

Description of Survey Process

PLUK, Montana's Parent Training and Information Center, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is providing feedback to OSEP's Monitoring and State Improvement Planning Division for their verification visit to Montana in August/September 2009. Using the Parent Survey Questions provided by the Department, PLUK rewrote and integrated questions into one of their larger consumer surveys. PLUK staff, parents, and the Regional Parent Technical Assistance Center produced a working copy, which was then shared with a wider group for feedback before final dissemination. The final version contains about 50 questions in five sections plus, additional open-ended text input fields.

- *Section 1 - Your Household,*
- *Section 2 - Your Child,*
- *Section 3 - Where do you get information?,*
- *Section 4 - Questions on infant toddler programs (Part C) (if your child ever received services through the infant/toddler programs),*
- *Section 5 - Special Education Services in School (includes preschool) - Part B, and*
- *Additional Questions/Comments.*

The survey was launched on August 7th for a one-week turnaround to produce data for this report. About 90 surveys were completed which included over 80 pages of text. Surveys were also available on paper and could be completed via phone. All responses were entered into the electronic system for analysis.

PLUK's philosophy in this process is to continue to gather information on an ongoing basis that will be available to the Part C agency, OSEP, and others rather than just a one-shot survey (this initial survey being a baseline). The advantage to this approach includes the ability of monitoring trends over time, modifying questions or adding questions to probe deeper into issues, etc.

Link to sample email sent out announcing survey:

<http://hosted.verticalresponse.com/246071/36f3cb35bd/TEST/TEST/>

Link to sample survey:

<http://pluk-2009-test.questionpro.com/>

Link to PDF of survey:

http://www.pluk.org/PLUK_Survey_2009_Testing.pdf

Key parent survey data for Part C

About 50 responses were recorded for Part C questions. Sixteen of the 50 indicated they were currently receiving Part C services (reported children currently in the age range) for their child. These 16 were disaggregated (as requested) and are listed below as the second percentage. The numbers for each question correspond to numbers on the **OSEP SAMPLE PART C PARENT VERIFICATION VISIT SURVEY**. Questions 3 (IDEA noncompliance) & 7 (data on early childhood outcomes) were dropped because of parent & staff feedback (not enough knowledge to answer). Also, it was felt rating the need for improvement in "Receiving services in natural environments" (question 2) rendered question 8 about natural environments redundant and it was dropped.

- 1.** I have been informed of my **parental rights** under the Early Intervention program and been given a copy of procedural safeguards at least once per year in my native language. - **YES 82%/80%** (NO 10%/20%, Other 8%/0%)
- 2.** Rate the level of improvement you believe is needed in each of the following areas (rating scale is 1-5. Percentage is calculated as the sum of 4+5. Options not included in the sample OSEP SURVEY are indicated. Some options were reworded and combined from the SAMPLE SURVEY. "Other Community Based Services" was dropped as an option.)

	all responses ~50	disaggregated ~16
Appropriate services that meet my child's and family's needs. (non OSEP question)	53%-needs improvement	55%-needs improvement
Quality service providers (combined "Qualified service providers" and "Early Intervention Services Providers")	47%-needs improvement	62%-needs improvement
Receiving services in natural environments	42%-needs improvement	37%-needs improvement
Child find/referral (the process for finding children who qualify for services)	39%-needs improvement	44%-needs improvement
Timely early intervention services	38%-needs improvement	37%-needs improvement
Evaluation/Assessment	37%-needs improvement	37%-needs improvement
Transition from the infant/toddler program to preschool special education	33%-needs improvement	28%-needs improvement
Implementing IFSP	31%-needs improvement	14%-needs improvement

4. In the last year I have had to **resolve a dispute** with the agency providing services for my child. - **YES 19%/10%** (possible responses are YES & NO)

5. Where do you go to get **information on Early Intervention Services?**
 - **PLUK 32%/31%, EI agency staff 24%/44%** (other parents 12%/12%, State website 6%/6%, State or district staff 4%/0%, Other 21%/6%)

6. I believe the **early intervention system in Montana** is providing the services and family supports that my child and family needs. - **YES 42%/50%** (No 28%/30%, Not sure 20%/0%, Other 8%/20%)

9. Are you **aware of the US Department of Education's evaluation** of Montana's compliance? - **NO 73%/91%** (possible responses are YES & NO)

Analysis of Part C results

The survey results were representative, both geographically and demographically, of families in Montana. Results were received from all regions of the state from families of children of all ages and disabilities (including Native American and Hispanic populations).

Observations/comments by question.

1. (Procedural safeguards) Comments from parents (unsure, don't remember) indicate they may not understand the term "procedural safeguards." PLUK staff comments state some parents may not realize they have been given this information or what it means especially early on in the process (when many are still in "shock").

2. (Rating areas of improvement) Responses in all areas have significant responses in both "needs improvement" and "doesn't need improvement" with a (10-20%) neutral vote in the middle. This could be because each family's individual experience with the system varies greatly. Parent comments reflect this by expressing both frustration (difficulty communicating with professionals/providers, confusing rules/bureaucracy/forms, difficulty

finding "knowledgeable, kind, & understanding" people to work with their children) and positive experience (early intervention services have been an "essential part of our child's life"). PLUK staff comments basically support parents' views "services can vary greatly;" and add "parent perceptions can be affected due to their own family issues and state of grieving."

4. (Dispute resolution) Not one parent comment mentions any kind of formal complaint. The results are probably measuring informal disputes. PLUK staff comments add that parents probably won't know what a formal complaint is unless they have actually filed one. Staff also report that, in lieu of using procedural safeguards, many parents "vote with their feet" and change providers. Some parents fear losing services and don't complain.

6. (EI MT system rating) This rating is very similar to #2, significant at both ends of the spectrum with a (20%) "Not sure" in the middle. There are few parent comments and they offer no clues. Again, this could be the variability of quality of services and experience of each parent.

9. (Awareness of Dept of Ed evaluation info) Very low awareness, even among staff.

As a general comment, PLUK staff report that most parents do not retain knowledge of the difference between Part B/C even when they are informed. Some use explanations like "Part B" is for Big = big kids. If the information isn't important relative to their situation, it drops quickly. They also report difficulty getting parents who receive Part C services to complete the survey mostly because they are psychologically unable.

Conclusions

While the overall goal of providing parent input for the MT OSEP verification visit was clear the specific information needs emerged after we began. We have attempted to "fill the gap" between the information generated from the survey and the actual information needed by OSEP. The time and resources input to produce this information has been worth the effort to provide direct parent feedback to OSEP's Monitoring and State Improvement Planning Division. It is critical that the information provided effectively reflect parents' experience throughout the state and fulfill the information needs of the Part C agency and OSEP. The information generated by this initial effort is useful, but can be improved in many ways by working in collaboration with OSEP and the Part C agency to improve the collection of information. Montana's parents thank you for this opportunity to participate.

For questions or to view survey data or text, phone or email Roger Holt, PLUK Executive Director, 406/255-0540 or rholt@pluk.org.