



Michigan
Office of the Auditor General
REPORT SUMMARY

Performance Audit

Early On

Michigan Department of Education

Report Number:
313-2000-12

Released:
November 2013

Early On is Michigan's coordinated approach for providing early intervention (EI) services to children from birth to three years old who have disabilities and developmental delays and their families. Using funding from Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEA-Part C), the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) provides formula grants to intermediate school districts (ISDs) to identify, evaluate, and coordinate EI services across public and private agencies. About one-third of children eligible for IDEA-Part C funded EI services also qualify for EI services funded with State special education funds.

Audit Objective:

To assess MDE's efforts to ensure that ISDs comply with federal standards related to the delivery of Early On services.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that MDE's efforts to ensure that ISDs complied with federal standards related to the delivery of Early On services were not effective. We noted two material conditions (Findings 1 and 2) and three reportable conditions (Findings 3 through 5).

Material Conditions:

MDE did not ensure that ISDs complied with federal regulations by providing Early On-only children access to a comprehensive selection of EI services delivered by qualified personnel. As a result, ISDs were not in compliance with federal regulations and some children eligible for Early On and their families may not have received the most appropriate type and quantity of EI services for their conditions ([Finding 1](#)).

MDE did not ensure that ISDs developed and reviewed individualized family service plans (IFSPs) for children and their families qualifying for Early On-only services according to federal regulations. As a result,

ISDs were not in compliance with federal regulations for IFSPs and affected children and their families may not have received the most appropriate or complete EI services for their conditions ([Finding 2](#)).

Reportable Conditions:

MDE did not ensure that ISDs complied with federal regulations and offered a comprehensive array of EI services to Early On children and their families during the ISDs' summer recess. Discontinuing or significantly reducing the amount and type of EI services available during summer recess could result in children decompensating or missing critical opportunities to develop, or timely develop, new skills. In addition, this practice is not in compliance with IDEA-Part C regulations ([Finding 3](#)).

MDE did not ensure that ISDs complied with federal regulations and provided EI services to children in their natural environments or documented acceptable reasons for not doing so. Also, MDE did not ensure that ISDs accurately reported to MDE the primary location that the ISDs planned to deliver each service included on children's IFSPs. As a result, many children did not receive EI services in the setting that, according to

professional literature, promotes optimal childhood development and promotes and enhances children's behavioral and developmental competencies. In addition, MDE reported incorrect percentages of children primarily receiving EI services in the natural environment to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP), which could decrease OSEP's ability to effectively monitor EI service provision on a national level (Finding 4).

MDE did not ensure that ISDs complied with federal regulations and provided or timely provided required EI services. As a result, many children did not receive EI services as expeditiously as possible (Finding 5).

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Audit Objective:

To assess the effectiveness of MDE's efforts to ensure that eligible children are identified and evaluated for Early On services.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that MDE's efforts to ensure that eligible children were identified and evaluated for Early On services were moderately effective. We noted one reportable condition (Finding 6).

Reportable Condition:

MDE did not ensure that ISDs made sufficient efforts to publicize their EI programs and to identify, locate, and evaluate all children who were potentially eligible for EI services. As a

result, some ISDs may not have provided or timely provided EI services to eligible children who could have benefitted from receiving the services. This may have resulted in children having decreased long-term developmental and educational gains (Finding 6).

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Audit Objective:

To assess the effectiveness of MDE's efforts to ensure that ISDs meet Early On outcome targets.

Audit Conclusion:

We concluded that MDE's efforts to ensure that ISDs met Early On outcome targets were moderately effective. We noted one reportable condition (Finding 7).

Reportable Condition:

MDE did not ensure that ISDs provided MDE with comprehensive and accurate child outcome data. As a result, MDE was limited in its ability to accurately assess the effectiveness of individual ISDs' EI service delivery systems or reliably demonstrate the overall effectiveness of Early On (Finding 7).

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Agency Response:

Our audit report contains 7 findings and 8 corresponding recommendations. MDE's preliminary response indicates that it agrees with all of the recommendations.

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A copy of the full report can be obtained by calling 517.334.8050 or by visiting our Web site at: <http://audgen.michigan.gov>



Michigan Office of the Auditor General
201 N. Washington Square
Lansing, Michigan 48913

Thomas H. McTavish, C.P.A.
Auditor General

Scott M. Strong, C.P.A., C.I.A.
Deputy Auditor General