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**AVERAGE EFFORT EXTENDED IN PERSON HOURS TO  
COMPLETE AN INITIAL CHILD STUDY TEAM EVALUATION**

**By  
Lisa Hak Licciardello**

**A Thesis  
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
Of  
The Graduate School  
At  
Rowan University  
May 5, 2002**

**Approved by** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date Approved** May 5, 2002

## ABSTRACT

Lisa Hak Licciardello  
AVERAGE EFFORT EXTENDED IN PERSON HOURS TO COMPLETE  
AN INTIAL CHILD STUDY TEAM EVALUATION  
2001/2002  
Dr. Stanley Urban  
Masters of Arts in Learning Disabilities

The purpose of this study was to determine the number of person hours necessary to complete a Child Study Team initial evaluation by School Psychologists and Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants in a random sample of school districts in Southern New Jersey. Sixteen components of an initial evaluation were identified and respondents were asked to report the time in minutes devoted to each component. Thirty questionnaires were distributed and twenty-four were returned. On the basis of the responses, it was found that School Psychologists spend fourteen hours completing an initial evaluation, and Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants spend ten hours completing an initial evaluation. The results have implication for staffing patterns necessary to provide quality services.

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
One – Introduction.....	1
Background.....	1
Need for Study.....	2
Value of the Study.....	3
Research Question.....	3
Definitions.....	3
Limitations.....	5
Two – Review of the Literature.....	7
Three – Design of the Study.....	17
Population.....	17
Method of Sample Selection.....	17
Instrumentation.....	17
Collection of Data.....	18
Research Design and Analysis of Data.....	18
Four – Analysis and Interpretation of Data.....	20
Introduction.....	20
Results.....	20
Table 1.....	25
Table 2.....	26
Summary.....	27

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
Five – Summary, Findings, and Conclusions.....	28
Summary.....	28
Discussion and Implications.....	28
Conclusions.....	29
References.....	31
Appendix 1 – Letter to Child Study Team Directors.....	33
Appendix 2 – Survey.....	35

## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

### **Background**

The passing of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, (EAHCA) in 1975 and renamed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) in 1990, entitles all children to a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment that provides educational benefit. The passage of EAHCA completely altered the education system in our country. No longer could individuals with disabilities be ignored or shipped off to local mental institutions or state residential facilities. Schools are now required to make accommodations and provide support to students with disabilities and allow those individuals to be educated to the greatest extent possible in a regular education class. The IDEA and its subsequent amendments have largely achieved its goal that all eligible students with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education personalized to meet their needs. Today more than ever before, students with disabilities are being educated in regular classroom settings, and they are often extremely successful.

In order for individuals with disabilities to receive an education in the least restrictive environment, they must be assessed so that their present level of performance is known and an individualized education plan (IEP) can be developed. Members of the Child Study Team are required to evaluate each student referred to the team due to a suspected disability, as well as those that have already been identified with a specific



disability, in order to ensure appropriate services are provided and the proper placement is presented.

The number of students that are assessed each year by Child Study Teams in New Jersey varies greatly from district to district. During the 1999-2000 school year, Child Study Teams in the state of New Jersey assessed 84,301 students. That number includes initial evaluations as well as re-evaluations. As this number suggests, the amount of time expended by members of the Child Study Team on assessment is almost staggering. This number has been on the rise since 1990, dropping only three times over the ten-year time span. It is absolutely necessary for Learning Consultants and School Psychologists to work quickly yet precisely to be able to complete the necessary requirements in the amount of time allotted. This is becoming increasingly more difficult with the rising number of evaluations and the stricter time constraints being imposed. This study seeks to find the average number of hours expended by Learning Consultants and School Psychologists to complete an initial evaluation, and to relate it to the rising number of cases being presented.

### **Need for Study**

After conducting extensive searches for previously completed studies that address the amount of time needed to properly and effectively assess students referred for an initial evaluation, only one was discovered. The lack of research on this crucial issue provides justification for this study. Many districts are unaware of the amount of time required for each initial evaluation, which must be completed in addition to reevaluations.

