



Snapshots

Status and Trends in the Number of Preschoolers Served in the IDEA Part B Preschool Special Education Program (1992-2002)

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Abstract

State-by-state analyses of the percentage of 3- to 5-year-old children served in the IDEA Part B Preschool Special Education Program between 1992 and 2002 were the focus of this report. As of 2002, almost half the states (47%) were serving an estimated 6% of the preschool population with disabilities. An additional six states were projected to reach the 6% criterion by 2004, and 12 states were projected to reach this criterion by 2010. Only two states would never reach the 6% criterion based on patterns of participation between 1992 and 2002. Implications for research and practice are discussed.

Introduction

Every year since 1992, State Education Agencies responsible for serving 3- to 5-year-old children eligible for preschool special education have reported the number of children served by their Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B(619) Programs to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. The number of children reported are those served on December 1 of each year, which are included in the Office of Special Education Program's reports to Congress. This *Snapshots* includes findings showing state-by-state patterns of participation in preschool special education for the 11-year reporting period (1992-2002) for which data were available at the time this report was prepared.

Population estimates of the percentage of 3- to 5-year-old children having disabilities or conditions that would make them eligible for IDEA Part B(619) preschool special education range from 3% to 7% (Bowe, 1995; Boyle et al., 1996; McNeil, 2001). According to McNeil (2001), 3.4% of children 3 to 5 years of age "have a disability with either a developmental delay or a condition that limits the activities of walking, running, or playing" (p. 7). The percentage of preschoolers with disabilities range between 5% and 7% when additional

conditions are included in prevalence estimates (Boyle et al., 1996; Larson et al., 2001). A figure of 6% is used as the criterion in this report to ascertain the status and trends of children served in preschool special education programs at the time this report was prepared.

We present data for all 50 States and the District of Columbia. We show the percentage of the 3- to 5-year-old population served state-by-state as of 2002, the trends in state increases (or decreases) in the percentage of children served between 1992 and 2002, and report the year states served or were projected to serve 6% of the 3- to 5-year-old population based on the 11-year trends.

Method

The number of children enrolled in Part B(619) preschool special education programs per 100 children 3 to 5 years of age was used to ascertain patterns of between and within state changes for the 11 reporting periods. The number of children served were those reported annually by states to the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, as part of IDEA reporting requirements. The number of children 3 to 5 years of age living in a state during the years corresponding to each reporting period was based on U.S. Census Bureau (2004) yearly estimates. These estimates include all births minus deaths plus net migration. The number of preschoolers reported by states divided by the population estimates was used to calculate the percentage of 3- to 5-year-old children served each year between 1992 and 2002.

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The percentage of children served in 2002 was used to group states into seven categories ranging from states serving less than 4.5% of the 3- to 5-year-old population to states serving more than 8% of the 3- to 5-year-old population. A 7 Between Group X 11 Year ANOVA was used to ascertain similarities and differences in patterns of changes across time with the percentage of children served during each reporting period as the repeated measures.

Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Bryk, Raudenbush, & Congdon, 1996) was used to ascertain patterns of increases or decreases in the percentage of 3- to 5-year-olds served in Part B(619) preschool special education programs for the 11 reporting periods. The main focus of analysis was the slopes (trends) in the percentage of preschoolers served between 1992 and 2002. The year-by-year percentages and slopes were used to calculate the projected year that 6% of the preschool population would be served by each state. The reliability estimates

for the yearly percentages (intercepts) and slopes (trends) were .99 and .95 respectively (Bryk et al., 1996).

Results

Status

Table 1 shows the states ordered by the percentage of preschoolers served in 2002. States were grouped into seven categories according to the different percent increments shown in the table. About half the states (47%) were serving at least 6% of the estimated numbers of 3- to 5-year-old children with disabilities. The range in percentage of children served in preschool special education varied from 2.3% (District of Columbia) to 12.6% (Kentucky).

