

Children's Integrated Services Early Intervention Family Survey FAQ

What is the CIS-EI Family Survey?

Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires that states use an approved tool to measure how well Early Intervention programs have helped families to:

- Know their rights
- Communicate their and their child's needs
- Help their children develop and learn

Vermont's CIS-EI Family Survey is made up of four page:

- Introduction Letter to the Family
- Demographics Information, Comment Opportunities
- Section A: Ways that Family Supports Child's Needs
- Section B: Helpfulness of Early Intervention Program

Sections A & B make up the Family Outcomes Survey-Revised (FOS-R), a federally approved tool to measure program outcomes. [ECTA Center: Family Outcomes Surveys](#)

What is the data used for?

It is used locally for celebrating the positive impacts that CIS EI has had on families and creates opportunities for targeted program improvement.

Data from Section B is sent to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in the Annual Performance Report (APR) and populates Indicator 4 for Vermont's Part C Program.

When is the survey period and which families receive it?

The CIS-EI Family Survey is disseminated to families that have received CIS-EI services for at least six months in two pushes:

- Families where the children are turning three are surveyed between November 1- March 31
 - Regions may also request surveys for children who are exiting within this time period prior to their third birthdate, so long as they have been served for at least six months.

- Active families are surveyed between March 15-June 30.
 - This is pulled for families whose One Plan date was on or before September 15 of the previous year.

How do regional teams receive the survey?

A packet containing a survey for each of the families identified is mailed or delivered to CIS-EI Supervisors from the State.

What Is the UID and How Do I Find It?

The UID is a Unique Identification code for each child. The format is [Region][Child Id]. An example is 'Burlington1512'. The Child ID is the number assigned to the record in the state database.

This is how the return rate is tracked. If the UID is not recorded, then 'credit' for that survey will not be given to the region. This ensures that we are able to connect the right child to the right response. It can be found in two places:

- On the tracking excel sheet provided by the State
- At the bottom of the paper survey, highlighted in yellow.

How can families respond to the survey?

- Online by scanning the QR code or navigating to the site listed on the family survey letter.
- By mail using the business reply envelope provided in the survey packet.
- By phone with the family engagement coordinator at 802-798-6468.
- By text: families can text a photo of the completed family survey directly to the family engagement coordinator at 802-798-6468.

How can I deliver a survey to the family?

- Best practice is to hand deliver the survey to the family during a visit.
- The survey link can be emailed or texted to the family
- The survey can be mailed to the family. If regions would like to avoid paying for postage, the State Team must be contacted so that a survey can be sent directly to the family.
 - Make sure you put the address on! The survey provided by the State does not have that information.

What if a family receives services primarily at childcare?

If a family/child primarily receives CIS services in a child care setting, the survey can be left at the childcare with the Child Care Provider's permission.

Families should be notified that the survey will be dropped off and some communication (phone or electronic) should happen with the family about the survey, the importance of their feedback, and how to respond.

What is a script I could use to talk about the survey with families?

“Each year Early Intervention evaluates our program to learn how we are helping families like yours – and how we can improve. One way that you can help is by completing this short survey [explain how to complete]. You will need the unique code at the bottom of the survey. It takes about 10-15 minutes to complete and is completely confidential. I won’t see your responses. CIS-EI really values the information you and other families provide in this survey. Your feedback helps us to improve the program and better support families like yours. Thank You!”

How can regional teams track their CIS-EI Family Survey delivery attempts?

A member of the CIS State Team will email a password protected spreadsheet containing a list of all children, including their [UID](#), whose survey has not yet been received by the State.

This spreadsheet is a central place to track deliveries, attempted deliveries, undeliverable surveys, and notes such as if two children reside in the same house (whereby only one of the surveys should be delivered).

Regions can ask for an update at any time, but the finalized version will need to be returned to a member of the State Team by an assigned time after the survey period closes (typically mid- July at the latest).

What about siblings or multiple children in one household?

Only one survey should be sent per household, regardless of how many children are listed. Siblings or multiple children should initially be indicated on the tracking sheet so the State Team can combine them into one packet.

If one has been sent in error, please notify the State Team and a corrected survey will be sent.

