

# 16

## EARLY INTERVENTION PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS

### Issues and Strategies in Personnel Preparation

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There are five primary reasons why practitioners, administrators, and families must analyze early intervention policies and practices. First, policies should promote services that are meaningful to consumers and effective in achieving desired outcomes. Second, federal, state, and local laws and regulations affect programs and practices in both dramatic and subtle ways that practitioners must learn to recognize. Third, by understanding the basic provisions of early intervention law and regulations, practitioners and families can discourage misinformation and incorrect interpretations that may be incorrectly held out as “the law.” Fourth, if early intervention policies are monitored and analyzed as they are developed by governing bodies, they will better reflect recommended practices. Finally, as public policies are implemented, careful evaluation can highlight beneficial aspects of the policy as well as those requirements that need modification.

This chapter defines a policy as a statement of goals and principles that govern actions to address and solve issues affecting groups of people. Political scientists argue that the term *policy* should be reserved for “statements of intention and direction of a relatively high order” (Starling, 1977, p. 128), which is “commonly used to designate the *most* important choices made either in organized or in private life” (Lasswell, 1951, p. 5). Furthermore, the authors of this chapter view policies as the rules and standards that are established to allocate public resources to meet a particular social need. Viewed in this perspective, early intervention policies for young children with disabilities are key goals and guiding principles that reflect the political, economic, and societal values of a specific time period regarding how to care for and provide services to children with special needs and their families. These goals and principles take the form of laws, regulations, guidelines, and administrative directives.

This chapter identifies three key competencies needed to analyze early intervention policies: 1) understanding the context for the development of an early childhood policy, why it was needed, and how it evolved; 2) critiquing the policy to understand its provisions and how it will affect all stakeholder groups; and 3) influencing public policy during its development and implementation by contributing to draft policies and modifying existing ones. The text is organized in four major sections. First, challenges to teaching public policy analysis are described. Then three instructional sections, each targeted to one of

the key competencies, are presented. Each instructional section includes strategies for teaching the content, skills, and values of each competency. Selected teaching resources for instructors and recommended readings for participants are included in tables in each of the three instructional sections.

## **CHALLENGES TO TEACHING PUBLIC POLICY ANALYSIS**

Teaching students and practitioners to analyze early intervention public policy is a complex task. One of the factors that contributes to this complexity is that there is no comprehensive public policy for children in the United States. As Gallagher (1981) pointed out, “Public policy around any broad dimension of American society such as the family will be done in piecemeal, issue-by-issue, decision making” (p. 38). Early childhood policies cover health, education, public welfare, housing, child care, and economic issues; no one state or federal agency has responsibility for all of these. Table 16.1 identifies the key laws to consider in early childhood personnel preparation activities. Students and practitioners should understand the provisions and effects of each of these laws as well as their implementing regulations and any accompanying guidelines. Smith (1996) provided a comprehensive listing of federal programs serving children with disabilities.

A second challenge in personnel development is that early intervention is a relatively new policy arena. Before the early 1900s there were no national health or social policies for children (with or without disabilities), reflecting the values and perspectives that children were possessions of their parents, without rights until they matured (Hanft, 1991). Children did not receive specialized pediatric care because they were viewed as miniature adults without unique developmental or health needs of their own. This instructional challenge is addressed by suggesting strategies to assist participants in understanding the political, social, and economic factors that influence the development of a specific policy in the section on understanding the context for policy development.

A third challenge in teaching many participants to analyze early intervention public policy is their lack of awareness and experience in three key areas: 1) family members’ desires for their children, 2) day-to-day program operations, and 3) atypical child development. Participants at both preservice and inservice levels must learn to critically review public policy; however, a major difference exists between these two groups. Practitioners working in the field directly experience how a new or revised policy will affect the families they serve as well as their own professional services; preservice students generally do not have these experiences on which to base their analysis. The suggested instructional strategies in this chapter emphasize ways to dramatize how policies affect both professional and family life.

A final instructional challenge is that policy development is often perceived as an invisible process that is very difficult to influence. Many people do not understand the process of drafting or revising laws and regulations and feel powerless to change them. They view their daily existence as separate from the legislative or regulatory process and have little interest in contacting state or federal policy makers. The instructional section on influencing public policy focuses on learning to communicate effectively with all policy makers.

