Giving Children a Good Start

All children deserve a good start in life. Some children need additional support to develop in a way that is healthy and maximizes their potential for success. Unfortunately many developmental issues are not unearthed until children start school, several years after early intervention services could put them on a typically-developing track. Identifying these children early would give them the best opportunity for life success.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians conduct periodic screening for developmental delays during well-child visits of infants and toddlers, including screening for autism.1 Yet the demands on physicians are great, and even then many children do not have a pediatric medical home that provides on-going monitoring and evaluation. Engaging community agencies in identifying children at risk would increase the number of children with special needs who are identified early and served.2 Partnerships between health care providers and community organizations could have a significant impact on health and developmental outcomes by assisting with early identification, supporting parents, and coordinating needed services in a timely manner. One successful example of such a partnership is led by 211 LA County. 211 LA County has employed phone-based developmental screening with real-time screening results, immediate care coordination services, and referral network development as a cost-effective strategy to increase early identification and early intervention with young children in an underserved, low-income, ethnic-minority population.

**FAST FACTS**

- 4 out of 10 children birth to five years old in California do not have a medical home where a pediatrician can track their health and development, and low-income children are even less likely to have a medical home. 3
- Low-income and ethnic-minority children are much less likely to have developmental issues identified early. 4
- It is possible to identify children with autism spectrum disorders as early as two years of age; yet most children are identified at 4 years of age or later. 5
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $13,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more. Early intervention in the preschool years can reduce the need for costly intervention later on. 6

"The high rate of risk for developmental delays and [Autism Spectrum Disorders] identified through [211 LA County] screenings, coupled with the fact that one-third of families had pre-existing developmental concerns, signals a critical level of unmet need and underscores the utility of universal screening in this population." 7

211 LA County launched Developmental Screening and Care Coordination with grant funding received from the W.K. Kellogg, Weingart and S. Mark Taper Foundations and matching grants from First 5 LA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Local Funding Partners.

**PARENT STORY**

Anthony turned his life around to regain legal custody of his 2½ year old son who had been in foster care for one and a half years. His son’s speech delays and behavior problems were troubling. Anthony called 211 LA and took a developmental screening questionnaire that found his son at high risk for potential developmental disability. Anthony was quickly connected to a free comprehensive developmental assessment and a speech therapy program for his son.

“I was eager to learn more about how my son was learning, developing and growing for his age. I know that early intervention makes a difference. 211 LA helped me with information and resources.

"THANKS TO 211, MY SON WILL HAVE A CHANCE" (Anthony)

211 LA County
211, Box 726
(626) 350-1841
www.211LA.org

ZERO TO THREE
411 North Beverly, Suite 150
Los Angeles, CA 90007
(213) 481-7279
www.zerotothree.org

ZERO TO THREE is a national, nonprofit organization that informs, trains, and supports professionals, policymakers, and parents in their efforts to promote the health and development of infants and children. ZERO TO THREE is a nonprofit, research-based resource for federal and state policymakers and advocates on the unique developmental needs of infants and toddlers.

To learn more about this topic or about ZERO TO THREE, please visit our website.

211 LA County is dedicated to providing an easy-to-use, caring, professional source of guidance, advocacy, and 24/7 per week access to a comprehensive range of human services to the people of Los Angeles County.

CONTACT/ABOUT
Giving Children a Good Start

All children deserve a good start in life. Some children need additional support to develop in a way that is healthy and maximizes their potential for success. Unfortunately, many developmental issues are not unearthed until children start school, several years after early intervention services could put them on a typically-developing track. Identifying these children early would give them the best opportunity for life success.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians conduct periodic screening for developmental delays during well-child visits of infants and toddlers, including screening for autism. Yet the demands on physicians are great, and even then many children do not have a pediatric medical home that provides ongoing monitoring and evaluation. Engaging community agencies in identifying children at risk would increase the number of children with special needs who are identified early and served. Partnerships between health care providers and community organizations could have a significant impact on health and developmental outcomes by assisting with early identification, supporting parents, and coordinating needed services in a timely manner. One successful example of such a partnership is led by 211 LA County. 211 LA County has employed phone-based developmental screening with real-time screening results, immediate care coordination services, and referral network development as a cost-effective strategy to increase early identification and early intervention with young children in an underserved, low-income, ethnic-minority population.

