



CONNECTICUT
BIRTH TO THREE SYSTEM

PRESCHOOL SPECIAL
EDUCATION



• *Working together for children with disabilities* • INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND PROFESSIONALS
SPRING, VOL. 8 NO. 4

A Scoreboard for Our Programs

By Maria Synodi, Coordinator,
Early Childhood Special Education and

Linda Goodman, Director, Connecticut
Birth to Three System



*This article is translated into Spanish
on page 2. Ver la versión española de
este artículo en la página 2.*

Produced by the
State Department of Education
and the
Connecticut Birth to Three System
in collaboration with the



University of
Connecticut

COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
College of Agriculture and Natural Resources

The Yankees, Red Sox and Mets... We think of spring training, the upcoming season and the series playoffs. Baseball fans wonder who will be this season's winner. A good bet is based upon the information that we already know about the players, the team and the money - the money that goes into recruiting the players, paying the manager and coaches, and making the team the best that it can be. Don't you wish that you had as much information about the programs and services designed for your child?

Congress is now asking the U.S. Department of Education questions about whether the millions of federal dollars spent for early intervention and preschool special education actually make things better for children and their families. Are children making progress? Are children learning in the same places as children without disabilities? Are families getting information on their child's disability? Are children growing and learning? Are programs helping parents know how to effectively advocate on behalf of their child? In order to answer these and other questions, the U.S. Department of Education has turned to the states. To ensure that questions get answered the federal law, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), now requires that all states collect data to answer specific accountability questions and also requires that the answers are made available to the public. The federal government

wants to know how well a state is ensuring that early intervention programs and school districts fulfill their obligations to young children with disabilities and their families.

To respond to the questions about how states are doing early intervention and special education systems collect tons of information. This information in the form of data is analyzed to give a picture of what is happening for children and families throughout the state. The data that represents how the state is doing is reported to the U.S. Department of Education every year. States establish performance targets which define the state's goals. The annual report to the U.S. Department of Education shows whether or not the state has met its targets. This same information is separated out by early intervention program and school district and is made available to the public. Birth to Three program and school district information is posted on the web sites of the Connecticut Birth to Three System and the Connecticut State Department of Education for public review. If you want to see how well your early intervention program is doing go to www.birth23.org. If you want to see how your school district is doing, in the future, the Department will have that information available at www.sde.ct.gov under "School Profiles". You can compare each program or school district against the state's targets, somewhat like looking at a scoreboard. It is the state's

(Continued on page 2)

responsibility to follow up with programs or school districts that are not doing as well as others to see how quickly they can improve their standing.

So what kind of data is collected and what questions do states need to answer? Across the country, state early intervention systems must report on the percent of timely IFSPs, services and transition planning, services in natural settings, child progress, and the

extent to which families have important knowledge and information. Special Education for children ages three through five must report on the percent of children receiving their special education and related services with typically developing peers, child progress, and whether special education services are in place by age three for children who transition from the Connecticut Birth to Three System. This collection of data and public

reporting will happen annually and represents a new wave of accountability in publicly funded programs and services. So before you know it, we will have a scoreboard of how well our programs and services are doing for the children we serve. And hopefully, over time, we will show that we not only can win the game, but we can sweep the series.

Un Marcador Para Nuestros Programas

*María Synodi, Coordinadora, Educación Especial en la Primera Infancia
Linda Goodman, Directora, Sistema para Infantes a Tres Años de Connecticut.*

Los Yankees, los Red Sox los Mets... Pensamos en el entrenamiento de primavera, en la próxima temporada, en los juegos de las series. Los fanáticos del béisbol nos preguntamos quién será el ganador esta vez. Una buena apuesta se basa en la información que ya tenemos de los jugadores, del equipo y del dinero - dinero para reclutar jugadores, para pagar al 'manager' y entrenadores, para lograr que el equipo esté en la mejor forma posible. ¿No desearían ustedes tener igual información de los programas y servicios diseñados para sus niños?

