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A Look at Technology Use Across the Country: State Implementation of AT Practices for Infants and Toddlers

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EI professionals from across the country recently participated in the Tots-n-Tech's (TnT) Assistive Technology (AT) Program Self-Assessment. Part C Coordinators designated agency and program directors, regional coordinators, or other relevant people in their states to respond to the on-line self assessment of AT practices. The self-assessment is designed to provide a picture of how well recommended AT practices are implemented within state communities. Information from all respondents is combined to provide state-wide and regional views of how programs are doing in making AT available for infants and toddlers with disabilities or delayed development.

What Does the Self-Assessment Measure?

Items in four major practice areas are included on the self-assessment reflecting:

- Child evaluation and assessment,
- Individualized planning,
- AT implementation and use, and
- System Supports

The assessment was developed through a multi-step process. Potential items were identified through a review of articles published about AT and young children and recommendations made by various organizations or groups about quality AT practices. Participants who were working in EI programs across the country then judged the items by responding to a survey posted on the TnT website. Their responses were analyzed statistically to identify the most important items and to drop those that were unclear or unimportant. This process resulted in a semi-final version of the scale which was completed by another national sample of providers and further refined into the existing instrument. Psychometric analyses were conducted with data from each of the field tests and used to refine the items on the scale (see Wilcox, Dugan, Guimond, & Campbell, 2009 for a full description of the psychometric development of the instrument).

How is the Self-Assessment Scored?

The self-assessment is scored against an expert score. A number of people across the country who are leaders in AT with infants/toddlers were asked to score the self-assessment to identify: items required by public policy (law, etc.); items not recommended; and items recommended. This process resulted in an expert – or optimal -- score against which responses to self-assessment items are scored.

Individuals completing the self-assessment scored items on a scale ranging from "always" to "never." An item marked as "always" was rated as an agreement (scored as a "1") with an expert rating of "required," items marked as never were in agreement with an expert rating of "not recommended," and items scored at midpoints were marked as agreements with "recommended." This scoring resulted in a score of agreement with the expert for each of the 4 self-assessment areas and a percentage of the number of items in agreement out of the total number of items in the category.

McLeod, J., Campbell, P. H., Wilcox, M. J., Guimond, A. (2009). A look at technology use across the country: State implementation of AT practices for infants and toddlers. *Research Brief Volume 3, Number 2*. Tots n Tech Research Institute. Available from http://tnt.asu.edu

Who Completed the Self-Assessment?

A total of 282 people from 46 states completed the self assessment during Fall 2008 through Winter 2009. A majority of the respondents were agency directors/supervisors, AT coordinators, or other similar roles; 14% were mainly direct service providers but also performed other roles such as AT coordinator or supervisor. Agencies provided services in urban (12%), rural (38%), suburban (11%), and combination (39%) geographical areas and ranged in size from small (served fewer than 20 families/children per month– 9%) to large (served more than 50 families/children per month — 82%). Someone with specific training in AT was on staff in 57% of the agencies and these agencies also had lending libraries.

How Well Are AT Practices for Infants and Toddlers Implemented Nationally?

The final version of the self-assessment includes a total of 50 items divided as: a) evaluation (24 items); b) Individual Planning (7 items); c) AT use (6 items); and Systems (13 items).

The graph below illustrates the self-assessment results for all 46 responding states. As can be seen, as a whole, state practices agreed with expert ratings for only about half of the practices related to AT system supports and fewer than half of the IFSP practices; agreement with more than half of the practices were reported for evaluation and AT implementation.
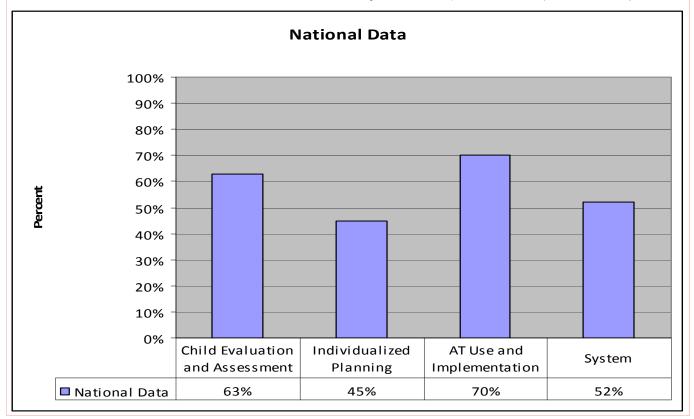
Next Steps ——

TnT will be monitoring state's adoption of AT practices over the next 5 years using web-based administrations of the Self-Assessment instrument approximately every other year

Additionally, a series of *Resource Briefs* are available at http://tnt.asu.edu . These guides target optimal practices for systems (e.g., how to start a lending library), the IFSP, and other areas.

Information about each state's practices as reported on the self-assessment is available at http://tnt.asu.edu.

For further information, please contact Jill McLeod at Jill.mcleod@jefferson.edu (215-503-4421).

National Data

National Data	Child Evaluation and Assessment	Individualized Planning	AT Use and Implementation	System
	63%	45%	70%	52%

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