## **Value of the Study**

Completing all the steps of an initial evaluation from the referral process to writing the IEP is a very time consuming job. There are many steps that an LDTC and a School Psychologist must complete, and they must be completed within a very specific time frame. The number of personnel hired in most districts to serve as members of the Child Study Team may not equal the number of person hours needed to adequately fulfill all the roles required of Team members. Many school districts appear to be understaffed in relation to Child Study Team members. The value of this study is that it objectively measures the amount of time it takes the average LDTC and School Psychologist to complete an initial evaluation. When compared to the number of cases completed each year, it can be determined if role expectations are realistic. Additional time and smaller caseloads, as well as more staff, may be necessary.

## **Research Question**

This study will collect and analyze data to answer the following research question: How many person hours are required to complete an initial evaluation from beginning to end, and how much time does each individual step take?

## **Definitions**

**LDTC** – Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant – The LDTC is an educational specialist who can assess students and analyze the results to characterize that student’s specific strengths and weaknesses. They also provide instructional strategies and

education plans, play a key role on a multidisciplinary team, act as a consultant to teachers, and plan and carry out in-services (Rubino).

**School Psychologist** – The School Psychologist is responsible for assessing and analyzing educational, psychological, and emotional behaviors in students. They also play a key role on a multidisciplinary team as well as act as a source of information for teachers and parents (Fischetti, 1999).

**Child Study Team (CST)** – shall include a school psychologist, a learning disabilities teacher/consultant, and school social worker that are employees of the school district and will be available during the hours that students are in attendance. They are responsible for identification, evaluation, determining eligibility, developing and reviewing the IEP and determining placement (NJAC 6A:14-3.1)

**Free, Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)** – “consists of special education and related services that are provided at public expense under public supervision and direction and without charge; meet state and federal requirements; include preschool, elementary, or secondary school education; and are provided according to an Individualized Education Program (NJ, 2001).

**IDEA** - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act is the federal statute that mandates a free, appropriate public education (FAPE) for students with disabilities. In New Jersey, that includes ages three to twenty one (IDEA Regulations, 20 U.S.C.: 1401 (18) (C).

**IEP** – “Individualized Education Program is a written plan developed at a meeting that includes an appropriate school staff and the parent. It determines the special education program for a student with disabilities in individually designed instructional activities constructed to meet the goals and objectives established for the student. It establishes the rationale for the students’ placement and documents the provision of a free, appropriate public education” (IDEA Regulations, 34: C.F.R.: 300 appendix C.1)

**Least Restrictive Environment** – “sets the standard that, to the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities should be educated with children who are not disabled. It means that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occur only when the severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily” (IDEA Regulations, 34 C.F.R.: 300.550(b)(z).

**Special Education Assessment** – the process of gathering educationally relevant material to make legal and instructional decisions regarding the implementation of special education services (McLoughlin, 2001).

### **Limitations**

There are several factors that limit the generalizability of this study. The information necessary to conduct the study comes directly from the Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultant and the School Psychologists themselves and is a see/report measure. Another limitation is the small sample size of professionals surveyed. Also, students are different and the amount of time necessary to assess each case can vary greatly. The

assessor himself is also a factor that needs to be taken into account considering that some may work at a faster pace than others, so the average times can differ greatly. Finally, participants were asked to round the amount of time spent on each item to the nearest quarter hour so that analysis can be completed efficiently.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

Before the enactment of Public Law 94-142, the fate of many individuals with disabilities was likely to be dim. Instead of being placed in an appropriate environment, too many individuals with disabilities lived in state institutions for persons with mental retardation or mental illness. In 1967, for example, state institutions were homes for almost 200,000 persons with significant disabilities. Many of these restrictive settings provided only minimal food, clothing, and shelter (OSERS, 2001). Too often, persons with disabilities were merely warehoused rather than assessed, educated, and rehabilitated to the fullest extent possible. In order to improve the living conditions of these individuals, massive de-institutionalization began in the 1960's and continued through the 1970's and 1980's. As part of a plan to provide for these individuals as well as children with disabilities already in the community, Public Law 94-142 was passed.

To combat instances such as those mentioned above, Congress enacted the *Education for All Handicapped Children Act (EAHCA)*, (Public Law 94-142), in 1975, to support states and localities in protecting the rights of, meeting the individual needs of, and improving the results for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities and their families. In 1986, public law 99-457 was enacted to include infants and toddlers. In 1990, Public Law 101-476 was added to include individuals with traumatic brain injury

(TBI) and those with autism. Finally, in 1997, the EAHCA was renamed the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*. Before IDEA, many children were denied access to education and opportunities to learn. For example, in 1970, U.S. schools educated only one in five children with disabilities, and many states had laws excluding certain students, including children who were deaf, blind, emotionally disturbed, or mentally retarded (OSERS, 2001).