## **UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT FOR PUBLIC POLICIES**

Understanding why a policy is needed and how it evolved is essential to analyzing the policy’s impact on children and their families. This requires a thorough understanding of

**TABLE 16.1.** Federal laws authorizing services for children with disabilities and their families

Law	Target group	Provisions for children with disabilities
<i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990, PL 101-476</i>		
Part B enacted in 1975 (the Education for All Handicapped Children Act, PL 94-142)	Children 3+ years with disabilities	Special education and related services in the least restrictive environment
Part H enacted in 1986 (the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments, PL 99-457)	Infants birth to 2 years and family members	Developmental and related family services in natural environments
<i>Economic Opportunity Act Amendments of 1972, PL 92-424 (Head Start)</i>	Children birth to 5 years from low-income families including:	
	Preschoolers with disabilities who meet IDEA eligibility or state definition of developmental delay	Preschool enrichment, special education and related services
	Infants and toddlers with disabilities less than 3 years of age	Comprehensive child development and family support services; prenatal care
<i>Americans with Disabilities Act (1990), PL 101-336, and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (1973), PL 93-112</i>	All children and adults in programs receiving federal funds; disability viewed as a physical or mental impairment (or perception of such impairment) that substantially limits a major life activity	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability; mandates reasonable accommodations in all public and private schools, child care, work settings, and so forth
<i>Medicaid Title XIX of the Social Security Act Amendments of 1965, PL 89-97</i>	All low-income families who receive Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or meet other state criteria	Access to federally mandated medical, social, psychological, and health services; optional state services can be offered such as home and community waivers to care for children with disabilities outside of institutions

(continued)

**TABLE 16.1.** *(continued)*

Law	Target group	Provisions for children with disabilities
Title V of the <i>Social Security Act of 1935</i> , PL 74-271		
Maternal and Child Health (MCH)	All children and families	Federal grants to states for health services such as prenatal care, well baby clinics, immunizations
Programs for Children with Special Health Care Needs (initially titled "Crippled Children's Services")	Children with physical and mental disabilities	Rehabilitation, social service, and medical services
<i>Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act (1975)</i> , PL 94-103	Individuals who meet the definition of a developmental disability before age 18	Federal grants to states to support protection and advocacy; university affiliated programs for evaluation and intervention services; Developmental Disability Planning Councils

Note: Original enactment dates are identified; laws are generally amended every 3–5 years.

the climate or context for policy development, that is, the social, economic, and political factors that influenced the development and implementation of a particular policy. The political context refers to the jurisdiction and responsibility of federal, state, and local government for providing services to young children. The social context includes the values and mores regarding all children's and families' rights in general as well as those of individuals with special needs. The economic context relates to how monetary and human resources are allocated and used for services for children with disabilities within the overall context of national, state, and local funding priorities.

The following example describes the context for the enactment of the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities (Part H) in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and serves as a model for understanding why other laws identified in Table 16.1 were enacted. Understanding the context for the development of a policy is part of the process of policy analysis and sets the stage for critiquing its impact once it is implemented.

### **Why the Early Intervention Program Was Enacted**

At the beginning of the 20th century, the United States was in the grips of the eugenics movement, which viewed people with disabilities, particularly mental or emotional disabilities, as "deviant." Intervention for these individuals focused on compulsory sterilization and institutionalization in large, isolated state facilities. Millions of children with disabilities were denied access to public schools as late as the 1970s because they were considered uneducable, even though public schooling had been provided by the states to "typical" children since the 1800s (Riley, Nash, & Hunt, 1978).

Several political, social, and economic factors reversed these policies in the 1970s. On the political front, organizations of parents and advocates began to demand services for children with disabilities. In landmark legislation prompted by a lawsuit filed by a parent advocacy group in 1971, the Supreme Court ruled that children with mental retardation could not be denied access to public education (*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children [PARC] v. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1971). Furthermore, the Supreme Court ordered that this education must take place in the least restrictive environment, forcing the widespread deinstitutionalization of children who had been “warehoused” in large segregated state schools. A related case (*Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia*, 1972) expanded this right to all students with disabilities. Congress responded to the demands of parents and advocates by passing the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975, PL 94-142, which required all states to provide eligible children with a free and appropriate public education if the states wanted certain federal education funds (Turnbull, 1986).

One of the key social trends that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s was the active role of parents in their children’s education and health care. A convincing body of early childhood research demonstrated that parents could positively affect their child’s educational achievement (e.g., Bowlby, 1969; Werner, Bierman, & French, 1971). Previously, parents of children with disabilities were viewed as passive recipients of intervention and often had no say about the type or amount of services their children received in school or health settings (Pizzo, 1990). This perspective shifted to one of parents as proactive team members, critical to the decision-making process. This shift in the social climate is reflected in the provisions of IDEA requiring the schools to develop an individualized education program for each student in conjunction with parents and guaranteed due process rights for parents related to the identification, evaluation, and placement procedures for their children. Likewise, in the health arena, the family-centered care movement emphasized that family members were the central decision makers for their children’s intervention (Shelton, Jeppson, & Johnson, 1989).

In the 1980s, research also documented the economic effectiveness of providing services at a young age (Lazar & Darlington, 1982; Shonkoff & Hauser-Cram, 1987). Early intervention was shown to improve the developmental outcomes for children with disabilities and was considered cost effective because it minimized the need for services and supports at a later age. Providing early services made for sound social and economic policies.

