

MCHB Combating Autism Act Initiative Evaluation

Client: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration

Overview

For this 3-year project, Insight designed and implemented an evaluation of the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Maternal and Child Health Bureau's (MCHB) Combating Autism Act Initiative (CAAI). The CAAI aimed to enable all children to reach their full potential by developing a system of services that included screening children early for possible autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities (DDs); conducting early, interdisciplinary evaluations to confirm or rule out ASD and other DDs; and if a diagnosis was confirmed, providing evidence-based, early interventions. Under the CAAI, MCHB awarded grants for training, research, and state demonstration programs to improve systems of services for children with ASD and other DDs.

The evaluation had four goals: (1) determine whether grantee activities were accomplishing MCHB's intended goals and objectives for the CAAI; (2) identify problems or barriers that surfaced

during implementation of the grants and how they were resolved; (3) identify gaps between the grantees' activities and the goals of the initiative; and (4) measure the program's outputs, outcomes, and resultant impacts. Insight designed a mixed-methods data collection plan that included document reviews, semistructured interviews, web-based questionnaires, and discussion groups with grantees. Insight developed the research questions, logic models, and data collection instruments based on review of the grantees' grant applications and iterative discussion groups to identify specific program goals and objectives and alignment of those goals and objectives with the CAAI.

In addition to measuring the grantees' progress in meeting the goals of the CAAI, the results of the evaluation assessed the success of MCHB in addressing the nation's growing need to improve the physical, behavioral, mental, social, and cognitive health and well-being of children and adolescents with ASD and other DDs. The study also contributed to the Report to Congress by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as mandated under the Combating Autism Act.

Products

- *Report to Congress on Activities Related to Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities: FY 2006–FY 2009*, available at <http://iacc.hhs.gov/reports/reports-to-congress/FY2006-2009/index.shtml>
- Final evaluation report for each of the funded grant programs

