

Jung, L. A. (2002). *Recommended practices in natural environments: A search for evidence in individualized family service plans*. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Auburn University.

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

With the 1997 revisions of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), there has been increased emphasis on providing early intervention services within a child's natural environment. Although the letter of the law is increasingly implemented, components of the underlying recommended practice, especially family-centered philosophy, have not been fully implemented (Harbin et al., 1998). The purpose of this study was to quantify indicators of family-centered philosophy in Individualized Family

Service Plans (IFSPs) and determine the extent to which variance in these indicators was predicted by characteristics of service coordinators. Indicators of family-centered philosophy were (a) required components are present, (b) lay language is used, (c) active voice verb tense is used, (d) assessment results emphasize positiveness, (e) outcomes are necessary, (f) outcome statements are specific, (g) outcomes are context appropriate, (h) methods match outcomes, (i) services are in natural locations, (j) families are integrated, (k) evaluation results are functional, (l) goals match concerns, and (m) concerns match outcomes. Service coordinator characteristics were (a) months of experience, (b) college major (education, special education, or non-education), (c) level of degree (associates, bachelors, masters, Ed. S. or Ph. D.), (d) nature of first employment in early intervention (primarily center-based or community-based), (e) attendance at Journey II training, and (f) hours spent weekly with each family.

One hundred and twenty IFSPs were rated on 13 indicators of family-centered philosophy using the IFSP Rating Scale. The IFSPs rated highest on inclusion in natural environments, functional outcomes, functional Present Level of Development, outcomes having concerns, and having outcomes. The lowest ratings were on the indicator that addressed how procedures were embedded in daily routines. Each of the independent variables accounted for a significant amount of variation in at least

one of these indicators. Attendance at Journey II training accounted for a significant amount of the variance in ten of the twelve indicators. Implications for training and further research are discussed.