“Public Law 94-142 was a response to Congressional concern for two groups of children: the more than 1 million children with disabilities who were excluded entirely from the education system and the children with disabilities who had only limited access to the education system and were therefore denied an appropriate education (OSERS, 2001).” This latter group comprised more than half of all children with disabilities who were living in the United States at that time.

With the passage of IDEA, all children, including those that were formerly excluded from a school setting, were entitled to a free, appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. To the greatest extent possible, students are to be educated in the setting least removed from the general education classroom. However, for this law to be effective, teachers, parents, school administrators, school specialists, and community resources and agents must form a collaborative and constructive partnership.

In order to properly evaluate a student to determine if special education services are necessary, the school district must form a team of professionals who can complete a full evaluation of the student. A Multi-disciplinary Team, often referred to as The Child Study Team, is available to complete this task. The Child Study Team usually consists of

a School Psychologist, a Learning Consultant, and a School Social Worker, and other individuals can also be included.

When a child is suspected of having a disability, whether it be at birth or at a later developmental period, a procedure must be developed to assess the child and, if needed, deliver the appropriate services. If a problem is suspected at birth, a physician can refer the parents to an Early Intervention Program (EIP) that will provide the necessary services for the child until the age of three. The EIP's are administered by County Health Departments. After the child turns three years old, it is the school district's responsibility to continue providing the appropriate services and placements.

In order to receive special education services, students must first be referred for an evaluation. A referral is "a written request for an evaluation that is given to the school district when a child is suspected of having a disability and might need special education services (US, 2001)." A parent, school personnel, or an agency concerned with the welfare of students can make a referral. Once a referral is made, the school district has twenty days from the time the referral is received to hold a meeting to decide whether or not an evaluation will be conducted. The parent, a member of the Child Study Team, the regular education teacher, and a Speech-Language Specialist (if applicable) all participate in the meeting. If the decision to evaluate is made, other decisions regarding the types of tests and other procedures that will be used to determine eligibility need to be made as well (US, 2001).

The next step in the process to determine eligibility is to evaluate the child. The child must be evaluated in all areas of suspected disability. At least two members of the Child Study Team and other specialists in the area of the suspected disability must



evaluate the child. No single procedure may be used as the sole criteria for determining whether a student has a disability or to determine proper placement. A variety of assessment tools and strategies must be used in order to gather enough functional and developmental information (NJAC, 1998). Once parental consent is given for an initial evaluation, the school district has ninety days to complete the evaluation and if necessary create and implement an IEP for the student (NJAC, 1998)

Once the student has been evaluated, eligibility must be determined. Members of the Child Study Team collaboratively decide whether or not services are necessary. In order to qualify for special education services, the student must have a disability according to one of the eligibility categories as defined by IDEA, and the student's disability must adversely affect his educational performance so as to put him in need of special education services. If the child does qualify, the IEP team has thirty days to develop an IEP for the child (NJ, 2001).

An Individual Education Plan meeting must then be scheduled. The parents of the student must be provided with copies of the reports ten days in advance of the meeting. At the IEP meeting, the parents are encouraged to take an active role in helping to develop the education plan for their child. The IEP is a written plan that will detail the child's educational program. A current level of performance should be included, as well as specific instructional needs, and measurable annual goals and objectives or benchmarks (US, 2000).

The IEP is then implemented and the student's progress is measured and reported to the parents throughout the school year. At the end of the year, an annual review meeting must be held to review and possibly revise the IEP. Parents must be informed of

the meeting and are urged to once again play an active role in revising the IEP for the following year. Finally, at least every three years, the student must be reevaluated. The purpose of a reevaluation is to identify whether or not the child continues to require special education services (US, 2000).

The Child Study Team that evaluates a referred child is usually made up of three individuals, as was previously stated. Of the three professionals, the Learning Consultant and the School Psychologist spend a great deal of time assessing the cognitive and achievement skills of the child in question. In addition to actual testing time, they also expend a significant amount of time conducting observations, consulting with teachers and other faculty familiar with the student, reviewing records, and writing reports. Both individuals play an integral role in the future of a child referred to the team. Their roles in the school system can be clearly defined.

