Connecting the Dots: Using Web-Based Developmental-Behavioral Screening to Coordinate Intervention and Behavioral Health Services

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The roots of behavioral health costs lie in early childhood problems unaddressed early in life. Two cutting edge approaches to identification/prevention and care-coordination are:

1. **211LA Developmental Screening and Care Coordination Program.** 211, is a national network serving those with non-emergent crises. 211LA serves greater Los Angeles and its 1 ½ million children under age 6: 45% of parents lack high school education and ~ 43% speak only Spanish. Predictably, families in crisis, have children at extremely high risk for developmental and behavioral problems. In 2009, 211LA ([www.211LA.org](http://www.211LA.org)) initiated development and behavior screening by inviting callers with children birth through five years of age to talk about their children are doing. Most caretakers, 86%, respond to the offer, at which point calls are transferred to 211LA Care Coordination Specialists. The Specialists then administer screening tests by telephone interview via *Peds Online*—a web-based screening service offering three validated, accurate developmental-behavioral screens. Because *Peds Online* screens are readily administered by interview and results delivered in real-time, 211LA can then provide a live three-way call to connect families to needed services such as Head Start/Early Head Start, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, etc. 211LA’s referral coordination efforts render enrollment rates more than twice as high as those found in primary care (where parents are often simply given a phone number to call) which is especially noteworthy given the extremely vulnerable families 211LA services. Numerous inter-agency agreements ensure that families are followed, enrollment confirmed, and databases shared for optimal tracking of outcomes over time.

2. **Delaware Division of Public Health (DE DPH): State-Wide Screening Initiative.** After ranking 50th among US States in percent of children screened, Delawareans sought legislative funding enabling health care providers to use *Peds Online* at no expense to practices. Division of Public Health (DE DPH) leads the initiative. Help Me Grow (HMG211DE) supports the 211 call center and provides referral/care coordination assistance families, clinics and agencies. The Delaware Academy of Medicine’s online training videos housed on a website along with slide shows, referral algorithms, etc. ([www.pedstest.com/ForDelawareUsers](http://www.pedstest.com/ForDelawareUsers)). By the end of 2014, ~40% of young children had been screened (moving Delaware to from 50th to 21st). Referral and enrollment rates in IDEA Part C or HMG211DE vastly increased.

**Conclusion**
The combination of accurate, efficient web-based developmental-behavioral screening combined with referral- and care-coordination services greatly increases enrollment in needed early intervention services. Further, highly vulnerable populations, i.e., families with numerous psychosocial risk factors are far more likely to receive services.