

Sinclair, E. (1993). Early identification of preschoolers with special needs in Head Start. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 13(2), 184-201.

Background: This research project was a result of a long standing collaboration between the Head Start program and the UCLA Child Psychiatry/Interdisciplinary Training Program Since 1987. UCLA has been assisting this Head Start program with trainings, workshops, classroom observation and individual assessment of children.

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to assess the severity of the disability of students that enroll in the Head Start program and to learn about the services provided according to individual assessments/Individual Education Plans (IEP) provided by the Head Start. The study was a joint effort between Head Start and the UCLA Diagnostic Team to provide individual assessment services.

Setting: The research was conducted at an urban Head Start program in Los Angeles. Head Start educational and support staff and UCLA consultants (students pursuing their education in special education) who were appropriately trained and professionally qualified to diagnose the specific disability conducted the student assessments and identified a categorical diagnosis and a functional assessment.

Subjects: 159 preschool students (of the total enrollment of 900) between 1989 and 1992.

Intervention: No intervention was used in this study.

Research Design: Quantitative research was implemented.

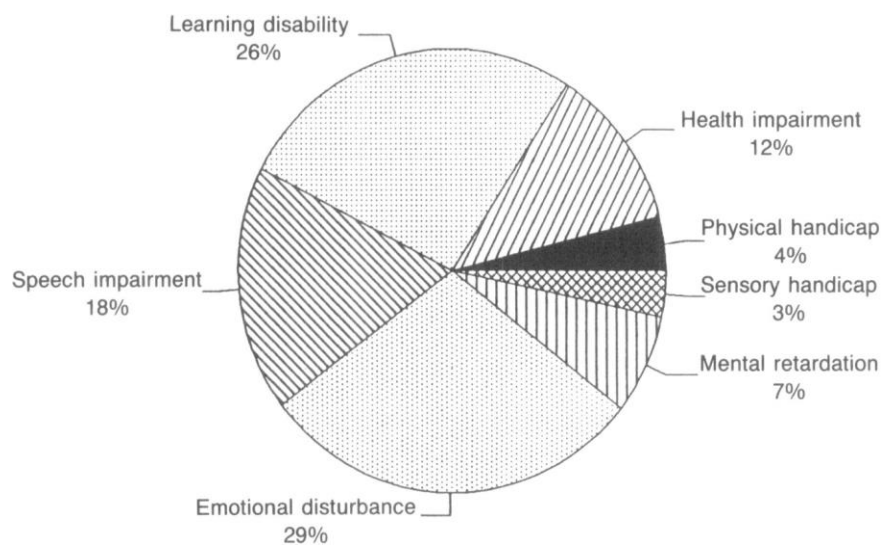
Data Collection & Analysis: Functional assessments and IEP's of 159 subjects were reviewed by the UCLA and Head Start consultation team. Three clinical clusters emerged that described the profiles of children along demographic, developmental/medical, family/home, and academic dimensions. Chi-square tests evaluated the relationship between categorical diagnoses, cluster membership, and the need for special education kindergarten placement.

Findings: Authors discussed the implications of early identification of children with special needs in Head Start on later school functioning. Children's overall disabilities were categorized in the following clusters.

Cluster I (38 subjects) - Children in cluster represented the most at-risk group in terms of family/home background. As a group, the children had experienced much chaos and instability at home. 29% were recommended to special education programs primarily because of serious emotional disturbance and 26% for learning & behavioral problems.

Cluster II (55 subjects) - Children in this cluster II demonstrated educational problems primarily in the area of speech and language. 18% were recommended to special education programs for speech impairments.

Cluster III (40 subjects) - Children in Cluster demonstrated more developmental and medical issues. They were diagnosed with mild and moderate developmental disabilities, including mental retardation. 26% were recommended to special education services for health, physical, sensory and cognitive related disabilities.



Head Start special needs certification prevalence rates (p.196)

Subthemes: N/A

Conclusions: The prevalence rates of distribution of specific disabilities and incidence of multiple problems in various areas of development and functioning were discrepant when compared with nationally. The authors concluded that the Head Start program was successfully including children with moderate to severe developmental delays in classrooms.