Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Early Intervention Services Use Among Children with Developmental Disabilities

*To access the commentary, click **here**.*

Early Intervention (EI) is a federally-funded program that provides therapies for children with developmental delays. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown restrictions in Philadelphia in 2020, these services made a rapid change to virtual service delivery. We sought to explore the experiences of families in accessing online therapy. We recruited families to participate in a mixed methods study in order to evaluate changes in the initiation and use of EI services pre- and post-pandemic lockdown. Of the 94 who completed surveys, 27 families were purposively sampled for semi-structured telephonic interviews to identify their perceptions of program assistance and needs. Themes developed from these interviews included participant satisfaction with the communication of program changes and concerns related to the effectiveness of virtual EI services. This information can be used in plans for transitioning to hybrid therapy as well as for future pandemics requiring a return to fully virtual services.

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