



nectac Evaluation Highlights

Client Feedback from October 2006 - September 2009
compiled December 2009



EVALUATION PLAN AND METHODS

The NECTAC Evaluation Unit collects and analyzes data to describe the quantity and nature of the technical assistance services provided by NECTAC staff. The Unit determines the quality and relevance of NECTAC services and products and whether clients use NECTAC Technical Assistance (TA) to improve state and local systems and services. An external evaluation was conducted with all primary clients (Part C and Section 619 Coordinators from all states and jurisdictions) regardless of their level of participation in NECTAC TA. The highlights included in this report include data from October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2009.

MAJOR FINDINGS – DOCUMENTATION

NECTAC staff provided more than 13,000 hours of direct TA to Part C and Section 619 programs in all 60 states and jurisdictions. Seventy-four percent (74%) of that time was spent on individualized TA where the TA is focused on a single state with a specific issue or TA request. The other 26% was spent on cross-state TA where the TA is designed for many or all states, such as OSEP’s National Early Childhood Conference.

Seventy percent (70%) of the total time expended in NECTAC TA efforts was spent providing “Major TA” services which were generally more than 8 hours and anticipated long term impacts for improving systems and/or practices. The other 30% was spent providing “Less Extensive” services in response to client requests.

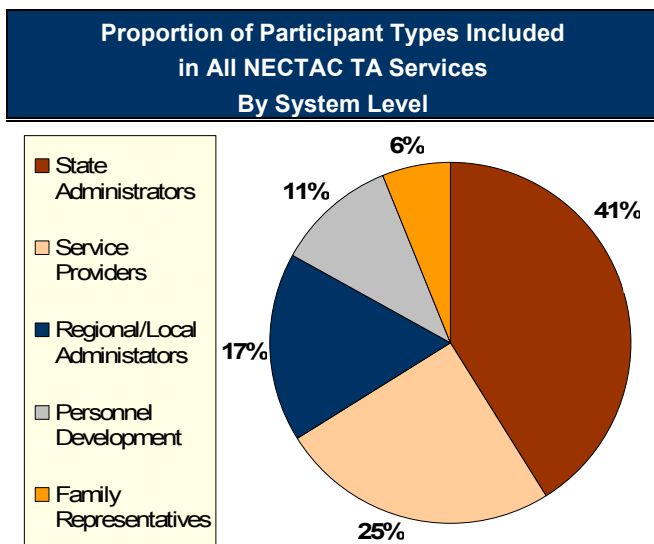
TYPE OF TA	TA Provider Time (hours)	% of Total Time
Individualized TA	10,048.25	0.74
Cross-State TA	3577.00	0.26
Major TA	9546.00	0.70
Less Extensive TA	4079.25	0.30

From October 1, 2006 to September 30, 2009, the NECTAC staff provided a total of 2,165 technical assistance services on a range of topics. The areas receiving the most effort to date are summarized in the following table.

TOPIC	TA Provider Time (hours)
1. Developing and implementing systems for measuring child and family outcomes .	3068.00
2. Expanding opportunities for young children with disabilities to receive services in Inclusion/LRE environments with their peers.	2130.25
3. Developing SPPs/APRs and developing data systems for collecting and reporting data.	1971.75
4. Implementing evidence based EI services , including IFSP process, service coordination and natural environments.	1789.75
5. Building effective general supervision and monitoring systems to ensure compliance with IDEA and quality services.	1584.75
6. Improving the transition process as young children move from Early Intervention to Preschool.	1163.75



NECTAC provided TA to a total of 14,899 state clients including state Part C and Section 619 administrators; staff from institutes of higher education, state TA providers and CSPD coordinators responsible for personnel development; regional and local administrators for early intervention and preschool programs; direct service providers including teachers, early interventionists, therapists; and family members and family representatives. The pie chart below depicts the proportion of state participant types, by system level, included in all NECTAC TA Services.



NECTAC also provided TA to a variety of other participants including federal agency staff from various programs, professional organizations, national and regional TA providers, private consultants, and the media.

