

## Sources of Information About Parent Appraisals of Child Behavior and Development

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This *Milemarkers* bibliography includes selected references to sources of information about parent appraisals of their children's behavior and development. Parent appraisals include the observations, opinions, judgments, and concerns of parents that involve subjective and objective assessments of child functioning. The references should be useful to practitioners who use information provided by parents and other primary caregivers as part of early identification procedures used to determine eligibility for early intervention or preschool special education.

The observations, descriptions, opinions, judgments, and concerns of parents and other primary caregivers regarding child behavior and development can be important information for part of the evaluation and assessment requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C Early Intervention Program (2002). As part of meeting the evaluation and assessment requirements of the Act, parents are in the best position to know their children's unique needs and strengths. Therefore, parents' appraisals of their children's capabilities and functioning are important sources of assessment information that can be used for and contribute to eligibility determination.

This *Milemarkers* includes selected references to sources of information pertaining to parents' appraisals and evaluations of their children's behavioral and developmental functioning (Glascoe & MacLean, 1990). A review of the literature with a focus on parental appraisals of child behavior and functioning useful for early identification purposes identified three categories of parental appraisal practices: (1) parental concerns leading to help seeking by parents or referrals by professionals (Glascoe, 1999), (2) parental judgments and estimates of child capabilities and functioning (Glascoe, 1998), and (3) parent/professional congruence in the assessment of child behavior and development (Suen, Logan, Neisworth, & Bagnato, 1995). Parental appraisal practices are one type of early identification activity (Dunst & Trivette, 2004) that constitutes the focus of research and practice at the Tracking, Referral and Assessment Center for Excellence ([www.tracecenter.info](http://www.tracecenter.info)).

### Parent Appraisals

#### Parental Concerns

Parental concerns are subjective judgments of child behavior and development usually expressed in terms of

the quality or quantity of functioning that is perceived to be atypical or "not like that of other children" (Glascoe & Dworkin, 1995). Parents' concerns about their children's development and social and behavioral functioning are often the basis for seeking professional advice and guidance (e.g., Ellingson, Briggs-Gowan, Carter, & Horwitz, 2004). Physician responsiveness to parental concerns, in turn, is often the foundation for a referral for further evaluations, therapy, or intervention (Dulcan et al., 1990).

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## Parent/Professional Congruence

The extent to which parents and professionals make similar judgments regarding child behavior and development (congruence) or whether each provides a different point of view regarding a child's capabilities and functioning has been the focus of research for many years (Bagnato, 1984). Bagnato et al. (in press) concluded, based on their review of the parent/professional congruence literature, that parents and professionals generally agree regarding child behavior and development but that each makes a unique contribution to the understanding of important aspects of child capabilities.

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## Summary

Parents' concerns and assessments of their children's behavior and development can contribute to the information needed to ascertain eligibility for early intervention or preschool special education. This *Milemarkers* includes selected references to research and practice, and methods and procedures, for taking full advantage of parents' knowledge about their children's strengths, capabilities, and needs. The material in this bibliography should be useful toward practitioners' responsibility for conducting early identification activities.

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