When is a survey undeliverable?

A CIS-EI survey is considered undeliverable if the service provider (or any other designated member of the child's team) is not able to deliver (by hand, mail, or electronic means (email or text)) the survey to the family for any of the following reasons:

- The family has been determined “lost to follow up” before the first day of the survey period or within sixty days after the first day of the survey period.
- A distributed survey is not successfully received due to incomplete or changed contact information, and the family has not responded to other forms of outreach
- The family exits the program before the first day of the survey period

If a family exits *during* the survey period, this is **not** considered undeliverable. Please attempt to deliver the survey before they exit.

How do I access a translated or interpreted CIS-EI Family Survey?

- The State will provide surveys in multiple languages to accommodate families who require translations.
- Families may also complete the survey by phone with an interpreter.
- Please contact the CIS State Administrative Team at AHS.DCFCDDCIS@vermont.gov to coordinate.

Can I complete the survey with the family or on the phone with the family?

No. Providers can help a parent/caregiver understand a question and can be present when the family completes the survey, but providers *cannot* ask the questions directly of the family (either by phone or in person) and record the answers. Parent/Caregivers *must* be provided with the opportunity to give confidential feedback.

If a family is having, or might have, difficulty reading and responding to the survey, please call a member of the CIS State Team for support.

Why are regional teams (and not the State) responsible for delivering this survey to families?

Surveys are more likely to be returned when distributed by a familiar, trusted person. Regional CIS-EI staff have direct relationships with families and can better encourage participation.

Historically, the State did mail the surveys directly to the families. We decided to move away from this option for several reasons:

- It was burdensome on both the State and the regions to verify the mailing addresses for all families before we mailed them out.
 - It was very difficult to get surveys to the caregivers of children in custody because their addresses were not easily accessible.
- Many of the responses from the families who exited were providing feedback related to their experiences in Part B, rather than in CIS EI.
- The return rate of the survey was at its highest, 32%.

Based on feedback and discussions with other states across the country, hand delivery is the most effective way to get a strong response rate. States that use strategies like an outside organization to provide the survey have return rates lower than 30%.

Since we've switched to hand delivery, Vermont is one of 7 states that have a return rate above 50%, which gives evidence that this methodology is the best way to get the most relevant feedback from the most families.

How can I see the status of my region's response rate?

Throughout the survey period, the State Team will send out statewide updates to regional EI Supervisors.

At any time, you can request a regional update from a CIS State Team Member.

Why is statewide response rate data shared with everyone?

- It supports transparency and helps regions collaborate on strategies to boost response rates.
- This is a long-standing practice across EI data collection efforts.

In the future, can we change the questions in the CIS EI Family Survey?

The introduction and demographics pages are reviewed annually and may be updated, but sections A & B are standardized and cannot be changed (OSEP requirement).

If you would like to provide feedback about the survey, please contact a member of the CIS State Team.

Why isn't this, or a similar survey, delivered to all families who receive CIS?

The CIS State Team is working on a broader strategy to gather feedback from all families engaged with CIS services.

Reach out to a CIS State team member if you have ideas!

How are the response rate targets set?

The Vermont Interagency Coordinating Council (VICC) sets the state's targets. If you would like information about the Vermont Interagency Coordinating Council, please reach out to a member of the CIS State Team.

When and how is the information shared and used?

- The information is reported out to regions in late summer/early fall.
- The information is shared with the Vermont Interagency Coordinating Council in September.
- The information is reported to OSEP in the Annual Performance Report in February.

How does this information help providers?

The survey results validate that the strengths in Early Intervention programs are also recognized by families and provides opportunities to identify areas across the Early Intervention program that can be strengthened.

Does anyone follow up with families?

Yes. The CIS Family Engagement Coordinator reviews survey responses throughout the survey period.

Families that provide consent to be contacted (the first check box on page two) *and* share direct questions, requests for resources, unmet service needs, or potential violations of IDEA or Part C, are contacted.

Attempts are made to follow up with families who express an interest in engaging with program improvement work (by checking the second permissions box on page 2).

More questions? Please reach out to the State Team!