The role of the School psychologists in the education system is an important one. They have specialized training in both psychology and education. They work with teachers, parents, and other mental health professionals to help provide a healthy and successful educational setting for children in school. School Psychologists must undergo a rigorous program to become certified. They are required to complete a minimum of sixty graduate semester hours, which includes a yearlong internship program. "Their training emphasizes preparation in mental health, child development, school organization, learning, behavior and motivation (NASP, 1999)". A school psychologist must be certified and/or licensed in the state where he provides services. School psychologists also have the opportunity to become nationally certified by the National School Psychology Certification Board (NASP, 1999).

School psychologists, like most professionals that work in a school system, customize their services to provide services based on the needs of each child and their specific situation. Some of the services they provide include consultation, assessment, intervention, prevention, education, research and planning, and health care provisions (NASP, 1999).

Consultation consists of providing guidance in child development and how it relates to learning and behavior, giving strategies to teachers, parents, children and administrators for learning and behavior, and helping to strengthen the working relationship between parents and educators. Assessment services provide a variety of techniques to evaluate individuals as well as groups in academic and social skills, learning aptitude, eligibility for special education, and personality and emotional development (NASP, 1999).

Intervention strategies include working with children and families face-to-face, helping to solve conflicts dealing with learning, providing counseling for children and their families, social skills training, behavior management, and other strategies, and helping families deal with crisis. Prevention includes potential learning difficulties, failures and disruptive behavior, as well as teaching tolerance and understanding of diversity in the school community (NASP, 1999).

The education aspect of their role in the school system consists of developing programs on topics such as teaching and learning strategies, classroom management techniques, substance abuse, crisis management, and working with students with disabilities. The research and planning generates new knowledge about learning and behavior, the effectiveness of existing academic, behavior management and other

programs, and the evaluation of school-wide reform. And finally, the health-care provisions deal with collaboration to develop a comprehensive model of school linked health services, integrated community services dealing with health related issues, and developing health school environments (NASP, 1999).

The school psychologist is an important aspect of the public school system, but may also work in clinics and hospitals, private practices, universities, state agencies, or other institutions, and school-based health centers. They are valuable assets when it comes to understanding how schools work and how children can learn and prosper in the school environment. "School psychologists provide easy and accessible, cost-effective mental health services to children as well as promote positive mental health and a safe and effective learning environment (NASP, 1999)."

The Learning Consultant is another very important part of the school system. Like the school psychologist, a learning consultant must obtain a master's degree and complete an internship program. Before completing the master's program, the learning consultant must possess a standard teaching certificate and have completed two years of effective teaching experience. The teaching experience is important to the future role of teacher consultant. The learning consultant is certified by the State of New Jersey following the completion of an approved course of study (ALC, 2001).

The learning consultant is an educational specialist who has the professional preparation to complete a variety of important responsibilities. Some of the responsibilities include making an assessment and analysis of a child's learning profile and characterizing his strengths and weaknesses, designing instructional strategies for educational programs that will enable a child to succeed, be an active member on a

multidisciplinary team, act as an educational consultant to classroom teachers, and plan and execute in-service education. The learning consultant also plays an important role in staff development (Rubino).

The learning consultant is responsible not only for the educational assessments, but also for the educational plans that are to be developed based on the performance of the child during his evaluation and prior classroom functioning. The learning consultant takes an active role in developing the IEP for the student. Like the school psychologist, learning consultants are also assigned as case managers to children receiving special education in the school system

Learning Consultants work in the public school districts of New Jersey on Child Study Teams. They also work in a variety of other educational settings. They can be employed by colleges and universities, or by private schools. They may also be in private practice or work for the State Department of Education.

Working as part of a Child Study Team requires an immense amount of time. The school psychologist and learning consultant have numerous responsibilities as mentioned above, but the majority of their time is devoted to assessment. In the 1970's and 1980's, several critical studies were conducted that found school psychologists spending approximately thirty to sixty percent of their time on student assessment (Fischetti, 1999).

A study done by Barbara A. Fischetti, a member of the National Association of School Psychologists, "sought to obtain information from suburban Connecticut school systems regarding time requirements for psychological evaluations and the components that comprise a comprehensive evaluation (Fischetti, 1999)." Twenty-two school psychologists from nine suburban Connecticut school systems were utilized for this

study. They compiled daily logs with respect to their daily activities and time requirements for three evaluations. Their logs kept track of time in fifteen-minute intervals. The following activities were accounted for: folder review, classroom observations, conferencing, parent interview, parent conference, teacher conference, test administration, student interview, outside agency contact, scoring of assessment results, interpretation of data, report writing and planning, and placement team meetings (Fischetti, 1999).

