

Background

- The COVID-19 pandemic required early intervention and preschool special education programs to adopt new ways to conduct assessments. One solution was virtual assessment.

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 Part B 619 and Part C state coordinators, local administrators, practitioners, and families from 9 states.



Thinking of Adopting Virtual Assessment? Considerations for State and Local Administrators

Prerequisite: Authentic Assessment Practices

- Authentic assessment can be done well virtually. Direct structured testing cannot.
- **BUT** authentic assessment is best practice in early childhood. Programs should not be doing direct testing anyway.

Benefits

- Logistics
 - Reduces travel time for practitioners
 - More flexibility in scheduling for families and practitioners
 - Addresses staffing shortages
- Quality of the assessment
 - Observations of children conducted in a natural environment without a stranger in the room
 - Provides access to specialists who are not available locally
- Other
 - No one enters the home for medically fragile children or if another family member is ill
 - Prepares family members to be active participants in working with their child
 - Other family members (e.g., parent at work) can participate/observe

Challenges

- Practitioner attitude (e.g., belief that virtual assessment is inferior)
- Technology
 - Families who lack technology will need “loaner tech”
 - Poor internet connections
- Family members or practitioners uncomfortable with technology
- Need to prepare practitioners to administer virtual assessments
- Need to prepare families to participate in a virtual assessment
- Need procedures for how to complete forms, obtain signatures, etc., virtually
- Need policies and procedures for ensuring confidentiality of the process (e.g., practitioner is in a private location) and the recordings (if recorded).

Key Lesson

Provide families a choice between in-person or virtual assessment

“It made me a much better clinician. Not only did I educate families, but I actually felt like I taught them to get involved ... it really forced me to be a better family educator and coach versus just [a] demonstrator.”
–Local administrator



What's Next?

- Develop decision-making frameworks for state and local administrators that provide further details about adoption, implementation, and evaluation.
- Create additional resources to support implementation of virtual assessment



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