

Benefits and Challenges of Using Virtual Authentic Assessment With Young Children With Disabilities

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Innovative Technology for
Early Childhood Assessment

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What is virtual assessment?

- Assessment in which one or more **assessors are not in the same physical location as the child**. The assessors **use technology** to observe the child engaged in everyday activities in a familiar setting to gather information about what a child knows or can do. The assessment process may include asking the parent or caregiver to interact with the child in some way (e.g., asking the child to do something, positioning the child in a certain way, etc.) while the assessors observe remotely.
- Hybrid assessments:
 - can involve one or more assessors observing remotely with one or more in the room (simultaneous hybrid)
 - Some part of the assessment conducted virtually and another part at a different time conducted face-to-face (sequential hybrid)

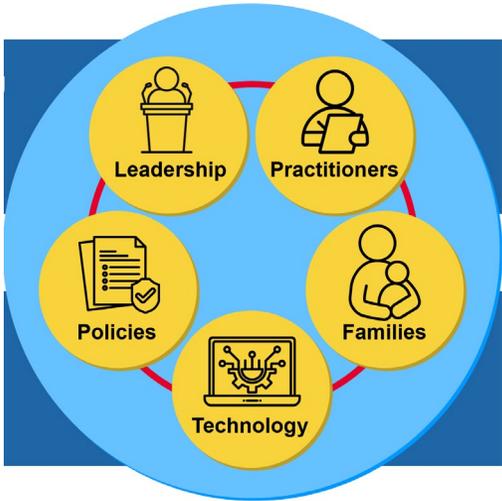
Innovative Technology for Early Childhood Assessment (INTECA)

- 3-year project funded by the U.S. Department of Education to:
 - Identify facilitators and barriers to using technology to support authentic assessment in early intervention (0-3 year olds) and early childhood special education (3-5 year olds)
 - Develop a framework and resources
- We interviewed 79 individuals (state and local administrators, practitioners, families) about their experiences with virtual assessment
- We conducted a literature review
- We conducted a scan of professional associations of those involved in conducting virtual assessment with young children with disabilities

What we learned is reflected in the INTECA Framework for Adopting and Implementing Virtual Assessment

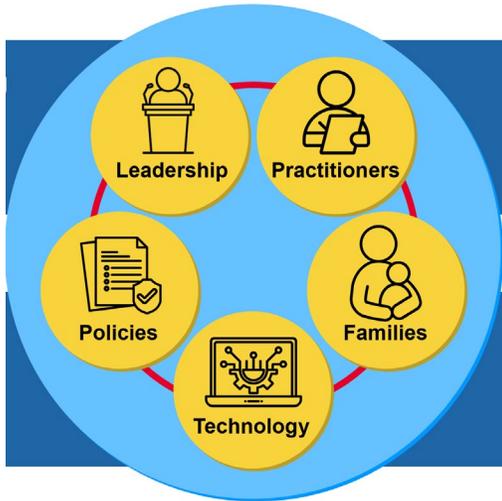


Key Ingredients for Effective Implementation of Virtual Assessment



- **Leadership** committed to allocating the necessary fiscal and human resources
- Support for **Practitioners**
 - Buy in
 - Ready access to the technology and how to use it
 - Professional development on how to gather information virtually
- Supports for **Families**
 - Information on what is virtual assessment and how to meaningfully participate
 - Access to the technology and how to use it

Key Ingredients for Effective Implementation of Virtual Assessment (Continued)



- **Technology**

- Availability for practitioners and families
- Ongoing support for use and troubleshooting

- **Policies** and procedures

- Address issues critical issues like privacy and confidentiality, use of technology, etc.
- consistent with federal (IDEA, FERPA, HIPAA, Medicaid) and state policies including licensing requirements.

Some Overall Benefits

- Improved assessment process
- Honors family preferences and needs
- Addresses staffing shortages
- Allows more assessments to be completed in a timely manner



Benefit: Provides high quality information

Improved assessment process

- Equal or better-quality information than in person assessments

"...the child is not interacting with you, which gives you more of an accurate depiction of how they are engaging with their everyday environment...that can be more helpful than if I am present and the child's distracted by me or just wants to engage with me."

Practitioner

Benefit: Increased family participation

Improved assessment process

- Increased use of authentic assessment practices.
- Increased family participation during the assessment.

"...the in-person ones, they don't really ask a lot of questions...They tend to take over the whole assessment...and exclude me. With the video chat assessments, I was the center and they were asking me everything, and I was trying to get [child] to do it all."
Family member

Benefit: Sets the family up as the expert on their child.

Improved assessment process

- Families learn more about the assessment process, their child's disability and what their child knows and can do.
- Prepares families for active engagement in supporting their child's learning and development.

"A big benefit is [that our state] uses the coaching model. So, when we were doing our evals in person...it was a much more structured assessment and much more standardized...it kind of set us up more as the experts at that initial assessment than it does now with the telehealth... it sets the tone that they're the experts on their child and we're going to observe and then help them from there."