The school districts involved in the study were all affluent districts with less than 10 % minority students in all districts but one. Special education populations ranged in the districts used from 9.5% to 14.8%. The non-English speaking household was considerably below the state average of 12% for all nine districts utilized (Fischetti, 1999).

The results of the study found that the average time spent on a psychological evaluation was 15.66 hours with a standard deviation of 5.43. The range of hours fell between 7.25 at the low end and 32.75 hours at the high end. The most time consuming activities were test administration and report writing. Testing required an average of 3.24 hours and report writing an average of 3.37 hours. Placement team meetings averaged 1.93 hours while child interview took the least time, averaging .56 hours. All other areas fell somewhere in the range of .56 and 3.37 hours (Fischetti, 1999).

The time necessary for evaluation increased by level with high school requiring the most time, an average of 19.03 hours, middle school requiring 17.50 hours, and elementary requiring 14.85 hours. An interesting finding was that students that exhibited social-emotional difficulties required the longest amount of time for their evaluations,

needing an average of 24.67 hours. The average amount of time needed for a learning disabled child was 15.92 hours. Finally, evaluation time for regular education students that were found eligible for special education averaged 16.81 hours, while students that were not found eligible required an average of 13.95 hours (Fischetti, 1999).

The results of this study are significant for the field of school psychology. The amount of time necessary to evaluate students is substantial, yet they are expected to fulfill all other elements of their position as well. Clearly, a comprehensive evaluation for referred students is necessary, but to what extent should their other roles be sacrificed? Not much time has been invested in the study of time spent on evaluation, but it's painfully obvious that there needs to be more research and evaluation of the requirements facing the diagnosticians who are responsible for evaluating and planning education programs for children with disabilities.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Design of the Study**

#### **Population**

The population used to conduct this study consisted of ten School Psychologists and fourteen Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants. In addition to those participants, two LDTC's and one School Psychologist were given the pilot study to complete instead of the actual survey used in the study. Those three individuals completed only the pilot study.

#### **Method of Sample Selection**

A representative sample of School Psychologists and LDTCs of small, medium, and large school districts were chosen to participate in the study. Participants were randomly selected from a directory that lists all the school districts in New Jersey. Participants were selected from counties located in Southern New Jersey.

#### **Instrumentation**

Participants were mailed a questionnaire that required them to indicate the amount of time spent on items, which defined components of a Child Study Team evaluation, by writing in the number of minutes rounded to the nearest quarter hour. The questionnaire contained 16 specific items and one open ended item that solicited general comments. Participants were also asked to indicate whether they were LDTCs or School



Psychologists, how long they have been working in their field, and whether they spend most of their time with elementary, middle, or high school aged students. An optional question requesting their name and district of employment was also included.

### **Collection of Data**

This survey was developed to be quick and easy to complete while still providing important information necessary to answer the questions in this study. The surveys were sent to the Director of Special Services for each school district. Each director received two surveys along with self-addressed stamped envelopes. A letter was also included which asked them to make as many copies as necessary and to distribute them to the LDTCs and School Psychologists on their teams. An option for them to have the results of the study forwarded to them was also incorporated into the letter.

Each question required the participants to estimate the average amount of time they spend on each element of an initial evaluation. The amount of time was to be rounded to the nearest quarter hour.

### **Research Design and Analysis of Data**

Once the surveys are returned, the items will be tallied and the amounts of time for each task will be averaged. The results of each step in the initial evaluation process will be reported in tabular form and will show the mean, standard deviation, number of responses, and range of answers. Any additional information provided by the participants will also be reported. The data collected will be examined thoroughly and an interpretation will be provided in order to answer the questions regarding the amount of

time each step in the initial process takes, and on average, how many total man hours it takes to complete an initial evaluation.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Analysis and Interpretation of Data**

#### **Introduction**

A two-page letter and survey was sent to fifteen different Child Study Team Directors from a variety of districts in the South Jersey area. The letter asked them to provide their Learning Consultants and School Psychologists with a copy of the enclosed survey and to return the completed surveys in the return envelopes as soon as possible. Each director was sent two copies of the survey and two return envelopes. They were encouraged to complete the survey themselves if they were involved in assessment in addition to their other responsibilities. Of the thirty surveys sent, twenty-four were returned. Because copies were made in several of the districts, and because the name of the respondent and the district were optional, the number of districts that actually responded is unknown, as is the number of participants from each district. Several districts returned many more than the two surveys sent to them. The results were tabulated and analyzed. Any additional comments made to the survey were also reported and analyzed.