Thus, in 1986, the evolution of early intervention public policy progressed with the enactment of the Education of the Handicapped Act Amendments, PL 99-457, creating the Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities and extending entitlement for special education and related services to preschoolers. These amendments to IDEA reflected the political, social, and economic contexts of the family and disability advocacy movement, judicial decisions ensuring education for individuals with disabilities, the realization of the importance of family participation in decision making, and recognition of the effectiveness and cost benefits of early intervention. Understanding this context enables participants to identify the social, political, and economic reasons for the development of a specific policy such as the early intervention program of IDEA.

### **Teaching Strategies: Understanding the Context**

The following strategies can assist participants to identify and analyze the context for policy development. They are designed to develop knowledge (e.g., analyze economic trends), skills (e.g., identify and argue positions in court cases), and values (e.g., adopt

the perspective of parents of children with disabilities). Table 16.2 outlines the purpose and identifies faculty and student resources for each of the following strategies.

**Creating Context Collages** To gain an overview of the context in which the early intervention program of IDEA was enacted, participants can develop a pictorial or print collage depicting the social, political, and economic context during landmark periods in the enactment of specific legislation for children (see Table 16.1). (For the early intervention program in IDEA, these landmarks are 1975 and 1986.) To understand the social context, participants can review high school and college yearbooks; the style, society, or living pages in newspapers and magazines; musical hits; and popular television shows. For a review of the political context, newspaper headlines can identify the issues of the times and the pressures on Congress and the President. Finally, the economic context can be understood by reviewing past editions of *The Wall Street Journal*, *Business Week*, and economic reports issued by public and private organizations. As participants develop their collages, they should correlate education and health policies implemented during the identified landmark periods with the political, social, and economic contexts of each period. This activity has also been successfully used as an inservice activity by grouping participants into “decades.” Each group takes a 10-year period starting in the 1940s through the 1990s and identifies the key contextual markers based on their own knowledge and experience of each period (Bergman, 1995).

**Conducting Court Debates** Once an entitlement for public education for all school-age children was established in the 1970s, early intervention policy evolved to include children at younger ages via statewide, interagency programs mandated in IDEA. Participants can gain insight regarding the political context in the 1990s by examining landmark court decisions from the past. After reviewing relevant decisions, for example, *PARC v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971) or *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972), teams are assigned to argue on behalf of the student and family or state perspective. The entire class can then discuss their attitudes and reactions to the courts’ decisions.

**Demystifying Legislation** Some participants may be intimidated at the thought of reading and analyzing actual legislation. Before reading a law or regulations, participants can review the report that accompanies proposed legislation (see Table 16.2 for information on how to obtain congressional committee reports). Reviewing the report will familiarize participants with the context for the legislation and the inspiration for provisions in more understandable terms than the formal legislation. For instance, participants might review the 1986 report accompanying the U.S. House of Representatives’ draft of PL 99-457 (U.S. House of Representatives, 1986). After they have read this report, participants will be better prepared to analyze the early intervention provisions of IDEA as well as the related regulations. This activity can be concluded by having participants debate the arguments for authorization of the early intervention program in IDEA and suggest why particular provisions were included.

**Adopting a Family Perspective** IDEA defined the family as having a primary role in decision making for the provision of early intervention services. Many students as well as new practitioners may assume that family members were always given a role in planning and decision making. Table 16.2 recommends readings for students that focus on parent and advocate narratives describing their experiences caring for and securing services for children with disabilities. To supplement or replace these readings, family advocates can be invited to address the group to share their perspectives on how the role of family members evolved from passive recipient to active partner since the 1970s.

**TABLE 16.2.** Resources for guiding participants to understand the context for early intervention public policy

Strategy	Purpose	Recommended faculty resources(s)	Student resources
Creating context collages	To gain an overview of the social context influencing the passage of IDEA	<p>"Early childhood intervention: The evolution of a concept" (Shonkoff, 1990)</p> <p>"Impact of federal policy on pediatric health and education programs" (Hanft, 1991)</p>	<p>"The politics of mental retardation during the Kennedy administration" (Berkowitz, 1980)</p> <p>"The Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142): Its history, origins and concepts" (Zettel &amp; Ballard, 1982)</p>
Conducting court debates	To examine and interpret court cases as they affect policies and programs in the 1990s	<i>Free Appropriate Public Education</i> (Rapport, 1996; Turnbull, 1986)	"Interpreting the rights of exceptional citizens through judicial action" (Smith & Barresi, 1982)
Demystifying legislation	To become proficient in understanding policy by interpreting laws, regulations, and reports and debating specified topics	<p><i>Legal and Political Issues in Special Education</i> (Cremens, 1983)</p> <p>Internet addresses for draft legislation and hearing schedules for federal government:</p> <p>U.S. House of Representatives: <a href="http://www.house.gov">http://www.house.gov</a></p> <p>U.S. Senate: <a href="http://www.senate.gov">http://www.senate.gov</a></p>	Copies of legislation, regulations, and congressional committee reports may be available from a depository library for U.S. government publications (contact a local library or the Office of Depository Services, U.S. Government Printing Office, (202) 512-1109, to locate the closest depository library)

(continued)



TABLE 16.2. (continued)

