

## Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic required that early intervention and preschool special education programs adopt new ways to conduct assessments. One solution was the use of virtual assessment (VA).

## Project Goals




- Increase the body of knowledge on equitable and innovative approaches for integrating technology into authentic assessments for young children with disabilities.
- Build capacity of the field to use technology to support authentic assessment through disseminating tools, resources, and decision-making frameworks.

## Methods

- 67 interviews with early intervention and preschool special education state coordinators, local program directors, practitioners, and families from 9 states.
- 2 focus groups with practitioners.



## Benefits and Challenges of Virtual Assessment

	Benefits	Challenges
<b>Assessment Process</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child is assessed in everyday settings and situations.</li> <li>With VA, families are active participants, preparing them for involvement in children’s services.</li> <li>Many programs are confident in the assessment results.</li> <li>Programs reported switching to an authentic assessment tool so they could use VA.</li> <li>VA allows more people to participate in the assessment (e.g., parents at work).</li> <li>VA and recordings support collaboration among professionals.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some practitioners felt the information was more limited compared with in-person assessment.</li> <li>Some practitioners believe VA should not be conducted at all.</li> </ul>
<b>Logistics</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligibility assessments can be completed more quickly.</li> <li>VA provides programs with more flexibility in assigning staff.</li> <li>VA addresses personnel shortages; assessor does not need to live near family.</li> <li>Practitioners spend less time driving.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some programs reported challenges in completing forms and obtaining necessary signatures (although some programs report using digital signatures).</li> </ul>
<b>Families and Technology</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many families feel comfortable using a variety of technologies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some families lack necessary technology (some programs address this with loaner equipment).</li> <li>Internet quality is inconsistent.</li> <li>Some families lack technology knowledge or are intimidated by technology (some programs address this by introducing families to the technology before the assessment).</li> </ul>

## Current State of Virtual Assessment in EI and ECSE

- There is more use of VA in early intervention (EI) than in early childhood special education (ECSE).
- In some states, the state decides to offer VA; in others, it is locally determined.
- The most common use of VA is to determine eligibility.
- VA is sometimes paired with virtual service delivery, but not always.
- Both professional and family perceptions of VA vary.
  - From “It’s great” (maybe even better than in person) to “I don’t like it”

## What’s Next?

- Develop and validate decision-making frameworks for state and local administrators on adopting and implementing VA.
- Create a variety of additional resources to support implementation of VA and other technologies.



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