

MCHB Combating Autism Initiative Evaluation

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

Project Overview

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



Insight had 4 main goals for this evaluation: 1) determine whether grantee activities are accomplishing MCHB's intended goals and objectives for the CAAI; 2) identify problems or barriers that surfaced during implementation of the grants and how these 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 includes document reviews; in-depth, semi-structured interviews; Web-based questionnaires; and discussion groups with grantees. The research questions, logic models, and data collection instruments were developed based on Insight's review of the grantees' grant applications and iterative discussion groups that aimed to identify specific program goals and objectives and the 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 this evaluation assessed the success of MCHB in addressing the Nation's growing need to improve the physical, behavioral, mental, and social and/or cognitive health and well-being of children and adolescents with ASD and other DD. The results from this evaluation study also contributed to the Report to Congress by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), as mandated under the Combating Autism Act (CAA).

Core Activities

Program Evaluation; Literature Reviews and Environmental Scans; Survey Design and Implementation; Qualitative Research; Secondary Data Analysis; Performance Measurement and Monitoring; Policy Analysis and Assessment; Report Development and Presentation

Products

- The "Report to Congress on Activities Related to Autism Spectrum Disorders and Other Developmental Disabilities Under the Combating Autism Act of 2006 (FY 2006–FY 2009)" (January 2011) is available at <http://iacc.hhs.gov/reports/reports-to-congress/FY2006-2009/index.shtml>.
- Final evaluation reports for each of the 4 funded grant programs and the final Report to Congress were released in 2012.