**Fast Facts**

- 4 out of 10 children birth to five years old in California do not have a medical home where a pediatrician can track their health and development, and low-income children are even less likely to have a medical home.
- Low-income and ethnic-minority children are much less likely to have developmental issues identified early.
- It is possible to identify children with autism spectrum disorders as early as two years of age, yet most children are identified at 4 years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $13,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more. Early intervention in the preschool years can reduce the need for costly intervention later on.

**Contact/About**

211 LA County
P.O. Box 726
(626) 350-1841
www.211LA.org

211 LA County is dedicated to providing an easy-to-use, caring, professional source of guidance, advocacy, and 24/7 per-week access to a comprehensive range of human services to the people of Los Angeles County.

211 LA County launched Developmental Screening and Care Coordination with grant funding received from the W.M. Keck, Weingart, and S. Mark Taper Foundations and matching grants from First 5 LA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Local Funding Partners.

**Parent Story**

Anthony turned his life around to regain legal custody of his 2½ year old son who had been in foster care for one and a half years. His son’s speech delays and behavior problems were troubling. Anthony called 211 LA and took a developmental screening questionnaire that found his son at high risk for potential developmental disability. Anthony was quickly connected to a free comprehensive developmental assessment and a speech therapy program for his son.

“I was eager to learn more about how my son was learning and growing for his age. I know that early intervention makes a difference. 211 LA helped me with information and resources.

“Thanks to 211, My Son Will Have a Chance” (Anthony)

**Contact/About**

211 LA County
P.O. Box 726
(626) 350-1841
www.211LA.org

211 LA County is dedicated to providing an easy-to-use, caring, professional source of guidance, advocacy, and 24/7 per-week access to a comprehensive range of human services to the people of Los Angeles County.

**Fast Facts**

- 4 out of 10 children birth to five years old in California do not have a medical home where a pediatrician can track their health and development, and low-income children are even less likely to have a medical home.
- Low-income and ethnic-minority children are much less likely to have developmental issues identified early.
- It is possible to identify children with autism spectrum disorders as early as two years of age, yet most children are identified at 4 years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $13,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more. Early intervention in the preschool years can reduce the need for costly intervention later on.

211 LA County launched Developmental Screening and Care Coordination with grant funding received from the W.M. Keck, Weingart, and S. Mark Taper Foundations and matching grants from First 5 LA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Local Funding Partners.

**Parent Story**

Anthony turned his life around to regain legal custody of his 2½ year old son who had been in foster care for one and a half years. His son’s speech delays and behavior problems were troubling. Anthony called 211 LA and took a developmental screening questionnaire that found his son at high risk for potential developmental disability. Anthony was quickly connected to a free comprehensive developmental assessment and a speech therapy program for his son.

“I was eager to learn more about how my son was learning and growing for his age. I know that early intervention makes a difference. 211 LA helped me with information and resources.

“Thanks to 211, My Son Will Have a Chance” (Anthony)

**Contact/About**

211 LA County
P.O. Box 726
(626) 350-1841
www.211LA.org

211 LA County is dedicated to providing an easy-to-use, caring, professional source of guidance, advocacy, and 24/7 per-week access to a comprehensive range of human services to the people of Los Angeles County.

**Fast Facts**

- 4 out of 10 children birth to five years old in California do not have a medical home where a pediatrician can track their health and development, and low-income children are even less likely to have a medical home.
- Low-income and ethnic-minority children are much less likely to have developmental issues identified early.
- It is possible to identify children with autism spectrum disorders as early as two years of age, yet most children are identified at 4 years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $13,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more. Early intervention in the preschool years can reduce the need for costly intervention later on.

211 LA County launched Developmental Screening and Care Coordination with grant funding received from the W.M. Keck, Weingart, and S. Mark Taper Foundations and matching grants from First 5 LA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Local Funding Partners.