Practitioner

And More Benefits



Addresses staffing shortage

- Provides families easier access to specialists
- Provides families more timely access to speech language pathologist, occupational therapists and physical therapists

Allows more assessments to be completed in a timely manner

- More assessments in a day with no driving
- More scheduling flexibility

Overall Challenges and Potential Solutions

- May be difficult to obtain information about the child
- Practitioners' negative attitudes and beliefs about the adequacy of the information provided by VA
- Practitioners are not fully informed about the federal and state policy regarding VA, or there are state policy prohibitions
- Practitioners lack adequate preparation for VA
- Negative family attitude and beliefs
- Limited technology or technology knowledge



Practitioner Challenges and Potential Solutions

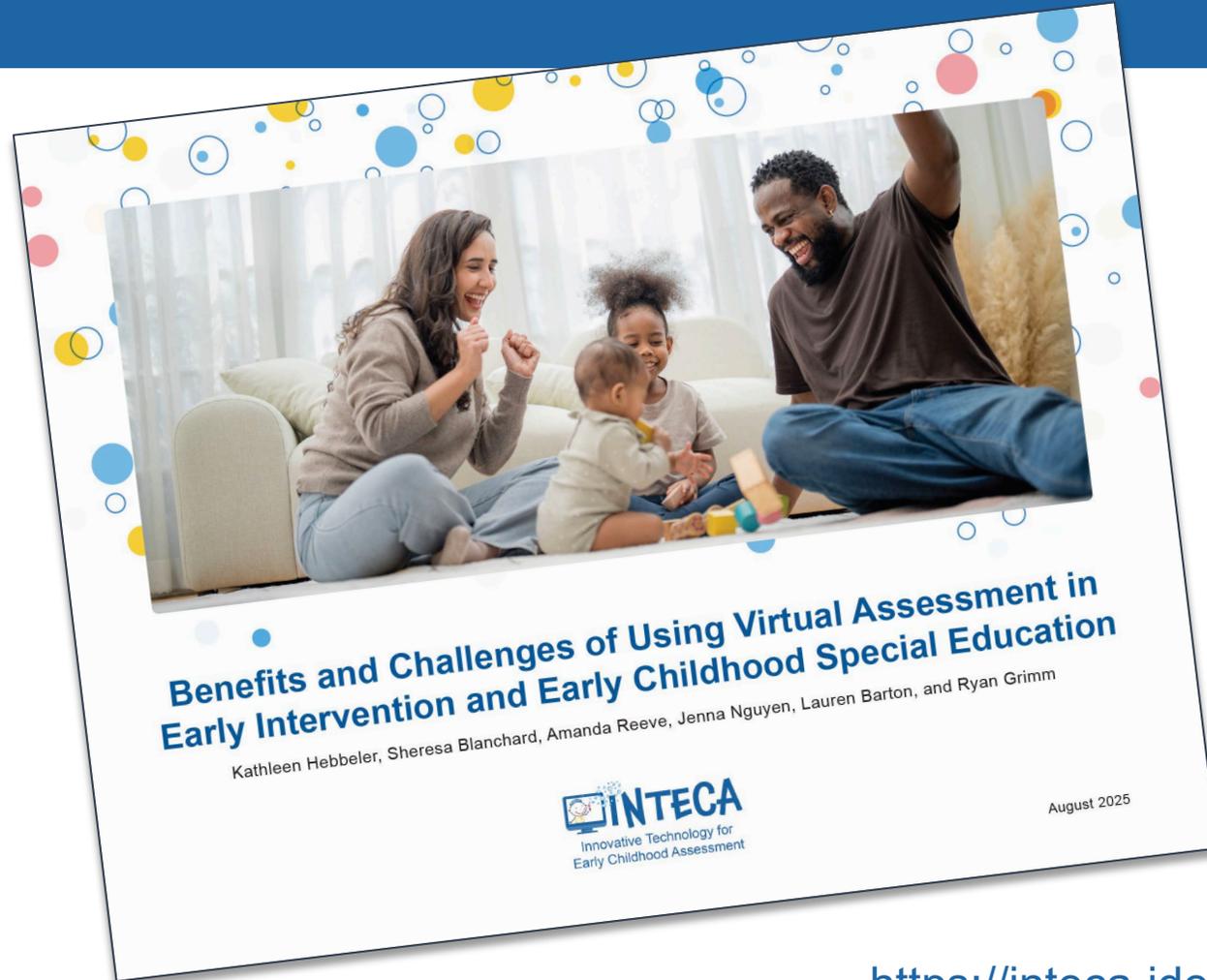
- Practitioners' negative attitudes and beliefs about the adequacy of the information provided by VA
 - Some practitioners expressed complete confidence in VA. Others were skeptical.
 - Solution: Help all practitioners understand the benefits and prepare them for how to conduct VA.
- Practitioners not prepared
 - Solution: Provide professional development on how to adapt assessment processes for VA

Technology: Challenges and Potential Solutions



- Families do not have the technology
 - Solution: Loaner devices or mobile hotspots
- Families are not familiar with the technology
 - Solution: Prepare the family for how to use the technology and the video-conferencing platform
- No cell coverage or internet access at the family's home
 - Solution: If feasible, locate a community building with internet access that would work for the assessment.

Read More in Our Summary Report



Benefits and Challenges of Using Virtual Assessment in Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

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<https://inteca-idea.org/benefits-challenges-of-va/>



Thank you!



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