NECTAC staff assisted states in developing and implementing 22 long-term systems change initiatives on topics such as developing systems for measuring child and family outcomes, building quality inclusive services/systems, ensuring smooth EC transitions and building/improving sustainable finance systems. Systems change initiatives are based on an ongoing relationship with a state and the work is driven by a stakeholder-developed strategic plan for improving the state system for implementing IDEA.

CLIENT SATISFACTION

The external evaluation was sent to all clients regardless of the extent to which they participated in NECTAC services. For every NECTAC TA service evaluated, participants are asked to rate the quality of the service, the relevance of the information and activities, and the provider expertise on a scale of 1 to 5 (5 being the highest rating). The evaluation also asked clients about their overall perceptions of the quality and relevance of NECTAC services and products. Below is a summary of the mean ratings related to these three GPRA indicators.

TYPE OF TA	High Quality	Relevance	Provider Expertise
Less Extensive	4.7	4.4	4.8
Major Individualized	4.5	4.6	4.6
Cross-State	4.2	4.4	4.5
Overall	4.4	4.4	4.6
Products*	4.3	4.2	n/a
Overall*	4.4	4.2	n/a

*External Evaluation results

Quality

The external evaluation also revealed that a strong majority of clients (96%) agreed that the services and products they received from NECTAC were of high quality, typically citing NECTAC's prompt response to inquiries and accuracy when sharing technical information. With regard to specific products such as NECTAC's Contact Lists, Part C Updates, Section 619 Profile, the NECTAC website, eNotes and client listservs, over 97% of clients said they agree or strongly agree that what they received is of high quality.

Relevance

Additionally, a majority of clients (92%) agreed that the services and products they received from NECTAC were relevant to their policies or practices, typically citing NECTAC's ability to share information from other states and awareness of OSEP requirements. Ninety-seven percent (97%) agreed that NECTAC's electronic resources, website, eNotes and client listservs are relevant to their policies and practices.

PROJECT EFFECTIVENESS

Immediate Outcomes

The Evaluation Unit measured immediate and longer term outcomes to determine the effectiveness of TA. The accomplishment of immediate outcomes for each event is measured to determine the extent to which the TA was able to increase the participants' capacity to implement quality EI/ECSE programs and/or practices. Immediate outcomes included increasing participant knowledge, skills, access to resources, changing attitudes and developing action plans. The overall mean ratings for accomplishment of intended outcomes by type of TA are listed below:

TYPE OF TA	Overall Mean for Intended Outcomes
Less Extensive TA	4.5
Major Individualized TA	4.5
Cross-State TA	4.1
Overall	4.4

Some examples of participant feedback related to the accomplishment of immediate outcomes:

"We will use the information to develop criteria for exemplary programs statewide. Those programs will then become visitation site models for others to replicate. The information will also be shared at our statewide leadership symposium."

"[We gained] techniques to use and share with staff. Some staff members fear data collection, but some of the ideas shared by presenters and colleagues demonstrated data collection can be painless!"

"The training has given me a deeper focus on the importance of teamwork to more accurately determine progress and positive outcomes for young children with disabilities."

Long-Term Impacts

Long term impacts were measured by NECTAC through follow up surveys and interviews with states. In addition, an external evaluation was conducted with all primary clients. Both internal and external evaluations revealed impacts on state and local systems and on practices.

State System Level Changes

Ninety-one percent (91%) of external evaluation respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their state level infrastructure had been improved because of the services and/or products received

from NECTAC. States reported changes in the following areas:

- Guidance (84%);
- Policies and procedures (73%);
- General supervision/monitoring (40%); and
- Inter-agency relationships (31%)

Data collected by NECTAC as follow-up to Major Individualized TA and Long-Term Systems Change Initiatives showed similar results. Ninety-five percent (95%) of Major Individualized TA and 97% of Systems Change Initiatives resulted in changes in state systems, as reported by key contact(s) in the state. Some examples of client feedback related to state level changes as a result of NECTAC TA:

"NECTAC was able to help us assess our general supervision system so that we have the ability to timely identify non-compliance policies that needed clarification for personnel, or develop targeted trainings, and ultimately implement changes to practices to achieve improvement."