The seven between state group by 11-year reporting period repeated measures ANOVA showed that patterns

Table 1

Percentage of the Three- to Five-Year-Old Population Served by States in 2002 (Enrollment) and the Average Per-Year Increase in the Percent of Three- to Five-Year-Olds Served (Trend) Between 1994 and 2002

State	2002 Enrollment	Trend	State	2002 Enrollment	Trend	State	2002 Enrollment	Trend
<i>Group 1</i> (< 4.50%)			<i>Group 4</i> (5.50%-5.99%)			<i>Group 6</i> (6.50%-7.99%)		
DC	2.27	.10	CT	5.55	.09	VT	6.59	.26
TX	3.76	.06	VA	5.60	.14	NM	6.74	.27
CA	4.05	.09	MI	5.60	.16	IN	6.79	.27
OH	4.27	.09	NH	5.60	.19	WI	7.29	.16
AZ	4.37	.09	FL	5.71	.21	NY	7.57	.29
<i>Group 2</i> (4.50%-4.99%)			LA	5.82	.13	RI	7.64	.28
AL	4.51	-.05	NC	5.97	.13	KS	7.86	.33
NE	4.60	.03	<i>Group 5</i> (6.00%-6.49%)			SD	7.90	.12
TN	4.67	.04	IL	6.00	.14	SC	7.90	.25
HI	4.67	.29	MS	6.09	.13	<i>Group 7</i> (>8.00%)		
CO	4.99	.13	MA	6.10	.08	WV	8.93	.31
<i>Group 3</i> (5.00%-5.49%)			AK	6.20	.02	AR	9.19	.36
NJ	5.13	.04	DE	6.22	-.02	WY	11.12	.40
GA	5.13	.16	ID	6.22	.08	ME	11.25	.57
UT	5.20	.12	NE	6.24	.19	KY	12.63	.38
WA	5.23	-.01	ND	6.33	.20			
OK	5.28	.15	MI	6.36	.14			
IA	5.31	.03	MO	6.42	.33			
OR	5.41	.24						
MD	5.42	.16						
PA	5.42	.16						
MT	5.47	.06						

of increases in percentage of children served were different in the seven state groups, $F(60, 440) = 7.79, p < .0001$. Figure 1 shows the year-by-year increases for the seven groups of states. Whereas all groups of states showed some incremental increases across reporting periods, states that were serving the largest percentage of children in 1992 tended to show the largest increases across time.

Trends

The state-by-state trends (slopes) in increases in the percentages of children served during the 11 reporting periods are also shown in Table 1. The trends represent the average percentage point change per year across time. For example, Maine showed the largest percentage increase, averaging over a half a percentage point increase per year (0.57). Six states (Alabama, Washington, Alaska, Delaware, Nebraska, and Iowa) showed no appreciable change across reporting periods, averaging between a -.05 percent decrease to a .03 increase per year.

The relationship between the percentage of children served by states in 2002 (status) and the year-by-year changes (trends) was assessed in a seven between state groups ANOVA with the trend (slope) data as the dependent measure. Figure 2 shows the mean percent increase for the trend data for the seven groups of states. There was a significant between group difference in the mean percent increases, $F(6, 44) = 11.52, p < .0001$, as well as a significant linear relationship between the groups of states measure and the year-by-year percentage change in the number of children served, $F(1, 49) = 50.49, p < .0001$. States serving the smallest percentage of preschoolers in 2002 were the same states showing the smallest percentage changes across reporting periods. In contrast, states

serving the largest percentage of children in 2002 were the same states showing the largest percentage increase across time.

Projections

HLM was used to estimate the year each state would (did) serve 6% of the 3- to 5-year-old population (Table 2). This was accomplished using the year-by-year percentage of children served across time and the trend (slope) data to calculate the projections. Fifteen states reached the criterion by the end of the last century. Twelve states reached or were projected to reach the criterion by 2004. The same number of states (12) were projected to serve 6% of the 3- to 5-year-old population between 2005 and 2010. Nine states and the District of Columbia were projected to take 10 to 45 years to reach the 6% criterion. Based on the patterns of participation between 1994 and 2004, two states (Alabama and Washington) would never reach the 6% criterion.

Discussion

Findings as a whole showed that most states achieved or are making progress toward serving 6% of 3- to 5-year-old population of children with disabilities. Despite variations in the percentage of preschoolers served in Part B(619) special education programs (Table 1), many states, even those serving less than the 6% criterion, are showing positive trends in reaching and serving eligible children. This is especially evident in states that have shown an average increase of 0.15% or more per year.