El Congreso está preguntando al Departamento Federal de Educación si los millones de dólares federales que se gastan en la intervención temprana y educación especial preescolar en realidad están haciendo las cosas mejor para los niños y sus familias. ¿Progresan los niños? ¿Les enseñan en los mismos lugares en que lo hacen a los niños sin incapacidades? ¿Reciben las familias información sobre las

incapacidades de sus niños? ¿Están creciendo y aprendiendo los niños? Los programas, ¿están diciendo a los padres cómo mejor abogar por sus niños? Para poder contestar estas y otras preguntas, el Departamento Federal de Educación ha acudido a los Estados. A ese efecto la ley federal - la Ley de Educación de Individuos con incapacidades o 'IDEA' - requiere ahora que todos los estados recopilen datos que satisfagan preguntas específicas, y también que las respuestas estén accesibles al público. El Gobierno Federal quiere saber cuán bien el Estado se está asegurando de que tanto los programas de intervención temprana como los distritos escolares cumplen sus obligaciones para con los niños menores con incapacidades y sus familias.

Para responder a las preguntas de cómo lo están haciendo los estados, los sistemas de intervención temprana y educación especial recogen toneladas de información. Esta información se analiza para presentar un cuadro que refleja lo que está pasando en el Estado con los niños y sus familias. Esos datos se transmiten al Departamento Federal de Educación cada los años. Los estados establecen metas de desempeño que definen sus objetivos. El informe anual al Departamento Federal de

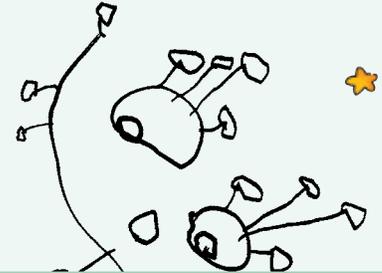


Educación dice si el Estado está cumpliendo con esas metas o no. La misma información se desglosa por programa de intervención temprana y por distrito escolar, y se hace accesible al público. La información del programa Sistema para Infantes a Tres Años y de los distritos escolares aparece en los websites del Sistema para Infantes a Tres Años de Connecticut y del Departamento Estatal de Educación para revisión del público. Si usted desea saber cual es su progreso en el programa inicial de intervención vaya al internet al www.birth23.org. Si usted desea saber como su distrito escolar esta progresando, en el futuro, el Departamento tendra esa informacion disponnible en el internet bajo "School Profiles" en www.sde.ct.gov. Puede comparar cada programa o distrito escolar con las metas del Estado como quien mira un marcador. Es

responsabilidad del Estado dar seguimiento a programas o distritos escolares que no lo están haciendo tan bien como otros, para ver cuan pronto pueden mejorar. Así que ¿qué clase de información se recoge y qué preguntas necesitan responder los estados? A lo largo del país, los sistemas de intervención temprana deben reportar el porcentaje que funciona a tiempo de los planes de servicios individualizados (IFSPs), planificaciones de transición, servicios en ambientes naturales, progreso de los niños y hasta dónde las familias tienen conocimientos

importantes e información. La educación especial para niños de tres a cinco años debe informar qué porcentaje de niños recibe educación especial y servicios relacionados conjuntamente con compañeros de desarrollo típico, el progreso de los niños, y si los servicios de educación especial están funcionando hacia su tercer cumpleaños para los niños que pasan del Sistema para Infantes a Tres Años de Connecticut. Esta recopilación de datos y su divulgación tendrá lugar anualmente y representa una nueva ola de responsabilidad en

programas y servicios públicos. De modo que antes que usted se dé cuenta - tendremos un marcador que refleje cuan bien están funcionando nuestros programas y servicios para los niños a los que prestamos servicios. Y esperamos, con el tiempo, demostrar que no solamente podemos ganar el juego sino además la serie.



