

# **IIP Evaluation Project Clay County Collaborative Final report**

*Final draft approved 8/12/08*

During spring 2008 members of the IIP work group of the Clay County Collaborative conducted a series of surveys to assess the effectiveness of the interagency process in our county.

## **I. Methodology**

We completed the following activities:

- Paper surveys were sent by Social Services case workers to parents of children who currently have IIPs and parents of children who no longer have IIPs. Approximately 37 surveys were sent out to parents of children who do have IIPs; two envelopes were returned because of incorrect addresses. Eleven surveys were returned. We don't know how many people received the survey for parents whose children used to have IIPs but we received six responses.
- An electronic survey was sent to school staff via the special education directors and county social workers through their supervisors. Rule 79 case managers completed a paper survey at a multi-agency meeting. Their responses were included in the results of the electronic surveys. We don't know how many people received the link to the online survey via email; we received 80 responses from professionals to the online and paper surveys. Seventy percent of respondents were school staff, 22.5% were community service providers and 7.5% were county social workers.
- Two evening focus groups were held for parents to probe more deeply into their answers. Two parents attended these focus groups.

## **II. Themes**

Four main themes became clear in the results of the above activities:

1. Respondents perceive that the success of teams depends on two factors: parent involvement and the commitment of professionals. The following survey response is typical: "What really matters is that all team members come together and can work together."
2. Several professionals observed that the IIP encourages parent involvement. This observation is confirmed by results in the parent survey – that parents feel that their ideas are heard at IIP meetings.
3. A challenge that was mentioned numerous times by both parents and professionals was feeling too rushed at meetings to adequately complete all portions of the IIP document.
4. The following aspects of the paperwork required for a IIP also received numerous comments:
  - a. Duplication – that agencies still use their own plans in addition to the IIP
  - b. Access to the document
  - c. Relevant data is not contributed to the document in a consistently timely manner

## **III. Results**

The surveys were designed so that parents and professionals were asked to respond to the same questions when at all possible so that we could compare their perceptions of various aspects of

the interagency meeting process and the IIP document. They were asked to respond to each statement using a scale of 1 – 5 with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree.” Results, listed below, show a high level of agreement on many parts of the process/plan:

Question	Parents			Professionals		
	5	4	<b>total 4&amp;5</b>	5	4	<b>total 4&amp;5</b>
1. I was/parents were asked to share my parent page at the beginning of the team meeting	27.27%	18.18%	<b>45.45%</b>	23.90%	34.30%	<b>58.20%</b>
2. I feel that the team listened to my ideas.	45.45%	36.36%	<b>81.82%</b>	22.70%	54.50%	<b>77.20%</b>
3. The plan considered the needs of my/the child.	36.36%	45.45%	<b>81.82%</b>	34.30%	53.70%	<b>88.00%</b>
4. My/the child's goals from the family page were included in the process and planning.	30.00%	40.00%	<b>70.00%</b>	22.40%	38.80%	<b>61.20%</b>
5. My/the child's strengths were used in developing the plan.	30.00%	50.00%	<b>80.00%</b>	28.40%	49.30%	<b>77.70%</b>
6. My/the child's IIP includes global goals.	22.22%	33.33%	<b>55.56%</b>	15.40%	44.60%	<b>60.00%</b>
7. I feel I am knowledgeable about IIP	10.00%	60.00%	<b>70.00%</b>	10.40%	43.30%	<b>53.70%</b>

Perhaps it is not surprising that parents whose children no longer had IIPs had strikingly different responses to many of the same questions:

Question	<b>total</b>		
	5	4	<b>4&amp;5</b>
1. I was asked to share my parent page at the beginning of the team meeting	33.33%	0.00%	<b>33.33%</b>
2. I feel that the team listened to my ideas.	0.00%	16.67%	<b>16.67%</b>
3. The plan considered the needs of my child.	0.00%	83.33%	<b>83.33%</b>
4. My child's strengths were used in developing the plan.	0.00%	16.67%	<b>16.67%</b>
5. My child's IIP includes global goals.	0.00%	16.67%	<b>16.67%</b>

Respondents were also asked a series of open-ended questions to elicit more information about the interagency process and IIP planning document. The authors of this report have chosen to include a few answers to each to illustrate the main ideas brought forth in the responses instead of including all responses. A collection of all responses is available upon request.

1. *Do you think the IIP is effective in coordinating services at home, in the community and at school to build on your child's strengths? Why or why not?*

*Comments from parents:*

- As a whole, yes – but I believe that the school district fights the process all the way.
- Yes but it depends on the team and how informed the parents are/staff are.
- Yes, creates consistency and looks at the overall skills of the individual.
- Not exactly. Not everyone from the team is there or involved in developing the plan.

*Comments from professionals:*

- It does help with coordinating, but my experience has been that each agency still conducts their own meetings and paperwork outside of the IIP meeting.
- I think it can be - depends on the strength and commitment to the process by the family. My team is successful due to the parents involvement.
- Yes, I believe it has potential to be effective. How the meeting is facilitated has a lot to do with the effectiveness of the IIP. But I do think that the students' strengths are kept in mind.
- I believe that there is just as much collaboration across environments with a normal IEP as there is with a IIP. It can also cause more friction between agencies because of the frustrations that can develop in trying to coordinate all of the parts in a timely manner, and meet state-mandated deadlines.