Strategy	Purpose	Recommended faculty resources(s)	Student resources
			Federal reports, laws, and regulations are available for purchase from the U.S. Government Printing Office, Post Office Box 6015, Gaithersburg, MD 20877 (202) 512-1800, fax (202) 512-2250, and are listed in the <i>Monthly Catalog of United States Government Publications</i> , found in many libraries
Adopting a family perspective	To understand the evolution of parental roles in decision making for their children	"Parent advocacy: A resource for early intervention" (Pizzo, 1990) "A brief history of family support programs" (Weissbourd, 1987)	<i>Parents Speak Out: Then and Now</i> (Turnbull & Turnbull, 1985) "Vision and empowerment" (Vohs, 1989)
Scanning the environment	To analyze the impact of political, economic, and social trends affecting a specific early intervention program	<i>Strategic Planning in Education: Unleashing Our School's Potential</i> (Newberry, 1992)	"Environmental scanning is vital to strategic planning" (Poole, 1991)



**Scanning the Environment** An environmental scan, a process of collecting data about trends and events that may affect a program or organization, is an excellent strategy for understanding the context for existing policies (Bryson, 1995; Newberry, 1992). Teams of participants can assess the impact of political, economic, technological, and social trends affecting a specific early intervention program by reviewing the larger community and national context in which the program operates. Reviewing all stakeholder attitudes and beliefs regarding the provision of early intervention services is also an essential component of this activity. Participants can gather information for their environmental scan by talking with the local chamber of commerce and community and business leaders. They can also review school board and county council reports and newspaper articles. Teams scan or review these data to identify political trends (e.g., upcoming elections, pending legislation, leadership), social trends (e.g., population served by the program, demographics of the entire community, attitudes and values of stakeholders), provider characteristics (e.g., education and experience, profession, instructional needs, personnel shortages), and the economic picture (e.g., funding sources for the program as well as revenues and businesses in the community). Once this information is collected, teams of participants can prepare charts for each category, separating the identified trends into supports and challenges for implementation of a specific early childhood policy within a community.

Because the development of an environmental scan requires some research, it is best assigned between classes or in preparation for an inservice workshop. When there is limited time for data collection, a guest speaker, such as an early intervention program director, can be invited to describe a particular program in the participants' community. Key demographic data describing the community in general and the population served by the early intervention program can be distributed on fact sheets for participants to review as they complete their scan. Inviting a guest speaker can also provide a helpful focus when trainees come from different programs or lack professional work experience (Hanft & Feinberg, 1995).

## CRITIQUING EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICIES

To analyze the effect of early intervention policies, participants must first understand the provisions and intent of a particular policy. To accomplish this, participants must have a framework to guide their analysis. Gallagher (1989) described a seven-step model for analyzing the impact of a policy once implementation has begun. He used PL 99-457 to illustrate his model (see Table 16.3).

### Framework of Policy Analysis

The first two steps of the model (i.e., the issues that led to the creation of the particular policy and a brief history of the present policy) are incorporated in the previous section

**TABLE 16.3.** Model of policy analysis

#### Steps for analyzing policy

1. Define the issues leading to the creation of the policy.
2. Summarize the history of the present policy.
3. Recognize the value base for the policy.
4. Examine how the policy has been implemented.
5. Identify how program objectives have been achieved.
6. Describe challenges and barriers to policy implementation.
7. Formulate recommendations for action.

Adapted from Gallagher (1989).

on understanding the context for public policies. Steps three through seven are also essential considerations in critiquing policies and are discussed in the following sections.

Recognizing the value base of a particular policy is the third step of Gallagher's model for critiquing policies. Although the value base for a policy may be communicated in a statement of need or vision, it is more often an implicit assumption or understanding. The values underlying early intervention policies, however, should be unambiguous to ensure effective implementation and communication among stakeholders (Moroney, 1981). Some major assumptions underlying the early intervention program of IDEA include the following: 1) when it comes to intervention, the earlier, the better; 2) if help is not available to infants and toddlers who need it, society will bear the costs of disabilities that might have been remedied or ameliorated; 3) intervention should do no harm; 4) family involvement is important in developing plans for the child; and 5) development is a continuous process (Paul, Gallagher, Kendrick, Thomas, & Young, 1992). Values contrary to these (e.g., we should not expend money on children who, at best, will make little contribution to society) may also be held by some stakeholders and will challenge or even derail the implementation of a specific policy, such as the early intervention program of IDEA (Gallagher, 1989).

Examining the implementation of a policy is the fourth step in policy analysis. Key questions to ask when reviewing the provisions of an early intervention policy and accompanying regulations are identified in Figure 16.1. Participants must understand the specific provisions of a policy to be able to understand its impact on each of three major early intervention stakeholder groups: 1) children who need specific services to grow and develop and their family members; 2) community agencies and early intervention person-

1. What services and programs does the policy provide for families and children, and who is eligible to participate?
2. What rights and protections does this policy guarantee for children and families?
3. How will current early intervention services/programs be affected by this policy, and what changes in operations and procedures will practitioners and administrators need to make?
4. Who will oversee the implementation of this policy and administer any services/programs?
5. What federal, state, and local resources (e.g., funding and personnel development) will be available to carry out this policy as mandated?
6. What benefits and/or challenges will this policy bring to families and children, early intervention providers, and administrators?