Help Wanted

The Birth to Three System is seeking parents of children previously enrolled in Birth to Three to participate approximately four days per month on our focused monitoring team. Compensation provided. If you are interested, please e-mail: Alice.Ridgway@po.state.ct.us



Want Ed...



Early Childhood Special Education Logo

Are you creative? Do you like to doodle or draw your ideas out on paper? Is there a child's drawing or art work so precious and beautiful that you want to share it? The Department of Education's Early Childhood Special Education Program is inviting folks to submit their ideas for an early childhood special education logo - any name, symbol or representation that would help people recognize Early Childhood Special Education. So send in your drawings, pictures, children's pictures, photos, anything that in your mind represents Early Childhood Special Education.

Everyone's ideas are invited!

Please send your logo idea by mail or e-mail to:

Cathy Malley
University of Connecticut
Cooperative Extension System
67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801
cathy.malley@uconn.edu



Providers from across the state were asked to give their thoughts regarding the new accountability in early childhood. And here are their perspectives - both good and bad:

- The focus on providing the least restrictive environment (LRE) is helping us get better and more creative at expanding the continuum of services available to preschool students by working collaboratively with School Readiness and Head Start.
- LRE is great - You cannot tell who is a child with a disability and who is a typically developing peer - a great class composition.
- It is especially difficult for our speech pathologists to collect the early childhood outcome information when they only see a child for speech once or twice a week, and often with other children. It is challenging to complete all the sections in a timely manner.
- Increased demands for accountability result in a lot more work for providers and in some cases, time away from the real focus of our jobs. But when an accountability effort works as it should, it combines all of our individual realities into a bigger picture of how our systems are doing as a whole.
- The focus on transition from the Connecticut Birth to Three System has encouraged cooperation between the two systems and transitions are better for everyone.
- Our preschool special education teachers are thrilled to have typical peers included in our classes. This has stretched our programs to a wonderful place.
- The new required collection of LRE data does not allow school districts to show what they are really doing because the

information includes the time children spend with other children outside of school.

- Gathering information for the early childhood data collection has put a financial burden on school districts. The manuals are expensive. We do not like having to buy booklets for each child when only portions of the booklets are used.
- Since children are entering preschool special education throughout the year, it is sometimes difficult to remember to stop and complete the information needed for the early childhood data collection.
- By working together with the early childhood community we are creating more inclusive classrooms.
- It will be interesting gathering early childhood outcome data at the end of the year when children are leaving for kindergarten and being sure we have that data when the state needs it.
- With the early childhood data collection, staff members are becoming very accustomed to really looking at individual children and as a result are writing better individual educational programs (IEPs).
- When an accountability system asks the right questions and collects the right data, the end result is valuable information about what is working for families and programs and what is not. As our systems become more accountable, we will better know what to look for in an early intervention/early childhood special education program, what to expect, and how to get it. And the good news is that that kind of information can only result in more effective and responsive programs for our children. 

BIRTH through 5 news

Information for Families and Professionals

is published periodically by the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System in collaboration with the Connecticut Birth to Three System, the Connecticut State Department of Education and the Newsletter Advisory Board. We welcome readers' comments and contributions related to the special needs of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. Please mail correspondence to the editor at 67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT 06801.

2007 ADVISORY BOARD

Cathy Malley, Editor

UConn Cooperative Extension System
 Claudia Anderson, Danbury Public Schools
 Jane Bisantz, Jane Bisantz & Associates,

LLC

Marlene Cavagnuolo, Fairfield Public Schools

Linda Goodman, CT Birth to Three System

Eileen McMurrer, CT Birth to Three System

Nancy Prescott, CT Parent Advocacy Center representative

Maria Synodi, State Department of Education

You are encouraged to reproduce articles or excerpts from *Birth through 5 News*. Please give appropriate credit to this newsletter and authors. *Birth through 5 News* is distributed free of charge to those interested in issues related to children, ages birth through five, with special needs. The mailing list includes families and providers active in the Birth to Three System, directors and providers of preschool special education services, special education directors, families in various preschool special education programs, local ICCs and others upon request. To add or delete your name from the mailing list, or to notify us of a change of address, please send your name, address and phone number to Birth through 5 News, CT Birth to Three System, 460 Capitol Ave., Hartford, CT 06106.

