

## **Investigating low referrals to Part C Early Intervention in King County**

Sharlene L. Joachim

**Background:** Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is federal legislation that mandates the provision of early intervention services to children birth to 3 years of age with identified disabilities and developmental delays. States are accountable for Part C service provision. Part C programs in Washington State and King County serve a lower percentage of children birth to 3 years than expected, given national and state averages. Percentages in King County are particularly low for children birth to 12 months. One hypothesis for low referrals in King County is that children who are eligible for Part C services are receiving services through non-Part C medical therapy providers.

**Methods:** Data for this study were obtained through retrospective review of medical therapy charts of 219 children, birth to 3 years, who received therapy services from a non-Part C medical therapy provider in King County between July 2007 and June 2008. Analyses aimed to describe the demographic and diagnostic characteristics of children in this population and to determine the proportion of children who would be eligible for Part C services.

**Results:** Preliminary findings indicate that 36% of the children were eligible for Part C services using Washington State eligibility criteria. An additional 20% of the children would be eligible for Part C services if Washington State extended its eligibility criteria to include children who are at risk for developmental disabilities due to medical or environmental risk conditions. Findings also indicate that 55% of the children were referred prior to 12 months of age. Children who were Washington State eligible were referred at older ages than children who were not eligible, and than children who would be eligible if Washington State extended its criteria to include medical and environmental risk conditions.

**Conclusions:** Children birth to 3 years who are receiving therapy services from non-Part C medical therapy providers contribute to low percentages of children served by Part C programs in King County. Additionally, Washington State's eligibility criteria may reduce the number of children birth to 12 months who are enrolled in Part C services.

### *Thesis Committee:*

Marcia F. Williams, PhD, MPH (Chair)

Susan Sandall, PhD

Maryanne Barnes, MEd

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