"[We are] bringing key folks with decision making capacity together to problem solve and set up strategies to support early childhood transition. Commitments and implementation have begun in the area of data sharing and finalizing a state level memorandum of understanding."

"Information was gained at the conference that definitely helped us in completing our APR in February. We've also used information from the conference to aid us in redesigning our TA system to local early intervention programs."

Local System Level Changes

Ninety-one percent (91%) of external evaluation respondents agreed or strongly agreed that their local level infrastructure had been improved because of the services and/or products received from NECTAC. States reported changes in these areas:

- Guidance (72%);
- Policies and procedures (50%);
- Inter-agency relationships (33%); and
- General supervision/monitoring (31%)

Data collected by NECTAC as follow-up to Major Individualized TA and Long-Term Systems Change initiatives had similar results. Ninety-eight percent (98%) of Major Individualized TA

and 87% of Systems Change Initiatives resulted in changes in local systems, as reported by key contact(s) in the state. The following are examples of client feedback related to local systems changes:

“We were shown how to gather our data ahead of time; how to develop protocols; how to ‘drill down’ for the root cause or systemic causes of non-compliance and how to work with the provider in setting up procedures.”

“Local lead agency contracts continue to be evaluated and amended to better reflect their responsibility to provide general supervision and monitoring.”

“[We have] stronger connections between early childhood special education and community based early childhood providers such as child care and Head Start through cross-sector trainings and conferences.”

Practice Level Changes

Ninety percent (90%) of external evaluation respondents agreed or strongly agreed that practices at the local level had been improved because of the services and/or products received from NECTAC. States reported changes in the areas of:

- Data collection and monitoring participation (60%);
- Direct service or teaching practices (51%);
- Screening and/or assessment practices (37%); and
- IFSP/IEP development (33%)

The follow up data from Major Individualized TA and Long-Term Systems Change initiatives yielded somewhat broader results because three years of data were analyzed. Seventy-seven percent (77%) of Major Individualized TA and 100% of Systems Change Initiatives resulted in changes in practices that had impacts for children and families, as reported by key contact(s) in the state.

Reported Impacts of NECTAC TA			
TYPE OF IMPACTS	% of State Programs (External Evaluation)	% of Major TA	% of Systems Change Initiatives
State System	91%	95%	97%
Local System	91%	98%	87%
Practice Changes	90%	77%	100%

Examples of client feedback related to practice level changes:

“We have seen improvements in the capacity of staff in centers to develop and sustain quality inclusive programming and we even developed a Mentoring Program for Directors in order that they could develop more leadership in inclusion skills.”

“We definitely are using more family input as to functional skills, generalization of skills, etc. I think previously we focused primarily on scores and not so much on the functionality.”

“[I] used Cara’s Kit with providers to help them problem solve challenges in the classroom. One center is now building more on child interests to assist with helping children become more engaged with activities.”

“Family reported data showed that there was an increase in the family’s ability to effectively communicate their child’s needs to others and their ability to help their child develop and learn from the previous period to the last report period.”

CONCLUSIONS

State Part C and Section 619 programs seek and receive TA from NECTAC on a regular basis in order to gain support in their implementation of IDEA. Overall, NECTAC TA is reported as high quality and relevant, and participants are able to use what they gain from the TA to make improvements to their systems for serving young children with disabilities and their families. Systems change initiatives have had the greatest reported impacts, as they are comprehensive, ongoing efforts designed to address state and local infrastructure, personnel development, and provider practices.

Thank you and keep the feedback coming!

NECTAC appreciates all the time and thoughtful answers our clients contributed to our evaluation. Client feedback is used regularly to improve our knowledge and TA services.

For more information about the work of The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, please visit our website at <http://www.nectac.org>