**Figure 16.1.** Key questions to ask when reviewing an early intervention policy.

nel who provide specialized services to children and families; and 3) administrators and legislators who authorize, fund, and oversee community programs and services.

The fifth step, identifying program objectives, focuses on evaluating whether basic policy objectives have been achieved. Typically, reviewers accomplish this through a literature search, personal interviews, questionnaires soliciting stakeholders' assessments and perspectives, or on-site review of specific programs and services to children and families established by the policy.

The sixth step identifies the challenges and barriers to policy implementation. Possible barriers include institutional (e.g., agencies, preexisting laws, bureaucratic procedures), psychological (e.g., personal, religious, or cultural beliefs of key individuals who implement the policy), sociological (e.g., values and mores of particular stakeholder groups), economic (e.g., funding sources, revenue, programmatic costs), political (e.g., challenges from established groups such as different levels of government or a professional organization), and geographic (e.g., rural versus urban, state and local boundaries, physical barriers such as mountains or rivers). Knowing the context for the formulation of a policy may provide indicators of challenges or barriers affecting implementation. For example, the political and social context for the 1986 reauthorization of IDEA provided strong support for extending the mandate for special education and related services down to age 3 but not to birth. Understanding this context enables participants to identify a major challenge to implementation of IDEA in having two sets of programs to administer the services, that is, early intervention services for the birth to 2-year-old population and school-based services for children with disabilities age 3 years and older. A particular challenge is faced when children make the transition from early intervention to school-based services.

The seventh and final step is to formulate recommendations for action. After evaluating whether policy objectives have been achieved, there are three possibilities for future action, specifically, acceptance, or partial or total revision of the policy under study. Strategies to assist participants in learning how to persuade policy makers to make changes as they draft and modify early intervention policies are discussed in the third instructional section on influencing public policy.

### **Teaching Strategies: Critiquing Early Childhood Policies**

The following instructional strategies operationalize Steps 3–6 of Gallagher's model of policy analysis. These activities will assist participants in learning to analyze public policies during their implementation. Table 16.4 outlines the purpose and provides faculty and student resources for each of the strategies.

**Identifying Stakeholder Values** The following activity will assist participants in understanding values and perspectives of early intervention stakeholders (e.g., families, practitioners, administrators). After reading family narratives (see Table 16.4 for suggestions) and/or talking with guest speakers to understand family perspectives, participants can be divided into small groups to discuss how personal and societal values affect the implementation of a policy, such as the early intervention program of IDEA. To illustrate, one concern for many families is finding cost-effective early intervention services in their own communities. Participants should consider how culture, ethnicity, and religion contribute to the values held by different families as they cope with the financial issues of paying for specialized services for their child. For example, participants might consider the differing values contained in statements such as, "My child's delay is God's will; He will take care of us somehow" or "I cannot ask others for help and must work harder to get what my child needs." Participants should consider how such personally held values

**TABLE 16.4.** Resources for guiding trainees to critique public policy

Strategy	Purpose	Faculty resource(s)	Student reading
Identifying stakeholder values	To understand the values and perspectives of major stakeholder groups (e.g., families, practitioners, administrators)	<i>Handbook for Ethical Policy Making</i> (Paul et al., 1992).  "The place of principles in policy analysis" (Anderson, 1979)	"Parental perspectives on the system of care for two birth weight infants" (Willis, 1991)  <i>Reflections on Growing Up Disabled</i> (Jones, 1982)
Understanding IDEA provisions	To understand the early intervention provisions of IDEA via innovative and entertaining strategies	Copies of IDEA and its regulations (CFR: Title 34; Education; Part 300-399) are available from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, DC 20402 (202) 783-3238  <i>Part H Updates</i> . (National Early Childhood Technical Assistance System, 1996). Available from: NEC*TAS, 500 NationsBank Plaza, 137 E. Franklin St., Chapel Hill, NC 27514 (919) 962-2001	<i>Families on the Move</i> (Institute for Child Health Policy, 1992), available at no cost from the National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health, 2070 Chain Bridge Rd., Suite 450, Vienna, VA 22182 (703) 821-8955 ext. 254  <i>Road Trip</i> (Sloop, 1994) diagrams, for the car parts, are available from the Partnerships for Inclusion Project, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center, CB 8180, UNC, Chapel Hill, NC 27599. Henderson (1992) includes informational materials about early intervention legislation and playing the game <i>Jeopardy</i> (Frank Porter Graham Child Development Center).
Interviewing policy makers	To demonstrate an awareness of various policies by framing interview questions and conducting interviews of stakeholders	"A functional analysis of the evolution of public policy for handicapped young children" (Meisels, 1985)	"From dream to reality: A participant's view of the implementation of Part H of PL 99-457" (Apter, 1994)