2. *Based on your experience, does using the IIP make a difference in your/the child's progress? If so, please explain.*

*Comments from parents:*

- Not sure – however it does work well to keep all involved on the same page and push toward working together.
- Yes, he's been understanding more on what's expected of him. A little more work needs to be done with his communication.
- I wouldn't say I have seen significant advantages

*Comments from professionals:*

- If the goals are coordinated and global than it appears to make a difference. If they aren't, everyone is approaching the situation in their own way which does not always mean progress.
- I don't think the plan itself changes anything. What really matters is that all team members come together and can work together. Sometimes that doesn't happen even with a IIP.
- Behavior wise it does. We are more consistent.

3. *Please describe a success story or two that illustrates how the IIP has made a difference!*

*Comments from parents:*

- We have a home therapy program going for our child as well as the school program. With the IIP both home and school work together on our son's needs. This had been successful in academic as well as behavioral ways. Our son has finally had success with telling time and counting money due to both teams working together.
- Having the agency there did prove once that we had a program for behaviors that was useful for the school. Having special services there kept a focus on reality vs. ideals.

*Comments from professionals:*

- I've had several children. One stands out, a child with down's syndrome, cerebral palsy and other needs received services from CCRI and the schools. We were able to combine objectives and share ideas regularly. The school staff would go to the home and vice versa to make sure we were all consistent in our approaches. The social worker was very involved in helping the family access many services. What a great collaboration. I felt the child progressed much more rapidly than if each agency did their own thing.

4. *What elements of the IIP process (or document) do you think work well?*

*Comments from parents:*

:

- Shared goals/shared meetings
- Looking beyond school goals.

*Comments from professionals – grouped into the main themes that became apparent in the responses:*

- Parent page:
  - I like the parent piece and having a space to include it on the IIP
  - The parent page gives nice information to the school, more information than a typical IEP would encompass. Also, it is nice to know what the outside agencies are working on, and if we are reinforcing each others' work or not.
- Working together/team process:
  - It informs all parties involved and keeps everyone on the same page.
  - Nothing that doesn't already work in the regular IEP process.
- Goals/objectives
- One document:
  - The thought of everyone working together on the same piece of paper is a good idea, but typically doesn't work out that way.
  - Having everything in the same document (if done). Including more information from the parents –

A similar question was posed to parents whose children no longer have IIPs:  
*What did you like about the IIP plan and process?* Comments included collaboration, coordination, and perceived family-friendliness. One parent also wrote the following: “The first year it gave me new things to look at regarding my child with some new issues to work into school settings.”

5. *What elements of the IIP process (or document) pose challenges to your child's/the team?*

*Comments from parents:*

- Meetings are not long enough to cover everything or allow time for all involved.
- They don't want to hear the family part as it doesn't pertain to curriculum. The whole family/student consideration section.
- Items are written down but not always followed.

*Comments from professionals – grouped into the main themes that became apparent in the responses:*

- Time for meetings:
  - time for meetings. time for discussion on global goals.
- Accountability:
  - Having all agencies be equal and responsible partners for the document.
- Paperwork:
  - More people doing paperwork - more confusing and getting people to do their part on time especially if other agencies involved is frustrating.

A similar question was posed to parents whose children no longer have IIPs:  
*What did you dislike about the IIP plan and process?* Several people mentioned feeling rushed at meetings and included other topics:

- The length of time to complete the back and forth between people; the system itself was always not working correctly.

- Rushed meetings, no planning together, needed meeting with provider after IIP meeting when thought it should be together

6. *Describe the atmosphere of collaboration among team members (parents, school personnel, social worker and other service providers).*

*Comments from parents:*

- As parents we are very involved and knowledgeable about the process so I think this increases the level of collaboration.
- The atmosphere is very cooperative and open unless parent is requesting access to IIP program. Then people get defensive. It think IIP is a good idea but I have a community plan at school, one at the county, one at his behavior service provider and one with our family therapist. That's a lot of plans. How can one person try to keep this all straight and working?

*Most comments from parents were positive, but we wish to acknowledge a negative comment which mentions multiple issues:*

- I would have to say there is none. Each area has their own section to do and evaluate and none of it seems to connect with anyone else. There is never enough time allotted so the facilitators change the subject no matter what. There doesn't seem to be any input from stream line teachers since coming to middle school.

