



Research Snapshot No. 3

November, 2022

Dunst, C.J, Bruder, M.B., Maude, S.P., Schnurr, M., Van Polen, A., Froleck Clark, G., Winslow, A., & Gethmann, D. (2020). Predictors of Practitioners' Use of Recommended Early Childhood Intervention Practices.

What you need to know

Research conducted in the last decade has established that certain types of early childhood intervention (ECI) professional development (PD), and how often they are delivered, are conducive to practitioners' use of recommended ECI practices. In an effort to inform future PD activities, a US Midwestern State set to identify ECI practitioners' needs for PD activities and the factors that may influence practitioners' capacity and use of ECI recommended practices.

What is this research about?

Using the Division of Early Childhood (DEC) recommended practices as a base, researchers sought to answer the extent to which:

- (1) practitioners' judgements of PD evidence-based practices (i.e., information provision, skill demonstration and modelling, authentic learning experiences, and coaching and feedback), delivered by professional development specialists (PDS), related to practitioners' use of ECI recommended practices;
- (2) PD evidenced-based practices explained practitioners' use of recommended practices when also considering practitioner background (i.e., professional discipline, years of practitioner experience, age of children); and
- (3) the different PD evidence- based activities relate to various ECI recommended practices.

What did the researchers do?

Researchers recruited a range of ECI practitioners across 14 different professional backgrounds, with the majority from early childhood education or special education, and with five or more years of experience working with young children with disabilities. The number of respondents varied between 781 and 955 given that participants were asked to complete survey sections that only applied to their current position or role.

Participants responded to a survey that included practitioner background questions and 47 items asking them to indicate the degree to which they currently used different ECI practices. They were also asked to specify the type of PD (if any) they had received for each of the DEC practices in the areas of assessment, environment, family, instruction, teaching and collaboration, and transitions, and rate whether the PD they had received contributed to their capacity building.

The researchers then conducted a series of statistical procedures (regression analyses) to determine the strength of various factors to explain practitioners' use of recommended ECI practices.

What did the researchers find?

- Practitioner educators and respondents with degrees other than education used different ECI practices.
- Practitioners with greater number of years of experience used ECI practices more frequently.
- Practitioners supporting 0-2 year old children use different ECI practices compared to those supporting 3-5 year olds.
- Practitioners reporting more frequent engagement with PD also reported more frequent use of all 10 ECI recommended practices.
- PDS' use of capacity building PD strategies contributed the most to practitioners' use of ECI practices, beyond all background characteristics.
- More frequent provision of evidence-based capacity-building PD is more likely to be associated with more frequent use of different ECI practices.

How can you use this research?

This study is relevant to practitioners, service providers and policy makers regarding the importance of the combined use of evidence-based PD capacity-building strategies in promoting the use of ECI recommended practices.

This research highlights the significance of *how* PD is provided is as important, if not more important, than just how often it is delivered.

Study findings provide impetus for the development of an ECI PD framework that acknowledges the diversity of factors that influence practitioners' learning and adoption of ECI recommended practices.

Where to from here

- **Resources**
 - DEC Recommended practices. Retrieved from <https://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices>
 - Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center- Practice Improvement Tools: Using the DEC recommended Practices. Retrieved from <https://ectacenter.org/decrp/>

- Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center- Practice Improvement Tools: Evidence-based Professional Development Procedures. Retrieved from <https://ectacenter.org/decrp/ebpdp.asp>
- [ECIA guidelines](#)
- **Links to related topics**
 - PD and the pyramid model in Australia, <https://www.pyramidmodel.org.au/events/>

About the researchers

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This Research Snapshot was prepared by Dr. Susana Gavidia-Payne, PRECI committee member and Associate Professor, Educational and Developmental Psychology.

In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.