#### **Results**

The results of this survey are reported in minutes. Each survey received was analyzed and the results were averaged and reported in tabular form. For each component surveyed, the mean, standard deviation, range and number of responses are

reported. The surveys were sorted into two groups: responses from Learning Consultants and responses from School Psychologists. Results were tabulated for each group separately.

An inspection of Table 1 shows the average amount of time fourteen Learning Consultants spend in each surveyed area. For example, the average amount of time spent reviewing the referral was 26 minutes, with a standard deviation of 16 minutes. The range of reported averages was 15 minutes to 60 minutes. The most time consuming component of the initial evaluation for Learning Consultants was the actual testing of the students. 126 minutes was the average amount of time spent on testing, but the range went from a low of only 60 minutes to a high of 240 minutes. The second most time consuming component was writing reports. Learning Consultants averaged 85 minutes in this area with a standard deviation of 29 minutes. The range extended from 60 to 120 minutes for this activity. Other time consuming components included meeting with the parents, which averaged 60 minutes, and writing the IEP, which averaged 63 minutes.

The component that appears to take the least amount of time is preparing for testing. An average of 15 minutes is spent on this activity, with some Learning Consultants reporting that they do not spend any time on this component. Other areas that showed only small amounts of time necessary to complete were: reviewing the cumulative file, reviewing other records, the follow-up meeting, and writing the integrated summary. All of these activities averaged less than twenty minutes each.

The times for the other components varied. The average time spent on each activity ranged between 26 and 51 minutes. The component on the survey marked as “other” yielded some interesting comments. Several Learning Consultants reported that

scheduling takes up a good amount of time averaging about 45 minutes. A follow-up with the parents was also reported in the “other” component as well as miscellaneous activities that vary from case to case.

There were two questions that were asked that were not reported in Table 1. Each Learning Consultant was asked to indicate how long they had been working as a Learning Consultant, and whether they work primarily with elementary or secondary aged students, or with both ages. The average length of experience for the Learning Consultants taking this survey was 10 years and 8 months, with a range of 1 year and 6 months to 24 years. Four Learning Consultants work with elementary students, eight work with secondary students, and two work with both age groups.

An inspection of Table 2 shows the average amount of time ten School Psychologists spend in each surveyed area. Unlike the Learning Consultant, the School Psychologists attributed most of their time spent on report writing. The average time spent was 134 minutes, with a standard deviation of 52 minutes. The range spanned from 60 to 240 minutes. Another large portion of their time is spent testing. The School Psychologists reported spending an average of 126 minutes testing students. The standard deviation for this component was 31 minutes and the range spanned from 90 to 180 minutes. Finally, the School Psychologists also found discussing the referral to be another component requiring a lot of man-hours. An average of 118 hours were reported spent on this component, with a range of 35 to 225 minutes.

The area School Psychologists reported spending the least amount of time on was writing the integrated summary. An average of only twelve minutes was calculated, with a range of zero to thirty minutes. Reviewing other records was also a component that

received less time, averaging only 20 minutes. The category labeled “other” averaged a total of 15 minutes with travel time being the largest complaint.

The average time spent on the rest of the components from the School Psychologists’ surveys varied. Each remaining activity averaged somewhere between 22 and 57 minutes for each. The questions asked at the end of the survey yielded the following answers. The average amount of time spent in the field for the School Psychologists completing this survey was 6 years and 9 months, with a range of 5 months to 19 years. The majority of these psychologists work with secondary education students. Six worked with secondary level students, 2 worked with elementary level students, and 2 worked with both.

Several similarities appear in both the Learning Consultant’s and the School Psychologist’s averages. Both groups found testing to be one of the most, if not the most, time consuming component in the initial referral of a student. Ironically, both groups averaged the exact same amount of time for testing, 126 minutes. Report writing averaged the most time for the School Psychologists, averaging 134 minutes, but the Learning Consultants also found this component to be time consuming as well, spending an average of 85 minutes on this activity. An area that seemed to differ greatly between the two was the discussion of the referral. School Psychologists averaged 118 minutes on this task, while Learning Consultants only attributed 51 minutes to this component. All other areas seemed to be compatible between the two professions.