*Comments from professionals:*

- Can sometimes be intimidating for school staff to work with other agencies, but for the most part the atmosphere has been friendly.
- I think the school is still seen as the primary member of the team. However, some teachers are very good at collaborating with everyone. In those cases, though, the process can take a lot of time and work. For one IIP I'm involved in, we had to meet 2-3 times for a couple of hours to get everything worked out. It would not be possible to do that for every child that I work with who is on a IIP.
- I usually feel I have a good working relationship between myself and parents. This is across the board with all my students whether they are on an IEP or a IIP. I have also had great working with many people working with outside agencies. I can't say the relationships have been any better with the IIP teams.
- Tolerant, hassled, occasionally frustrated. To be honest, it seems like a duplication of all the paper work each agency already does. It even tends to build a bit of resentment toward the parent who requested it, but has little extra work to do for it. I honestly see no benefit in it at all.
- The majority of the time the collaboration is positive and it provides an opportunity to really discuss your child's needs in a comprehensive way. It encourages a lot of parent involvement.
- It depends on the family and agency people that are on the team. Some teams work better together than others.
- I feel that I have a good relationship between most of the social workers, probation officers and Rule 79 case managers that I work with. I feel that we are able to work together for the best interest of the child given the constraints of the various programs.

Additional questions were asked at the parent forums. Among them, the following, which touch on issues mentioned above:

*Are you comfortable with a school staff person facilitating your IIP meetings?*

- Yes but would prefer it be a neutral person without vested interest in getting paperwork completed; having meetings at school makes outside providers not feel equal partners – feel like school-driven process rather than collaborative.

*Do you see this as a strength-based process?*

- Child's strengths are listed in plan so sometimes are discussed at meetings but strengths don't seem to be used to further build skills that are incorporated in goals.
- Not strength-based (e.g. when child was in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, they discovered that child was very strong in computer yet the computer has been used very little at school. Why? School has a computer program but child can't keep up – perhaps school personnel don't think they can modify it.)

#### **IV. Recommendations**

Based on the information gained from the surveys, the authors of this report, make the following recommendations to the Clay County Collaborative's IIP work group for their discussion and further action:

1. All team members should know the process and hold each other responsible for following it.
  - a. Meeting length:
    - i. Ensure that annual IIP meeting is scheduled for a reasonable length of time so that the process may be successfully completed.
  - b. Meeting agenda:
    - i. Make enough copies of the agenda so that everyone attending the meeting has a copy.
    - ii. Include the definition of IIP at the top of the agenda (something like "IIP is a coordinated, interagency plan to address the needs of a child that utilizes the child's strengths.")
    - iii. Add the following questions to the agenda:
      1. Does the plan address the needs of the child listed on the family page and core description?
      2. Does the plan utilize the strengths of the child?
  - c. Core description:
    - i. Recognizing that it is time-consuming to go through it every year, perhaps a quick update highlighting changes could be made every other year instead of going through all sections every year.
  - d. Follow-through/accountability:
    - i. Devise a plan for team members to hold each other responsible for carrying out the work toward the goals, including, for example, how to share quarterly or semi-annual updates on progress from outside agencies with the entire IIP team. A couple of suggestions:
      1. Children with IIP could be referred to wraparound so that the team could track progress on goals.
      2. A semi-annual IIP meeting could be scheduled according to the county's timeline in lieu of a parent-teacher conference. School case manager could represent the school (not all school people would have to attend).
2. Increase the commitment to interagency work on behalf of children with special needs by:

- a. Ensuring that all staff (school, community service providers, county) and parents are trained in the interagency process and use of the IIP planning document.
- b. Conducting training sessions on a regular basis.
- c. Revising training materials to include the following components gleaned from parent forums and surveys returned by professionals:
  - o Components and what it means
  - o Who's responsible for each
  - o Basics about global goals – how to understand what teacher writes;
  - o Integration of goals/objectives across agencies and home.
  - o Advocacy (e.g. school tried to schedule only 60 minutes for meeting but parent put foot down and now meetings are 90 minutes)
  - o Agenda – parent never saw IIP agenda
  - o How to read IIP to see where responsibility lies
  - o Acknowledge that everyone is intimidated by everyone else on the time and then remind people to focus on the best interests of the child.
3. Increase the percentage of eligible children using IIP by \_\_\_% over the next year. We can figure out the number of eligible families by finding out how many children receive county services (not counting Rule 79 or PCA as these children would not necessarily have IEPs).
4. Survey parents and professionals again next year to see if any improvement have been made in these areas.

#### **V. For further consideration**

We did not address the following areas which were included in our original evaluation plan. In the coming months, the IIP work group will decide whether or not to address these in the next evaluation cycle in addition to implementing any or all of the above recommendations.

##### 1) Sample goals on IIPs (& IEPs?)

Goal: to discern whether goals on the plans are global goals (i.e. across domains)

Take samples by age group

- Preschool
- Elementary
- Middle school
- High school/transition

Timeline for completion: March/April

##### 2) Survey for parents whose children have IFSP.

#### **VI. Conclusion**

On behalf of the IIP work group, the authors of this report wish to thank the Minnesota Department of Education and MnSIC for inviting us to participate in this evaluation project. We are grateful to have had the chance to collect data in our area to help us further define and refine our interagency planning process. We hope our findings will be of use to others.

Respectfully submitted,

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*Please visit [www.claycountycollaborative.org](http://www.claycountycollaborative.org) to see the questionnaires, full results of surveys, updated interagency agreement, etc. Click on "Committees" then "IIP."*