

RESEARCH SNAPSHOT

RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION



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Wanted: better access to therapy services for special needs kids in rural BC

What you need to know:

In rural British Columbia (BC), long wait times and therapist recruitment challenges limit access to therapy services for children with special needs. Using remote communications like webcams, encouraging collaboration between therapists, and specialized therapist education programs are suggested to improve access to EIT services in BC rural communities.

What is this research about?

In BC, the Early Intervention Therapy (EIT) program delivers physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech-language therapy and family support services to children with special needs from birth to school entry. In rural BC, long wait times and challenges recruiting therapists limit access to EIT.

The BC [Ministry of Children and Family Development](#) (MCFD) and the [BC Association for Child Development and Intervention](#) (BCADI) want to improve access to EIT for children with special needs in rural areas. Prompt EIT services are crucial to maximizing the development of children with developmental disorders.

What did the researcher do?

This project involved researching ways to improve access to EIT in rural BC. The researchers reviewed writing on the subject and conducted interviews using these questions:

- What is most effective in improving access to EIT services in difficult to serve areas?
- How are others improving access to EIT in rural areas?



Katie Whyte investigated methods to improve access to Early Intervention Therapy in rural communities (Photo credit: 3422763 from Pixabay).



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What did the researcher find?

The research findings highlight therapists collaboratively assessing clients as among the most effective ways to help more children. This approach also helps new therapists be effective in their jobs. The findings support using video and audio devices to give therapy remotely.

It was also found that increased access to employment training programs for therapists can improve access to EIT services in rural areas. Particularly, programs specializing on practicing therapy rurally.

How can you use this research?

This research will be vital for anyone providing services for children with special needs in rural areas, from policymakers to therapists. This research began to support EIT services in remote and rural BC; however, the findings can be tailored to other remote and rural communities outside of BC. In the project report, the researchers included helpful case studies on how each approach is used successfully in EIT services. Further research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness of EIT strategies in rural BC and to look at approaches appropriate for rural Indigenous communities.

About the researchers

Katie Whyte is a University of Victoria (UVic) graduate student. This project was completed as part of the [Graduate Studies \(GS\) 505](#) course and supervised by instructors Drs. Gord Miller and Wayne Mitic. Facilitated by UVic [Research Partnerships and Knowledge Mobilization](#), GS 505 is a partnership between MCFD and UVic. This project was prepared on behalf of MCFD in partnership with BCADI.

Keywords

Early intervention therapy services; early child development; physiotherapy; occupational therapy; speech-language pathology; speech-language therapy; therapeutic intervention; family support services; developmental delay; disability; children with special needs; remote communities; rural communities

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