

SSIP Progress Report



FIRST CONNECTIONS – EARLY INTERVENTION IN ARKANSAS

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Year 1: Training the Unlimited Potential Initial Cohort

2016 was devoted to supporting the EI professionals of the target group in how to prepare parents and other caregivers to engage as equal members of the IFSP team and in the child's early intervention. In quarterly workdays facilitated by ECTA, UP teams:

- watched a live demo of a FC Family Assessment conducted by an external coach who interviewed a parent volunteer (using the assessment tool) so that UP teams could work together to write functional goals based on what the parent shared
- rated the quality of IFSP outcome statements (both goals and objectives) and practiced using the tool to rate their own and their peer's submitted work
- shared redacted results of an assessment conducted with "other caregivers" at a child's childcare and the IFSP outcomes generated from the other caregiver assessment so that teams again rated the IFSP outcome statements for quality using a simplified rating tool
- showcased a redacted IFSP their team developed and presented to explain how their team developed their showcase IFSP

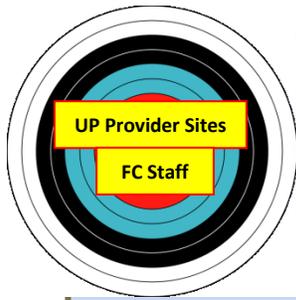
with the family as well as how their team would work with the family (within a typical family activity) to help the parent/caregiver learn to implement IFSP strategies to reach one of the goals on the child's and family's IFSP showcased

Between quarterly face to face workdays, monthly Web-based trainings (live) with the full team cut down on the travel time for busy EI providers, provider program administrators, and service coordinators while still allowing for brief, targeted, and interactive training. The monthly "Web calls" provided opportunities to informally assess teams' progress and touch base to ask what's working/not working each month. Topics for Web-based trainings included:

- Natural Environment Practices and Principles
- Team discussion of the National Inclusion Webinar
- Introduction to Routines-based Early Intervention
- Paradigm Shift to a Parent-Professional Partnership
- Introduction to Family Assessment practices and Assessing Other Caregivers
- Writing Functional IFSP Outcomes Using the Results of Caregiver Assessment

Arkansas' SiMR: State-identified Measureable Result for Part C

To increase the percentage of parents who report that early intervention helped them help their child learn and develop.



Expanding the Target

The “target” population to begin training to prepare EI Practitioners to implement Evidence-based Practices with fidelity began in 2016 with four Unlimited Potential Sites (EI Providers) who formed the initial cohort or target group via an application process. After an assessment of preliminary data on these teams’ early implementation of DEC Recommended Family Practices around IFSP development, it was determined that state staff needed to be rolled into the initiative as the next cohort in order to support these existing teams in their work with families (see preliminary data shared on this page).

First Connections staff joined the UP work, convening in February 2017 for orientation to the SSIP and the Unlimited Potential Initiative. The Staff Orientation resulted in work to begin implementation in this group, which will expand the target: selection of team leads for units involved, selection of internal (or peer) coaches, and a calendar of all calls, face to face workdays.

UP training for staff began in February and March 2017 with best practices for initial contacts with families that prepare families to be active partners participating in their child’s early intervention. The Staff UP Team will participate in monthly UP training with ample opportunities to put the new skills into practice in their work with children and families.

Preliminary Data on Initial Implementation

To reach the long-term goal of increasing the percentage of parent who report the early intervention helped them help their child develop and learn (the State-identified Measureable Results), EI providers implement evidence-based practices to work with adult caregivers in new ways. Specific DEC Recommended Family and Instructional Practices support families to advocate for their child and family to participate in the development of their child’s and family’s plan (the IFSP) around goals, activities, and people important to the family.

The short-term SSIP goal of improved IFSP quality ratings (in the target group) can be seen as a reflection of changes in the way parents and other caregivers engage early in the EI process (working with their IFSP team to develop a plan that reflects their priorities and goals) a critical early step to reach the SiMR. In forming the evaluation plan, the State needed a method to assess when this goal has been met. To know what “better than average” looks like, baseline data had to be collected and analyzed. 2015 and 2017 Average IFSP Quality Ratings for the State as a whole (excluding the target group) were analyzed to determine that “improved IFSP quality for the target” would need to “look like” scores that either reached “high quality” or nearly reached “high quality” defined as IFSP quality ratings between 30-35 on the FC IFSP-OAT tool (“high quality” range is 32-51).

Data used to demonstrate improvement in IFSP quality rating of the target compares the quality ratings of recently developed IFSPs in the target group to those of the state as a whole (excluding the target group sites). IFSP quality ratings for the target group were significantly higher (+25 points) than the statewide overall quality ratings. Moreover, IFSP quality ratings of the UP sites of the initial cohort group exceeded the initial target set (30-35).

2017 Initial Cohort (UP) Average IFSP Quality Rating (Target)	2017 Average IFSP Quality Rating (State Excluding Target)	2015 Statewide Average IFSP Quality Ratings (Baseline -- Prior to Identification of Target)
40.5	15.24	17.96

This preliminary data on IFSP quality ratings demonstrates that the initial training of the target group to develop the skill of functional IFSP development based on family-identified priorities, resources, and activities has been successful. This data can also be seen as an early measure of progress toward the SiMR.