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**The Developmental Observation Checklist System and the
Infant-Toddler Developmental Assessment:
An Examination of their Relationship in Measuring Child Development**

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"Parents know their children best" is a motto of many professionals in early intervention. This belief is consistent with research emphasizing the importance of parental and environmental influences on young children's development and family centered philosophy.

Part C of IDEA encourages equal partnerships between family members and professionals and respects parents as the ultimate decision maker for their child. If a child does not have a "diagnosed physical or mental condition which has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay" when initially referred, a team including parents and members from at least two different professional disciplines must evaluate the child's development to determine if the child meets the state's eligibility criteria for developmental delay. Actively and meaningfully involving parents in this process can be a challenge.

Because young children may not demonstrate their optimal abilities in unfamiliar settings or with unfamiliar individuals, parent report is a valuable resource for identifying children's current levels of development. When both parent report and direct observations of children are integrated into child- and family-friendly procedures, the team (including the parents) can obtain accurate descriptions of children's development and identify meaningful outcomes for service delivery.

The Developmental Checklist portion of the Developmental Observation Checklist System (DOCS) and the Provence Birth-to-Three Developmental Assessment of the Infant-Toddler Developmental Assessment (IDA) are two instruments which have the potential to be used in family-centered eligibility determination evaluations for early intervention services under Part C of IDEA. This study analyzed the numerical relationships between these two child development evaluation procedures.

Methods

Participants. This study analyzed eligibility determination data obtained when 30 young children under 36 months of age were referred to an early intervention program. These children and their caregivers are described in Table 1.

Procedures. As a part of the evaluation of the children's development to determine eligibility for early intervention services, parents were invited to complete the DC-DOCS and participate in the IDA process for measuring child development.

Instruments. The DOCS is a standardized, norm referenced instrument which uses caregiver report to obtain measures of child development in the following domains: motor, cognition, language, and social. Both standard scores and age equivalents can be obtained from the DOCS. The instrument is appropriate for children between infancy and 6 years of age.

The IDA is an individually administered formalized instrument for measuring current developmental functioning of young children between 1 and 36 months of age. This instrument contains eight domains: gross motor, fine motor, relationships with inanimate objects (cognitive), language/communication, self-help, relationships with persons, emotions and feelings, and coping. The performance ages obtained on the domains of the IDA are not age equivalents, but an indication of the age ranges obtained from careful determination of the items that most appropriately describe the child's developmental level. The IDA is based upon standardized instruments, but does not yield standard scores.

Results

Correlations. Table 2 depicts the correlations found among the DOCS age equivalents and the average IDA performance ages across domains. Correlations ranged from .856 to .919. All correlations were high and significant at the <.0001 level.

Comparisons of Means. The means were compared for DOCS age equivalents and average IDA performance ages on the motor, cognitive/relations to inanimate objects, social, and language/communication domains. Table 3 presents this data. No statistically significant differences were found.

Discussion

This investigation revealed similarities in the domain age equivalents resulting from the DOCS Developmental Checklist when compared with the average performance ages in related domains identified by the Developmental Assessment of the IDA. These findings suggest that these instruments can be used to obtain related information from both parents and professionals in the process of determining Part C eligibility.

Whereas the domain measurements did not differ statistically, discrepancies in the individual measurements were found. These differences can provide information which can elicit meaningful discussion among members of the evaluation team-including parents. Exploration of differences in outcomes can lead to dialogue which has relevance for both eligibility and program planning.

Table 1. Description of Participants

Infant				Caregivers							
<u>Chronological</u>	<u>Adjusted</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Race</u>	<u>Marital</u>	<u>Household</u>						
<u>Age in Mo.</u>	<u>Age in Mo.</u>			<u>Status</u>	<u>Head</u>						
1-6	10	1-6	10	Male	17	African Am	13	Married	16	Mother	13
7-12	1	7-12	1	Female	13	Anglo Am	17	Single	12	Mother and	
13-18	3	13-18	4	Total	30	Total	30	Divorced	2	Father	16
19-24	9	19-24	9					Total	30	Extended	
25-30	3	25-30	2							Family	1
31-36	4	31-36	4							Total	30
Total	30	Total	30								

Table 2. Correlations among DOCS Age Equivalents and IDA Average Performance Ages

DOCS Age	IDA Average Performance Ages						
	Gross	Fine	Relations to	Language/	Relations	Emotions and	Coping
Equivalents	Motor	Motor	Inanimate	Comm.	to Persons	Feelings States	Behavior
			Objects				
Motor	.889	.903	.901	.887	.874	.856	.913
Social	.886	.908	.903	.894	.884	.860	.915
Language	.889	.904	.899	.893	.886	.862	.912
Cognition	.887	.900	.900	.896	.884	.869	.919

Note; All correlations p <.0001

Table 3. Means Comparisons for DOCS Age Equivalents & IDA Average Performance Ages

Instrument/Domain	Mean Difference	t	p
DOCS-Motor , IDA-Gross Motor	-.392	-.390	NS
DOCS-Motor , IDA-Fine Motor	1.408	1.542	NS
DOCS-Cognition, IDA-Relation to Inanimate Objects	.675	.747	NS
DOCS-Language, IDA-Language/ Communication	-1.617	-1.774	NS
DOCS-Social, IDA-Relationship to Persons	.017	.017	NS
DOCS-Social, IDA-Emotions and Feeling States	.150	.138	NS
DOCS-Social, IDA-Coping Behavior	-1.042	-1.189	NS