**Parent Story**

Anthony turned his life around to regain legal custody of his 2½ year old son who had been in foster care for one and a half years. His son’s speech delays and behavior problems were troubling. Anthony called 211 LA and took a developmental screening questionnaire that found his son at high risk for potential developmental disability. Anthony was quickly connected to a free comprehensive developmental assessment and a speech therapy program for his son.

“I was eager to learn more about how my son was learning and growing for his age. I know that early intervention makes a difference. 211 LA helped me with information and resources.

“Thanks to 211, My Son Will Have a Chance” (Anthony)

**Contact/About**

211 LA County
P.O. Box 726
(626) 350-1841
www.211LA.org

211 LA County is dedicated to providing an easy-to-use, caring, professional source of guidance, advocacy, and 24/7 per-week access to a comprehensive range of human services to the people of Los Angeles County.

**Fast Facts**

- 4 out of 10 children birth to five years old in California do not have a medical home where a pediatrician can track their health and development, and low-income children are even less likely to have a medical home.
- Low-income and ethnic-minority children are much less likely to have developmental issues identified early.
- It is possible to identify children with autism spectrum disorders as early as two years of age, yet most children are identified at 4 years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $13,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more. Early intervention in the preschool years can reduce the need for costly intervention later on.

211 LA County launched Developmental Screening and Care Coordination with grant funding received from the W.M. Keck, Weingart, and S. Mark Taper Foundations and matching grants from First 5 LA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Local Funding Partners.

**Parent Story**

Anthony turned his life around to regain legal custody of his 2½ year old son who had been in foster care for one and a half years. His son’s speech delays and behavior problems were troubling. Anthony called 211 LA and took a developmental screening questionnaire that found his son at high risk for potential developmental disability. Anthony was quickly connected to a free comprehensive developmental assessment and a speech therapy program for his son.

“I was eager to learn more about how my son was learning and growing for his age. I know that early intervention makes a difference. 211 LA helped me with information and resources.

“Thanks to 211, My Son Will Have a Chance” (Anthony)

**Contact/About**

211 LA County
P.O. Box 726
(626) 350-1841
www.211LA.org

211 LA County is dedicated to providing an easy-to-use, caring, professional source of guidance, advocacy, and 24/7 per-week access to a comprehensive range of human services to the people of Los Angeles County.

**Fast Facts**

- 4 out of 10 children birth to five years old in California do not have a medical home where a pediatrician can track their health and development, and low-income children are even less likely to have a medical home.
- Low-income and ethnic-minority children are much less likely to have developmental issues identified early.
- It is possible to identify children with autism spectrum disorders as early as two years of age, yet most children are identified at 4 years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $13,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more. Early intervention in the preschool years can reduce the need for costly intervention later on.

211 LA County launched Developmental Screening and Care Coordination with grant funding received from the W.M. Keck, Weingart, and S. Mark Taper Foundations and matching grants from First 5 LA and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Local Funding Partners.

**Parent Story**

Anthony turned his life around to regain legal custody of his 2½ year old son who had been in foster care for one and a half years. His son’s speech delays and behavior problems were troubling. Anthony called 211 LA and took a developmental screening questionnaire that found his son at high risk for potential developmental disability. Anthony was quickly connected to a free comprehensive developmental assessment and a speech therapy program for his son.

“I was eager to learn more about how my son was learning and growing for his age. I know that early intervention makes a difference. 211 LA helped me with information and resources.

“Thanks to 211, My Son Will Have a Chance” (Anthony)
In September 2009, 211 LA County launched an innovative developmental screening and care coordination program. The program uses evidence-based screening tools in the agency’s 211 telephone call centers to assist families with children having potential developmental delays and disabilities. After receiving standard 211 service, a portion of parents called of children birth to five years of age were offered the opportunity to participate in the program about their children’s development using an on-line developmental screening tool. All children screened are assessed by a trained Care Coordinator. Parent responses are entered into a web-based tool that immediately generates a report of the likelihood that the child has a developmental issue. In the same call, Care Coordinators share the screening results and help families interpret the results.

