

Overview of the Part C Child Find Funnel Chart Tool

What Is the Funnel Tool?

The Child Find Funnel Chart tool is an Excel template for displaying data about infants and toddlers at each step of the Part C process, from referral through exit, for a set of infants and toddlers referred within a specified time span. State or local Part C programs may use the tool to generate a funnel chart that allows for easy visualization of the data. The guidance provided here includes considerations for analyzing the data in support of improvements to a child find system.

Why Is This Important?

The Funnel Chart Tool is intended for Part C staff with child find and related responsibilities. It is designed to

- identify and visually depict the percentage of children referred who proceed through the steps in the program from referral to exit;
- allow Part C staff to identify specific steps where unexpected numbers of children/families do not proceed to the next step in the process; and
- provide data that may help identify strategies to improve the degree to which infants and toddlers who need services receive them.

Showing the progression of a cohort of children through the program, the tool provides insight into the effectiveness and efficiency of the child find system. Comparing charts generated for subgroups based on characteristics like race/ethnicity, referral source, geographic region, and local program can also help Part C staff identify different patterns based on these characteristics, such as disproportionate dropouts. This enables Part C staff to identify opportunities for enhancing the effectiveness of the child find system, including the referral process, screening, and evaluation. **Improving the efficiency of the child find system is also important. The goal of child find is not to evaluate more children, but rather to find the children who are eligible for services.**

Background

Child find is a term used to describe activities states undertake to identify, locate, and evaluate all children who may need early intervention (EI) or special education services to ensure all children with disabilities receive the services they are entitled to under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Child find is federally mandated through the IDEA and is monitored in part by The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the U.S. Department of Education through use of state-reported performance indicators. States are required to report the statewide percentage of infants and toddlers with Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) relative to national data. States set annual targets and must provide explanations for performance levels that do not meet the target.

In addition to the number of children with IFSPs, data on the number of children referred as compared with the number evaluated and the number found eligible can help states evaluate the efficiency of their child find efforts. For example, if only a third of children referred are found eligible for Part C, the state may need to do some work with primary referral sources, such as physicians' offices, to help them better understand the eligibility criteria and reduce referrals of children who clearly will not meet the criteria.

One effort to systematically analyze data on how many children participate in and progress through each step of the referral, enrollment, and exit process is the IDEA Infant Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA) Birth Cohort Analysis. ITCA, in collaboration with the IDEA Data Center, has worked with states to measure Part C participation rates through the use of a birth cohort methodology—that is, by looking at a group of children based on the child’s year of birth. One aim of this birth cohort analysis is to present an alternative approach to analyzing participation rates in comparison to a single- day, point-in-time count. The birth cohort analysis examines the number of children in a given birth year who over the course of the first 3 years of their life are referred, evaluated, found eligible, and provided services under Part C of IDEA; participation rates from the birth cohort analysis are significantly higher than those from a single- day, point-in-time count.

Further information about the birth cohort study can be found here:
ectacenter.org/~ppts/meetings/ecidea16/ITCAIDIOPresentation_07112016.pptx.

The Funnel Chart Tool focuses on children’s movement through the referral and enrollment process, using a **referral cohort** as the starting point. This is different from the birth cohort analysis, which focuses primarily on participation rates relative to the population of children born. A referral cohort is the total number of children referred to Part C in a given year (e.g., 2017) or time span (e.g., April 2017–March 2018). With this method, the state will not have complete data for the final step for the cohort until all children in the referral cohort turn 3. However, this method can provide valuable data for examining the effectiveness and efficiency of child find efforts, and the data on the initial steps can be examined before the children turn 3.

Key Steps to Completing the Child Find Funnel Chart Tool

The following are key steps in using the Child Find Funnel Chart Tool. Detailed instructions are below and also available on the **Instructions** tab of the workbook.