Produced in Communication and Information Technology, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, University of Connecticut. Graphic Design by Poshen Wang.

The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System is an equal opportunity program provider and employer. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director; Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W; Whitten Building, Stop Code 9410; 1400 Independence Avenue, SW; Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964.

A Parent's Perspective

By Joyce Uhelsky

Connecticut is a state rich with educational resources for our youngest children. I should know, my daughter was in a Birth to Three program, continued on through pre-school special education classes and was exited from special education in the middle of kindergarten. Also, I now work with the state's Birth to Three System as a Parent Member of the Focused Monitoring Team. Although my daughter is now seven years old, I still remember much about my time as a new parent and being new to the world of Birth to Three. What a scary, confusing, tearful and tiring time that was! Like many parents, the initial shock of not having a "perfect" child was overwhelming enough to make me unable to think clearly. And in this state of muddled thinking, like many parents, began our family's time in

Birth to Three.

Thankfully, I am no longer in that panic mode frame of mind and processing information is much easier. Also, I had the benefit of learning in detail about Connecticut's Birth to Three System to prepare me for my work on the Focused Monitoring Team. Early on when my daughter was involved with special education I would sign paperwork because "they" told me to; now I understand that every piece is there to help protect families and children. I remember getting the brochure called Know Your Rights, but being worried about being labeled as difficult (and that having reprisal on my child) if I were to exercise those rights. Ah, to know then what I know now!

Connecticut's Birth to Three and preschool providers understand families' concerns and want to help. They understand that families might be in their own panic mode and do not want to overwhelm them with

too much information. They will be happy to sit with families and explain their rights and options. Everyone involved in these programs wants the same thing: for each child to be the best they can be.

Connecticut and the Federal Government have enacted many laws and guidelines about educating children under the age of five to ensure this. As a member of the Focused Monitoring Team, I visit programs across the state and evaluate whether they are complying with both the letter and the spirit of these laws. We look at files and speak with families and staff about their experiences. A summary report is compiled and is available on the internet. The Federal government also receives a report and tracks Connecticut's progress in correcting any problems found. Our state has a wonderful, high quality program and great things in place to keep it that way!



Resources

Web Sites:

The Early Childhood Outcomes

Center: www.fpg.unc.edu/~ecol/index.cfm

The site includes survey instruments designed to measure family outcomes, as well as an explanation of a Child Outcomes Summary Form being used by many states to measure child outcomes.

National Center for Special Education Accountability

Monitoring: www.monitoringcenter.lsuhs.edu

If you would like information about focused monitoring, state rankings, or measures of family outcomes click on any of the navigation buttons on the left side of the homepage.

National Early Childhood Technical

Assistance Center: www.nectac.org

This is a center specifically to assist state early intervention (Part C) and state preschool special education (Section 619 of the IDEA) programs. One of the items on the website is guidance to help states complete their state performance plans and annual performance reports as well as their annual applications for federal funding.

Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education:

www.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/ideal/monitor/index.html

This portion of the U.S. Department of Education's website includes all letters from the federal government to state early intervention (Part C) and special education (Part B) state programs related to their performance and their data.

Regional Resource and Federal

Center Network: www.rrfcnetwork.org

If you click on "Topical Information" on the left side of the homepage, it will bring you to a number of topics related to accountability including one called "LEA Accountability and Public Reporting of Data."

Results Based Accountability: www.resultsaccountability.com

This is a site that explains a way to look at the performance of public programs.