When screening indicates that a child may be at risk for developmental delay, the Care Coordinator creates an individual care plan and refers the family to appropriate care providers to ensure that children have medical homes where they can receive coordinated care. During an evaluation period, 70% of parents offered phone screening agreed to participate. A third of participating parents indicated that they had been concerned about their child’s development for at least several months. The acceptance rate of parents invited to participate in telephone screening suggests that this strategy can be an effective method for reaching underserved families. 211 LA County Developmental Screening and Care Coordination offers a replicable model for early detection of developmental issues that is the preschool grant available to states for providing educational programs for children ages 3-5 who are eligible to receive early intervention services. Part B of IDEA (1990) is the preschool grant available to states for providing educational programs for children ages 3-5 who are eligible to receive early intervention services.

Developmental Screening and Care Coordination offers a replicable model for early detection of developmental issues that is the preschool grant available to states for providing educational programs for children ages 3-5 who are eligible to receive early intervention services. Part B of IDEA (1990) is the preschool grant available to states for providing educational programs for children ages 3-5 who are eligible to receive early intervention services.

## Recommendations

- Include the 211 LA County telephone-based developmental screening and care coordination model as a scalable and cost-effective strategy in implementing the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part B programs for all children.
- Explore the feasibility of using the 211 LA County model in statewide efforts to strengthen coordination between child wellness services, public health, mental health, and developmental disabilities agencies to screen and provide services to vulnerable children ages 0-5 years.
- Expand reimbursement for developmental screening and care coordination under Medi-Cal (Medicaid) to community-based agencies such as 2-1-1.
- Provide resources to 2-1-1 programs in California to replicate the 211 LA County model and build local community services networks responsive to the needs of families.
- Ensure that state Medi-Cal regulations and private insurance coverages align with new federal requirements under the Affordable Care Act to provide developmental screening.

## Screening Through 211 LA County Strengths

- Children in the population served by 211 LA County—typically families with very low income, homeless or at risk for homelessness, facing domestic violence or other psycho-social issues—are at an extraordinarily high risk for a disability or a delay.
- Most screening participants reported that their children do not have medical homes or regular well-child medical check-ups where development issues might be identified.
- 211 LA County’s formal partner network builds cross-disciplinary partnerships to improve integration of care, promote effective communication, and encourage collaboration. As new family needs were identified through the effort, 211 LA County was able to build and extend this network.

## Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorders. Children can be identified as young as 1 or 2 years old, yet more than half are not identified until ages 4 or older. Children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are at increased risk for low income and ethnic minority families and are more likely to be at risk for autism spectrum disorder (ASD) at ages 4 or older. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive intervention later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) range from $6,000 to $100,000.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents recognize that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as knowing when to be concerned about their child’s development. The Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening; nor were they aware of screening services for which their children were eligible. Parents may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help them understand development and find support when needed.

The early period of life is a critical time in a child’s development and understanding when to be concerned about a child’s development is essential. Early childhood intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) range from $6,000 to $100,000.

## 211 LA County and Autism

In a 2011 report, the Colorado Department of Health and Environment found that 2-1-1 is a critical entry point for families in need of services for children with disabilities. The report recommended that 2-1-1 programs across the nation replicate the 211 LA County model.

The 211 LA County model has been widely replicated across the United States. The 211 LA County model has been widely replicated across the United States. The 211 LA County model has been widely replicated across the United States. The 211 LA County model has been widely replicated across the United States. The 211 LA County model has been widely replicated across the United States. The 211 LA County model has been widely replicated across the United States.

## Evidence-based screening tools

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk. Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk. Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.

