Evidenced-based Rating Practices at Exit 2016-2021 for ALL Children

- Family provided input re: child’s functioning for the exit ratings (S1)
- Exit ratings were decided by a team that included at least two professionals (S2)
- Information re: child’s functioning from multiple settings/situations used in deciding exit ratings (S3)
- Multiple sources of information, including an assessment tool, used in deciding exit ratings (S4)
- The family was present during the discussion and decision of child outcome exit ratings (S5)
- I was confident that the exit ratings given were accurate (S6)
- The process for deciding exit ratings matched my understanding of how it is supposed to be done (S7)
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I understand the meaning of each of the three child outcomes (S1)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratings are more accurate when parents are present for the rating decision (S5)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratings are more accurate when the Decision Tree is used to guide the rating decision (S6)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the difference between functional behaviors and discrete skills (S9)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand the annual results for my local system(s) on the three child outcomes (S10)</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
<td>0.0%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Appendix A-23
Chart L – Perspectives on Child Outcome Ratings (DISAGREE Statements)

Percentages of perspectives on child outcome ratings from 2016 to 2021, with "Strongly Disagree" as the percentage value. The chart shows the following statements and their corresponding perspectives:

1. The ratings given are higher than the child’s actual level of functioning (S3)
2. Child outcome ratings are too subjective (S4)
3. The ratings given are lower than the child’s actual level of functioning (S7)
4. It is difficult for individuals participating in child outcome ratings to reach consensus on one or more of the outcomes (S8)

The chart indicates the percentage of respondents who strongly disagree with each statement across the years 2016 to 2021.
Chart M – Assessment of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices

Assessment of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices 2016-2021

- 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)
- Modeled a strategy or activity while the parent/caregiver observed (S2)
- Gave the parent/caregiver the opportunity to practice a strategy or activity while I observed (S3)
- Provided the opportunity for the parent/caregiver to reflect on their knowledge and/or skills related to potential or practiced strategies (S4)
- Developed a joint plan with the parent/caregiver (S5)
- Asked mostly open-ended questions of the parent/caregiver (S6)
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Chart N – Perspectives of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices

Perspectives of Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices 2016-2021

- I am able to explain to families/caregivers their role in early intervention visits as well as the provider’s
- I am able to explain to families/caregivers the benefits of using everyday activities and routines as sources of child learning opportunities
- 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
- Parent/caregiver is actively engaged in interacting with the child during visits
- Coaching and natural learning environment practices are effective in helping families/caregivers help their child develop and learn