Evaluating policy effectiveness	To identify the format and methods used by policy analysts	<p>An annual listing of all reports and testimony (including policy evaluations) published by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) can be obtained from the GAO Document Ordering System (202) 512-6000. Example: <i>Home Visiting: A Promising Early Intervention Strategy for At-Risk Families</i> (GAO/HRD-90-83)</p> <p>The National Maternal &amp; Child Health Clearinghouse also distributes policy reports (703) 821-8955. Example: <i>Health Policy and Child Health: Expansions of Coverage, Managed Care Creates New Outreach Challenges</i></p>	<p><i>"Effects of family support intervention: A ten year follow-up"</i> (Seitz, Rosenbaum, &amp; Apfel, 1985)</p> <p><i>The Increasing Array of Early Care and Education Policies: An Argument for State and Local Control</i> (Smith, 1992). (Available from Allegheny-Singer Research Institute, 320 East North Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15212)</p>
Analyzing vignettes	To evaluate the intricacies of potentially ambiguous or complex aspects of public policies	<p>"The case method of instruction: Teaching application and problem solving skills to early interventionists" (McWilliam, 1992)</p> <p>"Problem-based learning: A review of literature on its outcomes and implementation issues" (Albanase &amp; Mitchell, 1993)</p>	<i>Working Together with Children and Families: Case Studies in Early Intervention</i> (McWilliam & Bailey, 1993)

support or challenge the societal values for early intervention programs identified on page 420.

**Understanding IDEA Provisions** Before reviewing how a policy is implemented, participants must understand the content of the early intervention provisions of IDEA. The following three activities provide an interesting complement to readings about provisions of IDEA:

1. *Families on the Move* A 10-minute video, *Families on the Move* (Institute for Child Health Policy, 1992) was filmed from a family perspective and provides a general introduction to the early intervention program in IDEA. The video illustrates 14 basic components of the law by linking each provision with the analogous parts of a bicycle, for example, the bicycle handlebars are representative of the family's role in steering the individualized family service plan.
2. *Road Trip* An educational game for teams, *Road Trip* (Sloop, 1994) was developed by a parent advocate to compare the basic components of the early intervention provisions of IDEA to the parts of a car. For instance, the steering wheel of a car is analogous to the role of the lead agency in coordinating or driving the statewide system of services. Replicas of car parts can be distributed to groups or pairs of participants as a prompt to discuss how their assigned car parts represent an aspect of the law. Teams can work to move a car across a map of their state by winning points for accurately describing their assigned IDEA provisions.
3. *Jeopardy* A humorous strategy to reinforce understanding of the major provisions of the early intervention program of IDEA is to play a version of the popular television game show *Jeopardy* (Rush & Martin, 1995). An "emcee," who dresses up in colorful clothes, gives each small group of participants a different statement describing a specific provision of the early intervention program. Each group must compose the corresponding question to win a point. For example, the correct question to the statement "This administrative group is responsible for ensuring that an IFSP is developed and implemented" is "What is a lead agency?" Descriptive materials about the law, as well as a copy of the legislation and implementing regulations, should be available to participants to use in forming the correct question. In preparation for this activity, each participant can write 10 statements with corresponding questions for the emcee to present.

**Interviewing Policy Makers** Participants can use the questions posed in Figure 16.1 to assist them in understanding the provisions of a specific policy in several ways. Practitioners can review newly implemented legislation, regulations, or administrative directives with a focus on how stakeholders from their particular agency or program will be affected both positively and negatively. Preservice students can use the questions as interview prompts to elicit the views of administrators, practitioners, and families involved in early intervention regarding the positive and negative impact of a specific policy. Guest speakers or a panel with respondents representing families, administrators, and practitioners could also be invited to class to discuss the questions.

**Evaluating Policy Effectiveness** Another strategy for teaching participants to evaluate the effectiveness of a public policy is to study reports completed by policy analysts. Participants can identify the structure and methods used, sources of information, key sections of the report, how analysis is presented, and recommendations for modification. Sources for early intervention reports available to the public are suggested in Table 16.4.

**Analyzing Vignettes** Role playing and/or discussing narratives of family situations gives participants the opportunity to grapple with the ambiguity and complexity of evaluating the supports as well as challenges to an early intervention policy. The following vignette was presented to key constituents during a case study of policy development for the early intervention program. Participants may want to compare results of their discussions with those of these policy makers (see Place & Gallagher, 1992).

