Background

"Early Intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities or at risk represent an investment in resources, in that these services reduce the ultimate costs to our society, by minimizing the need for special education and related services in later school years and by minimizing the likelihood or institutionalization. These services also maximize the ability of families to better provide for the special needs of their child.

"Early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities maximize the potential to live independently, and exercise the full rights of citizenship."

- Title 14, Government Code Section 95001(a)(2)

The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Education Programs (OSEP) makes supplemental funding available to provide early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families through Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA). In California, these services are provided pursuant to the California Early Intervention Services Act (Title 14, Government Code Sections 95000 through 95029). OSEP monitors states and their lead agencies, which is the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) in California. For DDS, OSEP looks for Part C requirements providing the strongest links to improved results for infants and toddlers with disabilities, and their families. Improved results for families include:

1) *Effective general supervision of the implementation of Part C;*
2) *All infants and toddlers with developmental delays, disabilities, and/or risk conditions are identified, evaluated, and referred for services;*
3) *Outcomes for infants and toddlers and their families are accomplished through family-centered supports and systems of services;*
4) *Eligible infants and toddlers and their families receive early intervention services in natural environments; and*
5) *Transition planning results in needed supports and services.*

Early Start Program Description

Early Start services are provided to infants and toddlers from birth to 36 months of age who have a developmental delay, an established risk condition, or are at high risk for a developmental disability. In addition to Early Start programs, DDS services, such as genetic screening, may be available to families who are at risk of giving birth to an infant with developmental disabilities.

Between September 1, 2000 and August 31, 2001, the California regional centers provided early start services to 31,585 children and their families. Services are based on an assessment of each child's developmental needs. The display on the next page identifies many early intervention services.

Early Start Program Description

EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES:

Assistive technology
Audiology
Family training, counseling/ home visits
Health Services
Medical Services for diagnostic
Nursing Services
Nutrition Services
Occupational therapy
Physical therapy
Psychological services
Respite services
Service coordination (case management)
Social work services
Special instruction
Speech and language services
Transportation and related costs
Vision services

This survey looks at the Early Start program and family perceptions about how the program meets family needs. In total, 1,706 families participated in this effort.

Purpose and Objectives

The primary purpose of this satisfaction survey was to collect and analyze data on the program not routinely or previously available. The survey and analyses establishes how well the program is performing in the following areas:

1) ***Communication with families**:* Is information given to families in a way that is understandable and consistent with statutory and regulatory requirements? Is information communicated in the family's language of choice?
2) ***Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP)**:* Do families have an opportunity to discuss concerns and priorities during the IFSP process? Further, does the IFSP contain goals that respond to family concerns and priorities?
3) ***Service coordination:*** Does the service coordinator facilitate the accomplishment of outcomes identified in the IFSP? Are services monitored and issues addressed?
4) ***Service delivery**:* Are families, infants, and toddlers receiving the services they need?
5) ***Quality, timeliness and quantity of services**:* Are quality services being delivered? Are services delivered in a timely fashion? Are sufficient services being delivered?
6) ***Transition planning**:* Are families, infants and toddlers assisted in making a smooth transition from receiving Early Start services to the next appropriate phase of service delivery?