Book:

Trying Hard is Not Good Enough, Mark Friedman

Available from Amazon.com. This is a very readable paperback book that explains Results Based Accountability



Preschool Special Education Update

By Maria Synodi, Coordinator, Early Childhood Special Education

The good news is that we have a state accountability system for children ages three through five receiving special education. The bad news is that we have a state accountability system for children ages three through five receiving special education. If you are a school district administrator or staff person you are aware of the increasing demands that have been placed upon you for information, specifically for data. The data collected from you reflects what is happening in your school district - and that aggregate information is what reflects how the state is doing. This entire newsletter has been devoted to explaining why there are increasing requests for information on how Birth to Three programs, school districts, and children and their families are doing as a measure of accountability. Right now, for a lot of folks, it looks like bad news. More time is needed to collect information, administrators and staff need more opportunities to share information and get

training, information needs to get out to the field and to parents, and sometimes there seem to be more questions than answers. The challenges have more to do with all of the new things being asked of us - all of us. While we are not being asked to teach children differently, we are being asked to take additional time to collect and report information. And right now that may seem like a burden.

The good news is that the information we collect and share with the public will let folks know how well we do our jobs. It will show objectively how much time and attention we put into creating a least restrictive environment for our young children with disabilities so that they can be educated with children without disabilities. The data will also show how well we do in making sure that children who leave the Connecticut Birth to Three System have their individual special education and related services by their third birthday.

In February 2007, the Connecticut State Department of Education submitted their report on how the state was doing to the U.S.

Department of Education. The report documented that 70% of Connecticut's children ages three through five receiving special

education spent 80% - 100% of their time with typically developing children. In the area of transition, 97.6% of children leaving early intervention received their special education services by their third birthday. That's great! School district administrators and staff should be applauded for their work. And next year the state expects that the next cycle of reporting will continue to show growth and progress.

While we have and can report data on two accountability measures, we are working on a third. One of the most important measures of how well we are doing is data that shows that the children we serve are making progress. This data collection, known as the Early Childhood Outcome Data Collection, began in May 2006. By 2008 Connecticut will have some early data that shows children's progress as a result of the services they received. So keep your eyes and ears open to more news and information on early childhood accountability.



Want Ed...



Parents of children with disabilities who are interested in participating on the state's Personnel Development Council

The council meets six times a year, during the day, usually in the Middletown area. It advises the state on issues of training and certification for special education and early intervention personnel.

Interested parents should contact Deb Resnick at 860-418-6151 or deb.resnick@po.state.ct.us.



Birth to Three Update - Spring 2007

By Linda Goodman, Director,
Birth to Three System

We are pleased to welcome a new Birth to Three program in the Fairfield County area. TheraCare is now offering early intervention services in the towns of Darien, Norwalk, New Canaan, Stamford, and Wilton. This agency operates at eleven different offices in the Metro New York area with divisions covering early intervention, preschool education, special education, and applied behavior analysis. Their stated goal is to "provide the highest quality rehabilitative, developmental and educational services." We look forward to working with them. While we do not yet know what

the state General Assembly will choose to do this year, we are hopeful that Birth to Three will be able to expand its eligibility rules to serve more children, especially premies, children with moderate speech delays, and children with mild and unilateral hearing loss. Looking toward the future, we are hoping to add children with mild developmental delays and some children who are at-risk for delay. One other item that the legislature is debating this year is whether to accept a recommendation to change the name of the Department of Mental Retardation (the lead agency for Birth to Three) to the Department of Developmental Services. We have recently submitted an annual performance report to the U.S. Department of Education. We are pleased to see that the Birth to

Three System has substantially met its targets in almost all of the indicators. The only area of concern we have is that we have not increased the percentage of infants under twelve months of age that are receiving early intervention services. We will be targeting birthing hospitals and neonatal intensive care units over the next twelve months in an effort to improve in that area. If you would like to review the report or see how each Birth to Three program is doing against the state targets, you can find that information in the Quality Assurance section of our website (www.birth23.org) or you can request a printed copy by calling the Birth to Three Service and Support Office toll-free at 866-888-4188.