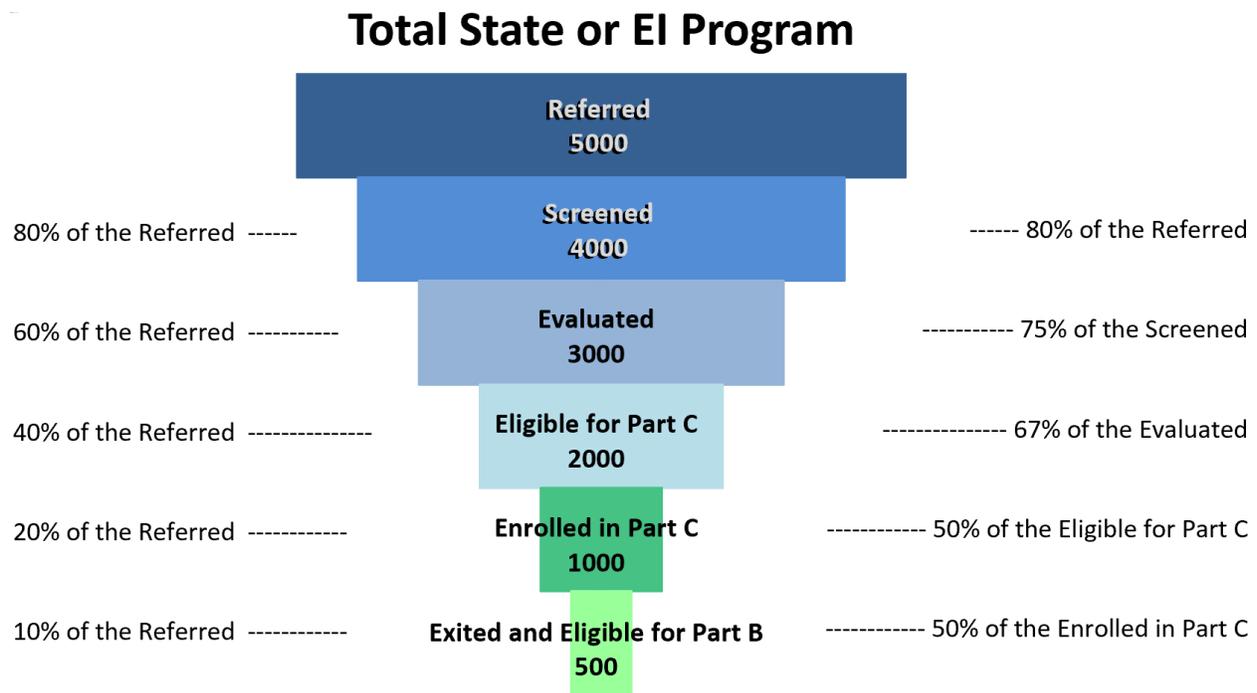
1. Enable Macros in the Excel file.
2. Define the time frame for the referral cohort (e.g., referred between January 1 and December 31, 2015).
3. Determine whether you will use statewide or local EI program data and the types of subgroups of interest, if any.
4. Identify the data elements of the funnel for which you have data for (e.g., referred, screened, evaluated for eligibility).
5. After entering data in the Enter Data worksheet, go to the Dashboard worksheet to select the data elements. Then generate (and print, if desired) the corresponding funnel charts.

Totals may be entered for statewide data or for a local EI program. In addition to statewide data, one or more subgroups may be identified and funnel charts generated for each. For example, to compare across multiple local programs, enter the data for each local program in the rows under Subgroup Name or Identifier, and use the Dashboard to generate funnel charts for each. Use the same process to compare data based on other subgroups, e.g., referral source or race/ethnicity.

Similarly, totals may be entered for a local EI program in the total row and additional subgroups identified for the local program.

Output from the Funnel Tool

Below is an example of a funnel chart generated by the tool using sample data.



- In addition to the counts, two sets of percentages are displayed to the left and right of the chart. The percentages to the left denote the counts as a percentage of all the referrals; the percentages to the right denote the counts as a percentage of the immediately preceding level. (These percentages are also displayed in a table not shown in the graphic.)
- The tool displays only one funnel chart at a time within Excel. However, you can view PDFs of the charts for each subgroup for which data are entered by using the buttons under the funnel chart on the Dashboard tab. Generating charts across subgroups allows you to make comparisons across demographics, referral sources, local programs, or other dimensions.
- The Funnel Chart Tool does not generate charts that track data over time for multiple referral cohorts; however, copies of the Excel file can be saved at different times and compared. Alternatively, you can enter data for multiple referral cohorts in one template, using the timespan of the referral cohorts as the group identifier (e.g., 2017 referral cohort, 2016 referral cohort, 2015 referral cohort).
- Statewide averages, percentages, and the like reflect only the data that were entered. Thus, the quality of the charts depends on the quality and completeness of the data for each of the data elements.

Considerations for Using the Funnel Chart Data

The Funnel Chart Tool can help states and local programs examine data related to such questions as:

- What percentage of referred children are eligible for Part C, and what percentage of eligible children are enrolled in services (e.g., have an IFSP)?

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- How do the data elements described above differ by subgroups, such as demographic characteristics, referral source, and local program?
 - What are the high-cost drivers related to child find activities (e.g., personnel, public outreach, evaluation, administration)?
 - How can the state maximize efficiency in the operation of child find related activities, (e.g., by changing policies and/or practices and reallocating resources)?

Assistance with Using the Funnel Tool

Staff from ECTA and DaSy are available to help states using the Funnel Chart Tool. This includes answering questions about how to work with the tool, assisting with identifying critical questions and/or analyzing data, developing a plan to improve child find efforts, as well as providing other kinds of assistance the state might need. If you would like assistance or have any questions about the tool, please contact DaSy or ECTA.

Related Resources

The resources below may be helpful for states and programs as you examine your child find data.

Identifying Meaningful Difference in Child Find Excel Tool <https://dasycenter.org/identify-meaningful-differences-in-child-find/>

Local Contributing Factor Tool: SPP/APR Results Indicators: C-2, C-4, C-5, C-6
http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/gensup/ContributingFactor-Results_Final_28Mar12.pdf

Critical Questions about Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education
<https://dasycenter.org/resources/critical-questions/>

Data Visualization Toolkit <https://dasycenter.org/data-visualization-toolkit-2/>

National Center of Deaf-Blindness Early Identification and Referral Self-Assessment Guide
<https://nationaldb.org/pages/show/early-identification-and-referral/early-identification-and-referral-self-assessment-guide>

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