Evidence-based screening tools are reliable measures that gather evidence indicating the probability of potential for a developmental problem, delay, or risk.
In September 2009, 211 LA County launched an innovative children with potential developmental delays and disabilities and includes autists. After receiving standard 2-1-1 service, a portion of parent’s calls of children born to five years of age afforded the opportunity for parents to discuss their concerns about their children’s development using an on-demand developmental screening tool. Care coordinators and autism screens are delivered by a trained Care Coordinator. Parent’s responses are entered into a web-based form that immediately generates a report of the likelihood that the child has a developmental issue. In the same call, Care Coordinators make referrals by conference call including the results of the developmental screening and support for families in obtaining complete evaluations of their children’s developmental delay, the Care Coordinator creates an individual care plan and refers the family to appropriate care providers to ensure that children have medical homes where they can receive coordinated care. During an evaluation period, 70% of parents offered screening agreed to participate. A third of participating parents indicated that they had been concerned about their child’s development for at least four months. The acceptance rate of parents invited to participate in telephone screening suggests that this strategy can be an effective method for reaching underserved families. 211 LA County Developmental Screening and Care Coordination offers a feasible model for early detection of developmental issues. 211 LA County offers annual follow-up screenings to participants where children are found to be at risk for developmental delay. In order to monitor the children’s development and support families, the Care Coordinator is encouraged to maintain contact with their primary health care providers to ensure that children have medical homes where they can receive coordinated care. The high level of caller interest and willingness to participate in the telephone screening is evidence of community demand and acceptability.

Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 24 months of age, yet most children identified with autism are referred because of referrals because of referrals from low-income and ethnic minority families not later than 5 years of age or older. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum can range from $16,000 to $100,000.

Parents welcome support, and...
In September 2009, 211 LA County launched an innovative developmental screening and care coordination program. The screening program uses evidence-based developmental screening tools in the agency’s call center to identify children with potential developmental delays and disabilities and inform families. After receiving standard-211 service, a portion of parent/caregiver callers of children birth to five years of age are offered the opportunity to discuss concerns about their children’s development using an online developmental screening tool. Developmental and autism screenings are delivered by a trained Care Coordinator. Parent/caregiver responses are entered into a web-based form that immediately generates a report of the likelihood that the child has a developmental issue. In the same call, Care Coordinators share the screening results and help families interpret the results.

When screening indicates that a child may be at risk for developmental delay, the Care Coordinator creates an individual care plan and refers families to necessary services. Care Coordinators have been able to assist families in obtaining complete evaluations and to monitor their children’s development, transitioning into early intervention services, and also offer support in finding early childhood program referrals, navigating services and support families. Families are also referred to the appropriate California developmental services. Over 7,000 calls monthly to 211 LA County are from parents or caregivers with children under 5 years old. In A High Risk Population – 211 LA County Developmental Early Identification of Developmental Delays and Disabilities provides evidence of community demand and acceptability.

211 LA County has found that supporting families in navigating services is the key to effective care coordination. Care Coordinators continue to check in with each family to ensure that families adhere to the plan and obtain the parent’s commitment to follow through on next steps. Because scoring of the developmental screening tool is conducted by a third party and not by Care Coordinators, families receive immediate feedback and can move forward with addressing concerns without waiting for additional appointments. Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 2 years of age, yet many are not until 4 years of age. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum have been shown to reduce the average cost of the children’s care by up to 70%.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents report that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as recognizing when a child’s development does not progress as expected. The Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening, nor were they aware of screening services for which their children are eligible. Families may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help understand them, develop treatment plans and save needed follow-up visits.


Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 2 years of age, yet many are not until 4 years of age. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum have been shown to reduce the average cost of the children’s care by up to 70%.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents report that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as recognizing when a child’s development does not progress as expected. The Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening, nor were they aware of screening services for which their children are eligible. Families may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help understand them, develop treatment plans and save needed follow-up visits.

Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 2 years of age, yet many are not until 4 years of age. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum have been shown to reduce the average cost of the children’s care by up to 70%.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents report that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as recognizing when a child’s development does not progress as expected. The Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening, nor were they aware of screening services for which their children are eligible. Families may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help understand them, develop treatment plans and save needed follow-up visits.

Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 2 years of age, yet many are not until 4 years of age. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum have been shown to reduce the average cost of the children’s care by up to 70%.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents report that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as recognizing when a child’s development does not progress as expected. The Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening, nor were they aware of screening services for which their children are eligible. Families may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help understand them, develop treatment plans and save needed follow-up visits.

Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 2 years of age, yet many are not until 4 years of age. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum have been shown to reduce the average cost of the children’s care by up to 70%.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents report that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as recognizing when a child’s development does not progress as expected. The Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening, nor were they aware of screening services for which their children are eligible. Families may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help understand them, develop treatment plans and save needed follow-up visits.

Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 2 years of age, yet many are not until 4 years of age. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum have been shown to reduce the average cost of the children’s care by up to 70%.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents report that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as recognizing when a child’s development does not progress as expected. The Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening, nor were they aware of screening services for which their children are eligible. Families may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help understand them, develop treatment plans and save needed follow-up visits.

Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The investment in early identification and treatment is well justified when we consider children identified on the spectrum of autism disorder. Children can be identified as early as 2 years of age, yet many are not until 4 years of age. Early intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for expensive interventions later. Behavioral interventions for children identified on the autism spectrum have been shown to reduce the average cost of the children’s care by up to 70%.

Parents welcome support and guidance. Most parents report that the early years are crucial, but many lack important information needed to support their child’s development, such as recognizing when a child’s development does not progress as expected. The Early Periodic, Screening, Diagnosis and Treatment program under Medicaid found that parents of eligible children did not understand the purpose of developmental screening, nor were they aware of screening services for which their children are eligible. Families may also encounter barriers in obtaining services once a referral is made. They look to trusted professionals to help understand them, develop treatment plans and save needed follow-up visits.
All children deserve a good start in life. Some children need additional support to develop in a way that is healthy and maximizes their potential for success. Unfortunately many developmental issues are not unearthed until children start school, several years after early intervention services could put them on a typically-developing track. Identifying these children early would give them the best opportunity for life success.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians conduct periodic screening for developmental delays during well-child visits of infants and toddlers, including screening for autism. Yet the demands on physicians are great, and even then many children do not have a pediatric medical home that provides on-going monitoring and evaluation. Engaging community agencies in identifying children at risk would increase the number of children with special needs who are identified early and served. Partnerships between health care providers and community organizations could have a significant impact on health and developmental outcomes by assisting with early identification, supporting parents, and coordinating needed services in a timely manner. One successful example of such a partnership is led by 211 LA County. 211 LA County has employed phone-based developmental screening with real-time screening results, immediate care coordination services, and referral network development as a cost-effective strategy to increase early identification and early intervention with young children in an underserved, low-income, ethnic-minority population.

**Fast Facts**

- 4 out of 10 children birth to five years old in California do not have a medical home where a pediatrician can track their health and development, and low-income children are even less likely to have a medical home.
- Low-income and ethnic-minority children are much less likely to have developmental issues identified early.
- It is possible to identify children with autism spectrum disorders as early as two years of age, yet these children are identified at 4 years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $13,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more. Early intervention in the preschool years can reduce the need for costly intervention later on.

Giving Children a Good Start

All children deserve a good start in life. Some children need additional support to develop in a way that is healthy and maximizes their potential for success. Unfortunately many developmental issues are not unearthed until children start school. Several years after early intervention services could put them on a typically-developing track. Identifying these children early would give them the best opportunity for life success.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that pediatricians conduct periodic screening for developmental delays during well-child visits of infants and toddlers, including screening for autism. Yet the demands on physicians are great, and even then many children do not have a pediatric medical home that provides on-going monitoring and evaluation. Engaging community agencies in identifying children at risk would increase the number of children with special needs who are identified early and served. Partnerships between health care providers and community organizations could have a significant impact on health and developmental outcomes by assisting with early identification, supporting parents, and coordinating needed services in a timely manner. One successful example of such a partnership is led by 211 LA County. 211 LA County has employed phone-based developmental screening with real-time screening results, immediate care coordination services, and referral network development as a cost-effective strategy to increase early identification and early intervention with young children in an underserved, low-income, ethnic-minority population.

**Parent Story**

Anthony turned his life around to regain legal custody of his 2½ year old son who had been in foster care for one and a half years. His son’s speech delays and behavior problems were troubling. Anthony called 211 LA and took a developmental screening questionnaire that found his son at high risk for potential developmental disability. Anthony was quickly connected to a free comprehensive developmental assessment and a speech therapy program for his son.

“I was eager to learn more about how my son was learning, developing and growing for his age. I knew that early intervention makes a difference. 211 LA helped me with information and resources.”

**“Thanks to 211, My Son Will Have A Chance”** (Anthony)