

Ohio Phase III, Year 4 SSIP Summary

Background – About the SSIP

The SSIP is a comprehensive, ambitious, yet achievable, multi-year plan for improving the results for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Ohio has completed and submitted work for Phases I and II, as well as all four years of Phase III. Components of each of the three phases are listed below.

Phase I – Analysis (FFY13/SFY14)

- Data analysis
- Analysis of state infrastructure to support improvement and build capacity
- State-identified measurable result (SIMR)
- Selection of coherent improvement strategies
- Theory of Action

Phase II – Planning (FFY14/SFY15)

- Infrastructure development
- Supports for programs in implementing evidence-based practices
- Evaluation

Phase III – Implementation and Evaluation (FFY15/SFY16 through FFY18/SFY19)

- Implementation of activities and steps needed to achieve outcomes
- Analysis of data related to outcomes to determine progress

Ohio's SIMR

Substantially increase the rate of growth in the percent of infants and toddlers with IFSPs who demonstrate improved acquisition and use of knowledge and skills

Ohio's Improvement Strategies

Through extensive data and infrastructure analyses in Phase I and significant stakeholder feedback in Phase II, several common themes regarding needed changes within Ohio's EI system emerged. Ohio chose three broad improvement strategy areas for its SSIP work to encompass these themes:

- (I)** Increase the quality of child and family assessments to develop meaningful initial and exit COS statements
- (II)** Improve the quality of IFSP outcomes to address family priorities related to child's acquisition and use of knowledge and skills
- (III)** Increase access to and delivery of needed evidence-based services

Stakeholder Involvement

Stakeholders have been heavily involved in and provided meaningful feedback about Ohio's SSIP work via topic-specific work groups, EI Advisory Council and stakeholder group meetings, targeted pilot initiatives, the bi-weekly EI program updates, and the EI website. Over the next year, which will serve as an extension of the current SSIP, as well as through the next SSIP cycle, DODD will keep the EI field informed about progress, continue to encourage stakeholder involvement, and incorporate stakeholder feedback in ongoing implementation.

Activities to Achieve Intermediate Outcomes

Ohio continued implementing numerous activities over the past year, making further systemic changes in various infrastructure areas, achieving intermediate outcomes, and progressing in the state's SIMR area. The state remained focused on increasing knowledge and improving practice at the local level and improving equity of access to EI services across the state. Specifically, DODD:

- Revised the assessment section of the prescribed IFSP form to better incorporate the COS into the assessment process; created and distributed a standalone exit COS form; added new COS reports to the Early Intervention Data System (EIDS); and provided individualized support around the COS process through TA plans
- Continued to evaluate the quality of IFSP outcomes and ensure local programs have easy access to IFSP outcomes via a report in the data system
- Expanded automatic EI eligibility to children with a diagnosis of neonatal abstinence syndrome (NAS) and elevated blood lead levels
- Received a significant increase in state funds; contracted with additional Payor of Last Resort (POLR) providers; and collaborated with providers and local programs to increase access to evidence-based EI services via technology

Ongoing Data Related to Intermediate Outcomes

Ohio's primary evaluation activities over the past year were focused on data analyses related to intermediate outcomes. These data, which will continue to be collected to determine ongoing progress, included the following:

- **Functional Assessment data** gathered via ongoing interactions with local programs, using the same items as were included in the functional assessment section of the E&A Process Review
- **IFSP outcomes** added to IFSPs between January and June 2019, which were rated using the ECTA six-step criteria
- **EI Service Provider data** collected via surveys to EI Contract Managers and County Boards of Developmental Disabilities
- **Ohio's annual Family Questionnaire**, which included questions to measure families' understanding of and ability to support their child's strengths, needs, and functioning related to acquisition and use of knowledge and skills

Related Projects and Initiatives

In addition to completing steps and activities to achieve the intended SSIP outcomes, Ohio began or continued several other statewide initiatives and projects that impacted at least one improvement strategy area, as described subsequently.

- DODD implemented new EI rules and forms in July 2019. To support the state's EI field in understanding and carrying out these new rules and forms, DODD created a variety of guidance documents and offered numerous TA and training opportunities.
- DODD piloted and ultimately implemented a Principles of Service Coordinator Course (POSC) along with a Service Coordinator Skills Inventory.
- DODD offered other new and continuing professional development opportunities including a variety of webinars, resources, and trainings around evaluating, assessing, and serving children with diagnoses of NAS and elevated blood lead levels.

How Ohio's EI System Has Changed

Over the past six years, Ohio's EI program has undergone significant systemic changes, both within its SSIP work and more broadly. Prior to the start of this SSIP cycle, Ohio had just established a position statement for EI after several years of work with stakeholders. Now, the state has made substantial progress in embedding recommendations included in the EI position statement in all infrastructure areas, including implementation of evidence-based practices. As DODD has worked to effect systemic change, the state's EI program has also experienced considerable growth. The number of children referred to EI in Ohio annually increased 30% over the past six years and the number of children served annually increased by nearly 15% in this timeframe.

During this SSIP cycle, collaborating with a wide array of EI stakeholders every step of the way, Ohio

- Successfully transitioned its EI lead agency from ODH to DODD;
- Experienced leadership and other personnel changes at the agency and state level;
- Revised EI program rules in January 2015 and July 2019, including the implementation of all new EI forms with the July 2019 rules;
- Made substantial changes to the state's COS process;
- Created and continuously added to and improved an EI website;
- Transitioned from a locally-run central intake and referral system to a statewide system with a single vendor; and
- Received a historic budget increase for EI.

While all of this was taking place, Ohio also

- Implemented a System of Payments rule and began to monitor the implementation of this rule;
- Made numerous changes to the state's data system in order to ensure consistency with the state's rules as well as add functionality and multiple reports;
- Created and made available an abundance of TA and professional development opportunities; and
- Revamped its monitoring processes and standards.

Through these system changes as well as the steps and activities implemented to achieve the state's short-term, intermediate, and long-term outcomes in each improvement strategy area, DODD made improvements at the state, local program, and family levels. DODD observed a continually increased amount of buy in from local programs and families in regard to the implementation of evidence-based practices over the years, helping to make all of the other improvements possible.

During this SSIP cycle, local programs made improvements in their assessment processes, leading to the development of better, more individualized and contextualized IFSP outcomes. While the percentages for the child outcomes indicators, including Ohio's SIMR, remained relatively stable, the state is confident that the changes made to the COS process along with the development of several professional development opportunities and resources around the COS have resulted in increased data quality and that observed trends in COS data will be more meaningful going forward. Through local partnerships, newly implemented contracts, greater availability of services via technology, and increased access to POLR funding through the state's SOP process, DODD has helped to ensure more equitable access to EI services statewide. Most importantly, as indicated in responses to the state's annual family questionnaire, Ohio's EI families now have a better understanding of their children's strengths, needs, and functioning and feel more competent and confident in their ability to support their children's growth in regard to acquiring and using knowledge and skills. This will undoubtedly contribute to continued improvement in child and family outcomes going forward.