An interesting point that appeared in both sets of surveys was that several participants claimed to spend no time at all on specific components. The fact that several components received zero minutes greatly affected the mean of those activities. Some

participants wrote in their surveys that they included a specific component with another, therefore combining the time spent on both and only entering it in one area, leaving the other with a zero. In other cases, no time was spent on a specific component at all, which is why it received a zero. Either way, the zero's played a large part in the surveys and greatly affected the results.

**Table 1**  
**Average Evaluation Time of Each Component (in minutes)**  
**for Learning Consultants**

<b>Component</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Number</b>
Review of referral	26	16	15 - 60	14
Discussion of referral	51	30	15 - 180	14
Review of cumulative file	19	19	0 - 60	14
Review of other records	16	17	0 - 60	14
Writing of evaluation plan	26	18	0 - 60	14
Observations	40	11	15 - 60	14
Preparation for testing	15	6	0 - 30	14
Testing	126	47	60 - 240	14
Test review and corrections	33	28	0 - 120	14
Report writing	85	29	60 - 120	14
Integration of findings with team	27	13	0 - 60	14
Writing integrated summary	18	13	0 - 30	14
Meeting with parents	60	21	150 - 120	14
Writing the IEP	63	33	30 - 120	14
Follow-up meeting	19	16	0 - 60	14
Other	16	20	0 - 60	14



Table 2  
Average Evaluation Times for Each Component (in minutes)  
for School Psychologists

<b>Component</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Number</b>
Review of referral	33	14	15 - 60	10
Discussion of referral	118	80	35 - 255	10
Review of cumulative file	41	29	0 - 90	10
Review of other records	20	16	0 - 45	10
Writing of evaluation plan	29	21	0 - 50	10
Observations	45	14	30 - 60	10
Preparation for testing	22	12	0 - 45	10
Testing	126	31	90 - 180	10
Test review and corrections	51	28	15 - 120	10
Report writing	134	52	60 - 240	10
Integration of findings with team	44	17	15 - 60	10
Writing integrated summary	12	21	0 - 30	10
Meeting with parents	63	22	45 - 90	10
Writing the IEP	57	21	30 - 90	10
Follow-up meeting	29	21	0 - 45	10
Other	15	26	0 - 120	10

## **Summary**

A total of twenty-four surveys were received, fourteen from Learning Consultants and ten from School Psychologists. The surveys were divided into the two professions and tabulated. Of these twenty-four surveys, similar amounts of time were found to be spent on the same activities by both groups. Both Learning Consultants and School Psychologists report that testing and report writing take up the largest amount of time when completing an initial evaluation. Reviewing the referral was an area that really showed meaningful differences between the two regarding the amount of time spent on that component. School Psychologists spent more time doing this activity than did the Learning Consultants. Preparing for tests, writing the integrated summary, and reviewing records other than the cumulative file all appeared to require a minimal amount of time. The total average amount of time spent on an initial evaluation by the School Psychologists surveyed was 839 minutes, or about 14 hours per case. The Learning Consultants averaged 640 minutes, or about 11 hours per case.

## **Chapter V**

### **Summary, Findings, and Conclusions**

#### **Summary**

The purpose of this study was to determine the number of person hours necessary to complete a Child Study Team initial evaluation by School Psychologists and Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants in a random sample of school districts in Southern New Jersey. Sixteen components of an initial evaluation were identified and respondents were asked to report the time in minutes devoted to each component. Thirty questionnaires were distributed and twenty-four were returned. On the basis of the responses, it was found that School Psychologists spend fourteen hours completing an initial evaluation, and Learning Disabilities Teacher Consultants spend ten hours completing an initial evaluation. The results have implication for staffing patterns necessary to provide quality services.

#### **Discussion and Implications**

The reported amount of time from this survey that School Psychologists spend on initial evaluations is comparable to the results of the study discussed in Chapter II. Although the results are compatible and seem reasonable, further study is needed to obtain a more representative sample of information. The twenty-four surveys received were not from twenty-four different districts in Southern New Jersey. Several districts

returned more than one survey, and one district in particular returned ten. A return of surveys from a more representative sample of districts would have been beneficial.