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**A mother living in a rural region of your state goes into delivery very early in her pregnancy, and complications develop with the infant after her birth. The baby is air-evacuated to the nearest neonatal intensive care unit (NICU). Because the baby meets the eligibility requirements for your early intervention program, a service coordinator is assigned and contacts the family, explaining that the early intervention program includes services to enhance the capacity of the family to meet the special needs of their child. The service coordinator asks family members what they need. They immediately say that the mother wants to see her baby. They do not have a car, nor do they have the money to go by public transportation. The mother explains, "My baby needs to be held by her mom. That's what she needs to get well and grow strong."**

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Sometimes the very ambiguity of the language of the law can create a challenge to interpretation and implementation. Various policy makers did express dramatically different points of view regarding the state's responsibility to provide early intervention services. Participants may answer the following questions on their own and provide a rationale for their answers based on the law and regulations: 1) Does the early intervention system sponsored under IDEA have a responsibility to provide the mother with transportation to a distant city where her infant is being treated in an NICU? and 2) If the parent then says she cannot pay for a hotel room, what is the responsibility of the system? Conclude this activity by holding a debate so that participants can articulate their positions and discuss inconsistencies in interpretations. Sources for additional narratives regarding family and state administrator perspectives are suggested in Table 16.4.

## **INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY**

The final step in policy analysis is formulating recommendations for future action. This action will involve influencing policy makers to maintain support for existing programs; influence the passage or revision of legislation, regulations, or other guidelines affecting services; and prevent the adoption of policies that may hinder the ultimate effectiveness of early intervention services for families and children. To fulfill the role of advocating for a certain policy, participants must demonstrate sophisticated analyses and communication. They should be able to look beyond the surface of what a policy states and evaluate testimony and evidence regarding its impact.

### **Teaching Strategies: Influencing Public Policy**

Effective policy advocates need to communicate effectively with influential policy makers. This requires being able to analyze positions, frame ideas, develop persuasive arguments, and convey these recommendations in an effective and respectful manner. The following strategies will assist participants to learn and practice the skills of a successful policy advocate. Table 16.5 outlines the purpose and provides faculty and student resources for these strategies.



**TABLE 16.5.** Resources for teaching participants to influence public policy

Strategy	Purpose	Faculty resource(s)	Student resources
Conducting a mock hearing	To adopt the perspectives of key policy makers by taking on the roles of congressional representatives and witnesses at a hearing	<i>Congressional Procedures and the Policy Process</i> (Oleszek, 1984) <i>The Dance of Legislation</i> (Redman, 1973)	<i>Anatomy of a Hearing</i> (League of Women Voters of the United States, 1972)
Evaluating oral testimony	To evaluate the oral testimony of key policy makers by attending a public hearing	<i>Present Yourself</i> (Gelb, 1988)	"Public hearings: Make sure your testimony is heard" (Glomp, 1982) "How to get your congressman to listen to you" (Kiplinger, 1972)
Gaining insight about influence	To gain insights from policy makers about factors that influence their decision making and to learn how to positively influence decision makers	<i>Lions Don't Need to Roar</i> (Benton, 1992) <i>People Skills</i> (Bolton, 1979)	<i>Written by Herself: An Anthology of Women's Autobiographies</i> (Ker Conway, 1992) "Influencing others: Skills are identified" (Goleman, 1986)
Developing persuasive arguments	To consider a position from all sides and to practice debating pros and cons	<i>Presentation for Decision Makers: Strategies for Structuring and Delivering Your Ideas</i> (Holcombe & Stein, 1983)	"The clinician as advocate for sensory integration" (Hanft, 1987)
Writing letters to policy makers	To become capable of drafting succinct and persuasive letters to policy makers	<i>How to Write Your Congressman and the President</i> (Friends Committee on National Legislation, 1991). Address: 245 Second St., N.E., Washington, DC 20002 (202) 547-6000	<i>Special Education and Related Services: Communicating By Letter Writing</i> (Ferguson & Ripley, 1991)

**Conducting a Mock Hearing** This activity focuses on conducting a mock hearing with participants assuming the roles of congressional committee members and witnesses. The success of this activity is dependent on some preparation by the instructor and participants. The instructor should monitor when congressional hearings relevant to early intervention are scheduled to videotape specific televised proceedings from networks dedicated to broadcasting congressional news (see Table 16.2 for the Internet address for hearing schedules). Copies of written testimony may also be requested from witnesses by contacting them immediately after the committee hearing (committees also may keep transcripts on file for several weeks after hearings). After viewing the videotape and reading any hearing documents obtained, participants can critique the witnesses' oral and written testimony and modify their testimony in ways they think will enhance the impact of their positions. Participants are then prepared to reenact the hearing, role-playing congressional members and witnesses viewed in the tapes. Participants not involved in the mock hearing can critique the effectiveness of the oral presentations to the committee. Participants will benefit from analyzing testimony and witnessing an actual congressional hearing but will also gain experience in making persuasive speeches before an authoritative body.

**Evaluating Oral Testimony** Local hearings or meetings can be identified for participants to attend (e.g., school board meetings, public hearings at the state capitol, the recreation subcommittee of the local city council). Participants should note the following in journals or oral presentations to the class: Who presented before the policy board? Whom did they represent? Why were these people invited or allowed to testify? How did the policy makers interact with each witness, and what influenced these varying interactions? What points did particular hearing witnesses make? How effective were they? Once the participant has analyzed the hearing, he or she can rewrite one witness's testimony to enhance its effectiveness. In addition to giving participants exposure to actual public debates, this exercise necessitates that participants analyze all the subtle influences crucial to testifying in a hearing. Finally, the task requires detailed analysis of testimony and recommendations for improving the presentation.

