

Men's Parenting Behaviors in Families of Children with Disabilities: Findings from the ECLS-B

IES Goal 1 – Early Intervention and Early Learning in Special Education * 2012-2014

Although a rapidly growing body of research has documented the impact of father involvement with typically developing children, little is known about how men approach parenting children with disabilities, and how their involvement impacts child, mother and family well-being. The purpose of the proposed project will be to take advantage of the data available in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study – Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) in order to examine the roles fathers play in families of children with disabilities. The following research questions will be addressed in the study:

1. How do the presence, timing, and severity of a child's disability relate to the structure and levels of father involvement?
2. How do the presence, timing, and severity of a child's disability influence the trajectory of father involvement from nine-months to four years of age?
3. What are the antecedents (e.g., family processes, characteristics of the father and/or mother, characteristics of the child, maternal involvement, contextual sources of stress and support) of father involvement, and do these antecedents differ by the presence, timing, and severity of a child's disability?
4. What are the direct and indirect effects of father involvement on family process and maternal and child well-being in families of children with disabilities?

The ECLS-B is a nationally representative, longitudinal data set of approximately 14,000 children born in 2001. To date, information for this data set has been collected from mothers, fathers, teachers and child care providers when the children were 9 months, 2 years and 4 years of age, and the kindergarten transition year. Included in the ECLS-B is data from approximately 8,392 residential fathers and 2,198 non-residential fathers. The population of interest for the analyses will be those children that had a diagnosed disability or developmental delay and/or were receiving early intervention services. Children will be grouped based on when the child was identified with the disability and/or developmental delay (i.e., 9 months, 2 years, and 4 years).

This project will conduct secondary data analysis with an existing data set. Analyses will be designed to explore the structure, sources and consequences of fathers' involvement in families of children with disabilities. Measures are limited to data available in the ECLS-B database. Data within the ECLS-B provides extensive information on child development and family functioning, is gathered from multiple sources (e.g., children, their parents, their child care providers), and includes multiple data collection formats (e.g., survey questionnaires, parent interviews, direct child assessments). To address the research questions outlined above, a variety of structural equation modeling techniques (e.g., latent variable growth curve modeling, general growth mixture modeling) will be used in order to capitalize on the longitudinal nature of the ECLS-B data.

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