



~Implementing a Child Assessment System and Technical Assistance~

The Department of Early Education and Care contracted with Glenwood Research in the spring and summer of 2007 to study child care centers and family child care homes funded through a Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) Pilot Grant program. The study examined how programs were utilizing child assessment information prior to receiving the grant, how programs used the funding to enhance their child assessment system and what recommendations should be considered for implementing successful child assessment systems. On-line surveys¹ and interviews² with programs were used to determine the status of child assessments in programs from the past, present and future. A study of other states and their child assessment systems helped in forming recommendations³. This fact sheet examines the recommendation of how to provide technical assistance to support child assessments.

Recommendation 1:

Consider working with a local university or research organization to coordinate and provide mentoring/technical assistance to funded sites.

Both family child care providers and center-based programs reported needing technical assistance with improving observation skills and interpreting data from child assessments. Improving observation skills and interpreting data from child assessments often requires someone with expertise to model and provide one-on-one assistance for effective practice. 54% of center-based programs and 75% of family child care providers indicated needing assistance with improving observations. 46% of center-based programs and 63% of family child care providers need assistance on interpreting data from child assessments.

One-third of programs indicated that having someone to talk to/answer questions about child assessments was a helpful form of technical assistance. Family Child Care providers noted that collecting child assessment data would be difficult without the on-site assistance from the Family Child Care system. Both family child care providers and center-based programs noted that while their questions were answered at the training, there would likely be additional questions that would need to be addressed later in the process of collecting data.

Center-based programs indicated that they need the most help in figuring out the electronic or on-line data entry system. 59% of those survey indicated that they needed help with the on-line data entry system, 54% indicated a need for assistance providing follow-up training on assessment and observation and 54% reported needing assistance improving observation skills.

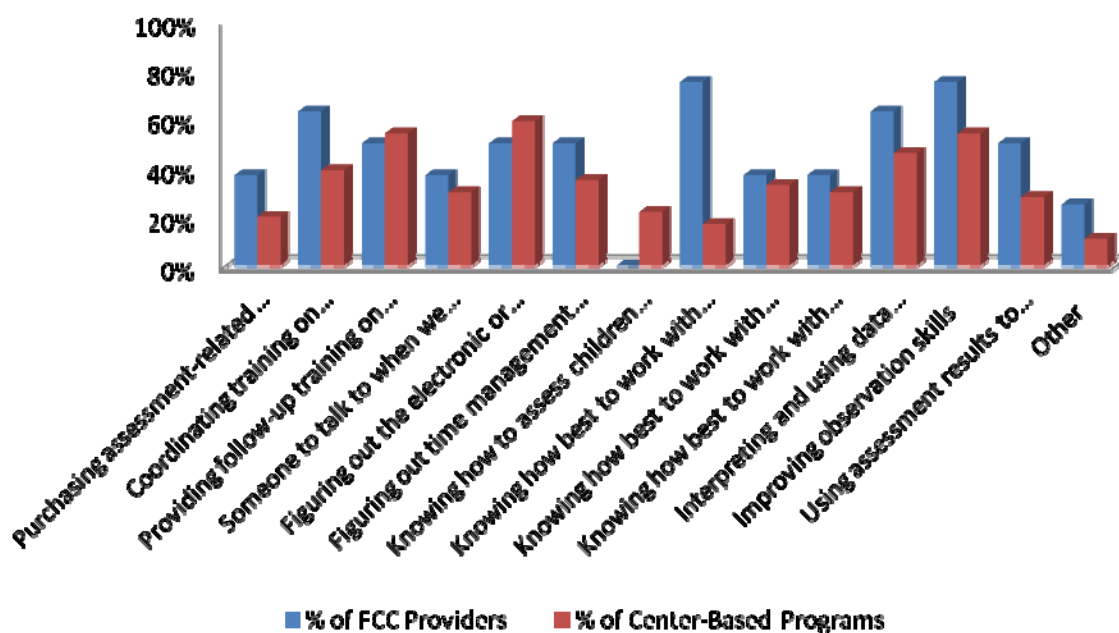
Family child care programs reported needing assistance most with knowing how best to work with parents around assessments (75%) and improving observation skills (75%). Another area where assistance was needed was around coordinating training on assessment and observation (63%).

¹ 54 out of 89 centers/public schools and 10 out of 44 family child care homes completed the on-line survey.

² 5 child care center directors, 3 child care teachers, 2 public school directors, 3 public school teachers, 4 Head Start Directors, 5 Head Start teachers, 3 family child care system administrators and 6 family child care providers were included in the interview sample.

³ States studied included: Arizona, Arkansas, California, New Jersey, Oregon, and Pennsylvania.

Technical Assistance Needed to Implement a Child Assessment System



Center-based directors indicated that they would provide assistance to staff for continued child assessment success. During interviews with Directors they stated that they would provide: assistance to staff in helping them complete child assessments, in-house training, support from outside coaches, ability for staff to receive on-line support from the publisher who publishes the tool, lead teachers as mentors, and allowing more staff to attend training relevant to the tool.

Recommendation 2:

Provide specific technical assistance tip sheets on frequently asked questions (i.e. children with special needs, English Language Learners, time management, technology, and training resources).

The majority of programs indicated a need for assistance with the on-line component of child assessment tools. 59% of center-based programs reported wanting help with getting and using the online system for the child assessment tool.

During the interview process professionals specifically mentioned targeted areas where additional training and technical assistance was needed. Programs specifically mentioned children with special needs, English Language Learners and how to support family child care providers as areas for additional training and technical assistance.

The biggest barrier in completing child assessments is time. Time is consistently mentioned as the largest barrier for both center-based and family child care in completing child assessments.

Technology is a barrier for teachers. During the interview process, directors noted that they were surprised at the lack of ability of their teachers with regard to understanding how to use computers and technology.

Teachers had “surface” knowledge but not in-depth knowledge about how to download files, use webex training, etc.

Recommendation 3:

Develop self-assessment tool.

The State of California and Head Start programs use an annual self-assessment tool to develop quality improvement plans. All participating California programs use a self-assessment tool to develop an action plan to increase the quality of care. This is one of the state’s mechanisms of ensuring accountability. Head Start does a comprehensive self-assessment using a combination of outside interviews, documentation reviews and observations to complete a program assessment. A large component of this self-assessment process looks specifically at curriculum and assessment.

Recommendation 4:

Develop program implementation guide for providers using clear, user-friendly language.

Most states have developed a program implementation guide that clearly outlines the expectations of a child assessment system. Arizona has developed a “Preschool Assessment Manual”. New Jersey has developed a “Teacher’s Manual for the New Jersey Early Learning Assessment System”. California has developed, “Desired Results Developmental Profile: Revised User’s Guide” to guide teachers in completing child assessments and reporting on and using the data gathered. These program guidelines were all able to be downloaded for program use.