**Gaining Insight About Influence** A key community leader, such as a county supervisor, the chair of the school board, or parent activist, may be invited to participate in an interview conducted by participants focusing on how to influence policy makers. Before the guest arrives, trainees should reach consensus about the interview questions (e.g., how to identify key decision makers for specific issues, how to gain access to policy makers, how to phrase comments, what influences this particular policy maker positively, what hazards can the guest warn the participant to avoid). Have a stand-up mike, if necessary, and assign or ask for volunteers to present questions to the interviewee. Ask the policy guest to offer tips and stories to guide the participants to become more effective at influencing policies.

The participants might also be interested in how the guest became an influential person. What led them to become interested in policy development, implementation, or influence? What instruction did they seek? What important life choices or events led to this outcome? For example, readings from *Written by Herself: An Anthology of Women's Autobiographies* (Ker Conway, 1992) will assist participants in understanding how women have attained positions of influence in professions from which they traditionally have been excluded (see Table 16.5).

Once questions are selected, a mock press conference or interview can be conducted. Participants could write a one-page press release based on what they learned from the interview. This activity gives participants the experience thinking about and framing es-

sential questions to ask an influential policy guest. It also gives them an opportunity to interview an influential guest in a formal manner in front of an audience and to summarize complex information succinctly.

**Developing Persuasive Arguments** When considering the implications of a policy, it is important to consider its impact from all perspectives. Participants can make a grid of all key stakeholder groups and summarize the pro and con perspectives of each group. This will help participants develop their argument to present to policy makers as well as anticipate the opposition's points by answering the question, "What does this policy mean for my group as well as other stakeholders?" (Scott & Acquaviva, 1985). To illustrate, assume a group of early intervention program managers has convened to suggest revisions to state Medicaid policy regarding payment for early intervention services in community settings outside of hospitals. Chart the key issues (pro and con) for each of three groups—families, practitioners, and state administrators—in regard to expanding the Medicaid coverage for the birth-to-3 population. Using this stakeholder perspective chart as a base, participants can develop their argument for or against this proposal. Remind them that effective proposals anticipate and answer the opposing views with objective data.

**Writing Letters to Policy Makers** Participants can be divided into groups of three and asked to reach a consensus about a local issue they would like to see policy makers address. Participants should organize their thoughts in a concise and persuasive letter to key decision makers (sources for effective letter writing to influence policy makers are listed in Table 16.5). To practice letter writing, issues need not be confined to early intervention and may address issues such as asking the city council or county board of directors to install a new traffic light at a dangerous intersection or requesting that university administrators implement a new policy of having security guards accompany students to their cars or dorms after 10 P.M. to ensure their safety. More experienced participants may write to state and federal policy makers regarding issues of personal or professional concern.

Many participants will receive a response, especially if they are members of the policy makers' constituency. Responses should be shared with the group. Some groups may not receive a reply. Participants should be reminded that the purpose of the task is to identify a policy that needs change, learn what constitutes an effective policy request, and draft such a letter. The response from policy makers is not essential to accomplish the desired goals for this task.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided faculty of personnel development programs with strategies for teaching participants to analyze public policy effectively. Students in preservice programs as well as practitioners in the field must receive instruction in policy analysis to understand the laws, regulations, and other policies that govern early intervention programs as well as clarify administrative directives regarding how best to conduct early intervention programs and services. Three key competencies have been identified that participants must acquire to analyze policies effectively: 1) understand the political, social, and economic context contributing to the development of the policy; 2) critique the provision of the policy and evaluate its effectiveness; and 3) influence policy makers to draft or revise policies.

As we approach the 21st century, many long-standing policies affecting children with disabilities and their families will come under scrutiny as the political, social, and economic context for providing early intervention services to children and families changes.

Debates about federal and state responsibility for services, limited financial resources for health care and education, and manpower shortages will continue to raise complex questions regarding whom to serve and what programs are needed and desirable. These complex questions are not answered simply, nor are policies understood solely through a review of their provisions. Policy analysis is a complex process that goes beyond a simple understanding of the provisions of a specific policy. Participants must be prepared to engage in a comprehensive analysis of the issues, values, and impact of a policy to make rational recommendations and influence the implementation of key early intervention policies for children and their family members.

(Early) intervention is not a monolithic phenomenon.... The idea that there is a “right” way to intervene with infants is outmoded.... We must design models that account for greater diversity of needs; offer more respect for individual differences; embody different governance structures; foster different approaches to training; contain totally different roles for families; rely on different levels of responsibility and leadership from diverse social services; and generally reflect different relationships between recipients of services, professionals, lay professionals, researchers, and policy makers. (Meisels, 1992, p. 5)

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