Five states (West Virginia, Arkansas, Wyoming, Maine, and Kentucky) have far exceeded the 6% criterion, serving between 9% and 13% of the 3- to 5-year-old

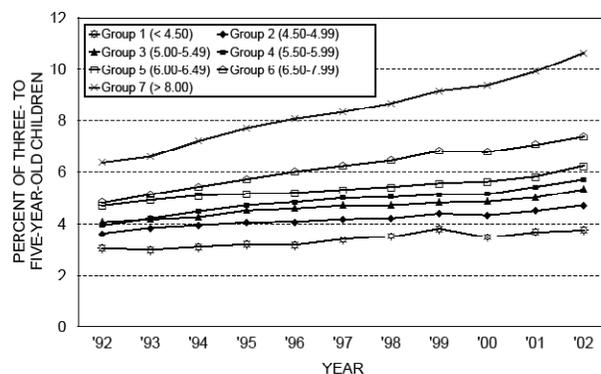


Figure 1 Percentage of 3- to 5-year-old children served during the 11-year reporting periods for seven different groups of states.

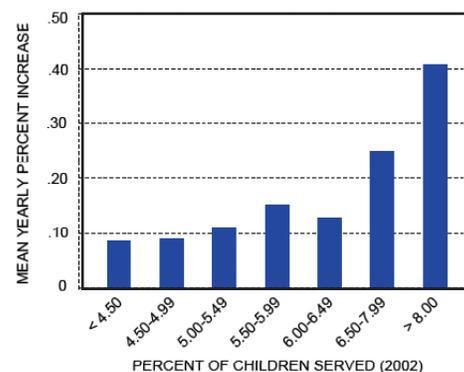


Figure 2 Average per-year percentage increase in the 3- to 5-year-old population served by states according to 2002 reporting data.

population. Closer examination of the child find, early identification, and eligibility determination practices in these states should make clear the reasons why these states have been more successful than others in serving a larger percentage of the preschool population. Case studies (Yin, 2002) of practices in those states will be conducted by TRACE Investigators to identify the child find, early identification, and eligibility determination policies and practices that account for these states' successes.

Based on the 11 years of data constituting the focus of analyses in this *Snapshots*, two states (Alabama and Washington) were found to be unlikely to reach the 6% criterion, and an additional six states (California, New Jersey, Tennessee, Iowa, Texas, and Nevada) and the District of Columbia, would take somewhere between 15 and 45 years to reach the estimated 6% of 3- to 5-year-olds with disabilities. Case studies will be conducted by TRACE Investigators in these states to identify the reasons the states are having such difficulties. Pattern matching techniques (Yin, 2002) will be used to compare policies and practices in low compared to high performance states to isolate factors best explaining the difference reported in this *Snapshots*.

Findings from this study are also useful for practice. Results can be used to identify those states where technical assistance may be indicated in terms of examining and changing policy or practice to improve child find, early identification, or eligibility determination practic-

es. This would include states that are serving the smallest percentage of the 3- to 5-year-old population *and* that have not demonstrated significant increases in the percentage of children served during the 11 reporting periods.

Further analyses of the percentage of children served in preschool special education are planned and will focus on factors that account for the differences reported in this *Snapshots* (e.g., Does adoption of a developmentally delayed eligibility category account for between state differences?). These analyses should make even more clear the characteristics of the policies and practices that are associated with the percentage of the 3- to 5-year-old population served in preschool special education.

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Table 2

The Year States Served or Were Projected To Serve Six Percent of the Three- to Five-Year-Old Population

1990-1999		2000-2004		2005-2010		2011-2050		Unreached	
State	Year								
KY	1990	IN	2000	LA	2005	MT	2015	AL	
SD	1991	MA	2000	VA	2005	AZ	2021	WA	
WY	1991	MN	2000	CT	2006	OH	2021		
DE	1992	MO	2002	MI	2006	CA	2024		
AR	1993	NE	2002	HI	2007	NJ	2026		
ME	1993	ND	2002	MD	2007	TN	2031		
WV	1993	FL	2003	PA	2007	IA	2032		
SC	1994	MS	2003	GA	2008	DC	2038		
WI	1994	NC	2003	OK	2009	TX	2040		
ID	1997	IL	2004	UT	2009	NV	2050		
KS	1997	NH	2004	AK	2010				
NY	1997	OR	2004	CO	2010				
RI	1997								
NM	1998								
VT	1999								

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