

# Service Intensity Changes in the King County, Washington Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program: 2005 - 2007

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**Introduction:** Early intervention (EI) is a federally mandated system of therapies, special education and support services for infants and toddlers with developmental delay. Children qualify for EI if they have a 25% or greater delay in one or more areas of development, or a diagnosed physical or mental condition that is likely to result in developmental delay. Children who qualify for EI are usually offered a service package in the initial Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP). In Washington State, EI services are directed differently in each county by a local lead agency, and services take place at multiple private agencies. In King County, EI services were restructured in late 2006 to meet county requirements that 65% of services be provided in natural environments. Natural environments include home and community settings that are designed for typically developing children, but do not include hospitals, clinics, or programs that are designed for children with disabilities. This study examines trends in recommended service intensity, defined as the number of service hours offered per month, in King County, WA between 2005 and 2007. The purpose of the study is to describe how recommended service intensity varied across time for children with differing personal characteristics, location and amounts of developmental delay.

**Methods:** A chart review of IFSPs was conducted for 260 children entering EI in January-February 2005, 2006, and 2007 at the four largest EI agencies in King County, Washington. This population includes approximately 75% of all newly entering children in the county.

**Results:** Preliminary findings indicate an overall decrease in service intensity over time, from 9 hours per month in 2005 to 6 hours per month in 2007. The amount of change in service intensity between 2005 and 2007 varied between agencies, from +1 hours to -10 hours per month, indicating increasing variability in service intensity over time. Further analysis will describe the extent of service variability among study participants by ethnicity, language, and amount of developmental delay.

**Conclusion:** Children residing in different regions of King County, WA have access to widely varying amounts of publicly funded EI service. Program restructuring in 2006 contributed to the amount of countywide variability in service.

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