ICC UPDATE

State ICC Committed to Quality

By Lolli Ross, State ICC Chair
The Early Childhood Outcomes

The State Birth to Three Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) advises and assists the Connecticut Birth to Three System in effectively managing the delivery of early intervention services and supports. The ICC plays a critical role in the provision of general oversight and quality assurance of early intervention services in Connecticut. ICC members and several other community representatives serve as the Focused Monitoring Stakeholder Group to make sure effective practices are in place to monitor the quality of our early intervention system.

Since the stakeholder group plays a lead role in many of the decisions about how the quality assurance and focused monitoring system priorities are established and monitored, it is critical that the group provides a broad array of people who cover a wide range of expertise, experiences, and views. Connecticut Birth to Three System stakeholders include parents, Birth to Three and other agency providers, and people who represent cultural and geographic diversity.

The group meets at least quarterly to establish priority areas in need of improvement in the System. We closely monitor data, review how programs are performing, and help decide which programs may need a focused monitoring visit and technical assistance.

Priority areas established by the stakeholder group include:

- IFSPs developed within 45 days

- of referral
- Families receive timely services
- Transition conferences are held at least 90 days before a child turns three years

ICC members are valued stakeholders in identifying areas in the system that need improvement. We are committed to improving the lives of young children with disabilities and their families. For more information or for a schedule of State ICC meetings, visit www.birth23.org/State%20Council/default.asp. Or call Anna at 860-418-8716.



Calendar

Assessing Three to Five Year Olds with Special Needs: Why Assess? What Is The Most Appropriate Assessment Tool?

May 11, 2007

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Four Points by Sheraton, Meriden
Presenter: Marianne Barton, PhD.,
University of Connecticut

Registration Fee: \$35

Target Audience: Early childhood special education administrators, teachers, and related service personnel.

That's Me! Representing All Children in The Library Corner

May 15, 2007

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Crowne Plaza, Cromwell
Presenters: Ingrid Canady and
Anne Marie Davidson, SERC
Registration Fee: \$30

Target Audience: Early childhood general and special education teachers, paraprofessionals, student

support services professionals and family members of young children with special needs, ages three to five.

Including Children with Motor Difficulties in Early Childhood Programs

Saturday, May 19, 2007

8:30 AM - 1:30 PM

SERC, Middletown
Presenter: Laurie Waple, OTR/
LACES

Registration Fee: \$25

Target Audience: early childhood teachers from school readiness, head start, and other public and private community-based providers who wish to know how to include children with motor difficulties in their program.

Transition Tools for Young Children with Challenging Behavior

May 23, 2007

9:00 AM - 3:30 PM

Crowne Plaza, Cromwell
Presenter: Rochelle Lentini, M.Ed.
University of South Florida

Registration Fee: \$25

Target Audience: Birth to three and early childhood special and regular education teachers, related service personnel, administrators and school principals.

For all of the above, contact Jennifer Sharpe at SERC 860-632-1485, X268 or visit www.ctserc.org. There are stipends available for parents.

Newborn Behavioral Observation System (NBO)

May 17 and 18, 2007

Rensselaer, Hartford
Presenters: Kevin Nugent and
Yvette Blanchard

Registration Fee: none

Target audience: Birth to Three providers

Registration for NBO can be found on the Birth to Three website (www.birth23.org) under "Personnel and Training."



UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM
1376 Storrs Road, Unit 4036
Storrs, CT 06269-4036

PRSR STD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
UNIVERSITY OF
CONNECTICUT
STORRS,CT
PERMIT NO.3

This newsletter is available in English and Spanish. Visit the Birth to Three site at www.birth23.org or the Department of Education site at www.sde.ct.gov. Then click on the Early Childhood link.

Este boletín está disponible en inglés y en español. Visite el sitio del Sistema para Infantes a Tres Años en www.birth23.org o el del Departamento de Educación en www.sde.ct.gov. Pulse entonces el enlace 'Early Childhood' (primera infancia).