Another reason further study should be conducted is because of confusion on the survey. Respondents were asked to round their estimated average time spent on each component to the nearest quarter hour using the numbers .15, .30, .45, and .60. Several participants were confused by these numbers and used .25, .50, .75, and 1 instead. Unfortunately, several respondents combined the two sets of numbers or used another completely different scale, making interpretation questionable. Reading the surveys and determining the amount of time the respondent was trying to indicate was difficult and may have been incorrectly reported in several cases.

Further study with a revised survey could yield more accurate results and have even stronger implications for necessary staffing changes in order to provide quality services.

## **Conclusion**

According to this study, School Psychologists and Learning Consultants are devoting a great amount of time to initial evaluations. The majority of their time is spent testing the students and writing reports. Both professionals reported that these two activities were the most time consuming. School Psychologists also reported devoting a large block of time to reviewing the referral. Preparing for testing, writing the integrated summary, and reviewing records other than the cumulative file were all reported to require minimal amounts of time.

The initial evaluation is only a small part of the School Psychologist and Learning Consultant's job, yet it encompasses a vast amount of time. School Psychologists reported spending an average of fourteen person-hours on just an initial evaluation, while Learning Consultants reported an average of ten person-hours. In addition to completing the initial evaluation, School Psychologists and Learning Consultants have other responsibilities. Case managing, completing re-evaluations, annual reviews, and various other undertakings are also responsibilities of both professions.. According to the New Jersey State Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs, 39,564 students were identified and received an initial evaluation in the 1999-2000 school year. Add the 44,737 students that required re-evaluations, and the amount of time necessary to complete these evaluations is staggering. Based upon the results of this study, an initial evaluation is a very labor-intensive activity and further study is needed to ensure that these professionals have the time necessary to provide quality services.

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## Appendix 1

Letter to Child Study Team Director



March 17, 2002

Dear Colleague,

I am in the process of gathering data for my Thesis Project, which is part of the requirements to complete the MA in the Learning Disabilities Teacher/Consultant Program at Rowan University. My main research question is to determine the amount of time necessary for a School psychologist and an LDTC to complete an initial evaluation. Would you kindly pass this questionnaire and envelope on to the School psychologist and the LDTC on your Child Study Team? If you complete evaluations in addition to your duties as coordinator, you may copy the questionnaire and complete it as well.

None of the questionnaires are coded and your responses are anonymous. Because there can be no follow-up due to the lack of coding, your cooperation is earnestly requested. If you would like a copy of the results of the study, you may put your address on the questionnaire or mail your address separately.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call me at (856) 478-4252.

Thank you for your anticipated cooperation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Licciardello". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Lisa Licciardello

## Appendix 2

### Survey

# Survey of Person Days Necessary to Complete an Initial Child Study Team Evaluation

Dear Colleague,

We are interested in completing an exploratory study of the person days necessary to complete a CST evaluation from initial referral to final disposition. Please respond to each item by rounding your time to the nearest quarter hour (ex. Review of cumulative files .45 hrs.). If you do not perform an item listed below, enter 0 hrs. We realize that each case is different and time spent can vary greatly, so we are asking for the **average** amount of time spent on each item. We are seeking realistic data, so please be as accurate as possible.

**Time Spent**  
**(to the nearest quarter hour)**

- Review of referral \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Discussion of referral with teacher \_\_\_\_\_
  - with parent \_\_\_\_\_
  - with other \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Review of cumulative file \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Review of other records \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Writing of evaluation plan \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Observations \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Preparing for testing \_\_\_\_\_
  
- Testing \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE TURN OVER**

- Test review and corrections \_\_\_\_\_
- Report writing \_\_\_\_\_
- Integration of findings with other team members \_\_\_\_\_
- Writing integrated summary \_\_\_\_\_
- Meeting with parent \_\_\_\_\_
- Writing the IEP \_\_\_\_\_
- Follow up meeting with teachers \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Are you a LDTC or a School Psychologist? \_\_\_\_\_
- How long have you been working in this position? \_\_\_\_\_
- Do you work primarily with elementary, secondary, or both age levels?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Name and school district (optional) \_\_\_\_\_

Your help with this survey is greatly appreciated. If you have any other thoughts or comments, please list them below. Thank you for your time and assistance with this study.