

Augmentative and Alternative Communication in Educational Settings: An Assessment of Needs

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Objective:

The aim of the study is to describe utilization of resources and services by children with disabilities and their families. Falicia Beck, study team member, previously completed a project through her social work graduate school research titled: The Relationship of Parents' and Families' Socioeconomic Status to Services for Children with Disabilities. This was used as a foundation to extend the questions for this study, though we recruited a new set of participants. We are completing this project as part of the Iowa Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and Related Disabilities (ILEND) program curriculum. For the project we attempted to analyze if a specific diagnosis impacts the degree of utilization of available resources. For instance, are there certain diagnoses that have increased usage of resources as compared to others? This information was intended to help us identify if there are proactive measures that can be taken by providers to better assist children and families who have certain diagnoses. We did this by sending out an anonymous survey to adult parents and legal guardians of children (0-18 years) in Iowa with a wide variety of diagnoses. We then utilized the data gathered from the survey to analyze utilization of resources across diagnostic categories. After data was collected, we performed a sub analysis to see if utilization was low in some disability types in comparison to others, which would indicate a good starting point for future studies.

Method:

A survey was sent out to caretakers/parents of children with disabilities between the ages of 0-18 years old in Iowa. Recruitment for this survey included flyers posted in waiting rooms of the Centers for Disabilities and Development and on two Facebook groups. The survey was completely anonymous in Qualtrics. We completed a calculation of descriptive statistics of our sample to present this data.

Results/Conclusion:

Although there was a small sample size (n=26). The data was broken into four disability types: physical, intellectual, socioemotional, and behavioral. Additionally, the data was broken into three service utilization categories: 0-5 services, 6-10 services, and 11 and more services. Comparing these two data sets proved children with physical type disabilities did demonstrate a higher usage of services in comparison to children with socioemotional type disabilities. The physical type of disability had nine respondents and had the most responses (55.6%) within the 6-10 service utilization category. The intellectual type of disability had six respondents with the majority (66.7%) in the 0-5 service utilization category. The next disability category was the

socioemotional type with all (100%) three respondents within the 0-5 service utilization category. Lastly, the behavioral type of disability had four respondents with most (75%) within the 0-5 service utilization category. Since this was an exploratory study, this small data set can help guide future research at a much larger scale.

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