

Support Service Decision Making for Students With Multiple Service Needs: Evaluative Data

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This quasi-experimental (pretest/posttest) study explored the use of (Vermont Interdependent Services Team Approach) (VISTA) with 11 educational teams serving students with multiple disabilities. Information about VISTA, a process to facilitate consensus decision making about support services for a time made

augment instruction provided by general and special educators. Support service decision-making issues have potential impact on the appropriateness and quality of a student's education and also raise important fiscal issues in an era when all social services are being

to the educational program, frequency of service, and This updated version has undergone review by a group

mode of provision (e.g., direct, consultation). In many cases these decisions are made unilaterally by profes-

of experts from 12 national organizations representing a variety of related service disciplines, special educa-

sionals and then communicated to other team members (Giangreco, 1990; Giangreco et al., 1991). Profes-

tors, parent and consumer groups, and general educators (Giangreco, Edelman, Luiselli, & MacFarland,

the team is encouraged to recommend services that are of the highest quality and most cost-effective.

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Table 2
Data Collection During the 1994-1995 School Year

Site	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.	Feb.	Mar.	Apr.	May			June	
1	FIB			SS				FIC	F2	Pre	F3	Post
2		FIB		SS				FIC	F2	Pre	F3	Post
3		FIB		SS				FIC	F2	Pre	F3	Post

reference to each listed support service. They were asked to write a plus (+) if they were "at least 80% confident that the support is needed," a minus (-) if they were "at least 80% confident that the support is not needed," or a question mark (?) if they were "not sure, less than 80% confident in either direction." For

ing meant team members had reached 100% agreement regarding which support services were needed and not needed in relation to each program-at-a-glance entry.

Posttest (Part 1) responses were used to establish a *post-VISTA reliability score* for each participant using the same formula as *pre-VISTA reliability scores*. This

Results

Pre-VISTA reliability scores averaged 61.61% (SD = 15.81), demonstrating that team members did not

specialized services to support 60% to 70% of the student's educational program, team averages dropped to about 40%.

A pretest/posttest comparison of the use of direct

As shown in Table 3, the pretest/posttest variables (Part 2) addressing study participants' perceptions of

missing data for variables 1 through 6. Variable 7 had more missing data during both pretest and posttest and

various service provision decision-making issues before and after use of VISTA are presented in descending order based on the magnitude of t values. Pretest mean scores ranging from 5.05 to 6.79 on a 10-point scale and standard deviations ranging from 2.05 to 2.62 depict generally low levels of confidence and wide variation among team members regarding their existing related services decision-making practices prior to VISTA use. The one notable exception to this was the

consequently lower t values than the other variables despite a similar pretest/posttest mean differences. Comments written on the data collection forms explained two reasons for the missing data. First, three of the situations were nontraditional (e.g., integrated preschool taught by a special educator; high school integrated community-based learning). Second, in two additional cases, the general education teacher was not physically present at the VISTA meeting or home

data collected about variable 8, "Our support service decision making involved the family." The higher

team members felt it inappropriate to comment on their level of involvement in the decision-making process.

was a big help in role clarification. The process helped us work together as a team." This sense of satisfaction extended to some team members who previously felt excluded as team members. As one paraprofessional

Future self-study procedures should be expanded to: (a) establish agreed upon team norms for preparation (e.g., ensure that everyone has read the same information and understands it); (b) establish opportuni-

first time that my opinion and input as a paraprofessional was respected and encouraged!"

This pattern of behavior was repeated during the

and provide each other with feedback or seek feedback from someone who is competent in the use of

narrowing of focus prompted by use of VISTA will continue to be narrowed further over time as the impact of support services is more closely evaluated. The fact that the frequency of service provision remained unchanged even though members consistently agreed

of paramount concern both in terms the quality and appropriateness of students' educational programs as well as the economic impact of resource utilization. Concurrent qualitative research (i.e., document review, observations, interviews) has been conducted

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