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 uncovered 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.

CONTACT/ABOUT

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

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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.

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

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.

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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

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 uncovered 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.

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ANTHONY

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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.

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- 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 four years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder cost over $11,000 per year, and specialized behavioral interventions cost much more.
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ZERO TO THREE
Vagabond Place
350 South Bixel Street, Suite 150
Los Angeles, CA 90017
(213) 411-7279
www.zerotothree.org

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

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Improving Access to Early Identification and Intervention

211 LA County Developmental Screening and Care Coordination

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In September 2009, 211 LA County launched an innovative screening tool in the agency’s 211 LA Care Coordination System, a web-supported screening using evidence-based tools. 211 LA County’s formal partner network builds cross-disciplinary partnerships that improve coordination between child welfare services, public health, mental health, and developmental disabilities agencies to screen and provide services to vulnerable children ages 0-5 years. 211 LA County has found that supporting families in intervention can positively impact communication and social skills and may reduce the need for special education services. 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 services. Care Coordinators have been able to assist families in obtaining complete evaluations of the child’s development, transitioning into early intervention services, and also offer support in finding early-childhood program placements or services such as mental health interventions. All children who complete the screening are referred to the appropriate California developmental disability regional center, which provides assessments and determines eligibility for services.

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 and 36 months of age, yet many states continue to screen for autism only between ages 3-5. In coming years, we will likely see a high increase in the number of children enrolled in public schools in Southern California. 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 cost upwards of $250,000.

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. Parents report feeling overwhelmed when trying to provide the best care for their child. The Early Identification of Developmental Delays in a High Risk Population – 211 LA County Developmental Screening and Care Coordination

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In September 2009, 211 LA County launched an innovative screening and care coordination program. The screening program uses evidence-based developmental screening tools in the agency’s call center to identify young children with potential developmental delays and disabilities including autism. After receiving standard 2-1-1 service, a portion of parent callers of children birth to five years of age are offered the opportunity to participate about their children’s development using an on-line developmental screening tool. Parents and families are screened are referred to a trained Care Coordinator. Parental 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 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 services. Care Coordinators have been able to assist families in obtaining comprehensive services for their child’s development, transitioning into early intervention services, and also offer support in finding early childhood program placements or services such as mental health interventions. All children who take the development screen are referred to the appropriate California developmental disability regional center, which provides assessments and determines eligibility for services.

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During an evaluation period, 70% of parents offered phone screenings agreed to participate. A third of participating parents indicated that they had been concerned about their child’s development for at least six months. The acceptance rates of parents invited to participate in phone screenings suggests that the strategy can be effective for reaching underserved families. 211 LA County’s Developmental Screening and Care Coordination offers a web-supported screening using evidence-based tools. Developmental and autism screenings are delivered 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 services. Care Coordinators have been able to assist families in obtaining complete evaluations of their children, transitioning into early intervention services, and also offer support in finding early childhood programs, placements or services such as mental health services. All children who identify as those referred to the appropriate California developmental disability regional center, which provides assessments and determines eligibility for intervention services. Knowledgeable Coordinators make referrals by confidence call including the parents so that parents learn how to request services and advocate for their children. Before ending the phone call, the Care Coordinator takes the opportunity to reinforce the plan and obtains the parent’s commitment to follow through on next steps. Because scoring of the developmental screening tool is conducted by software and scored immediately, families receive immediate feedback and can move forward with addressing concerns without awaiting additional appointments.

211 LA County has found that supporting families in navigating the system is the key to effective care coordination. Care Coordinators continue to check in with each family so that they no longer require assistance with the process. 211 LA County offers annual follow-up screenings to participants whose children were not found to be at risk for developmental delay. In order to monitor the children’s development and support families, COCs are encouraged to maintain contact with their primary health care providers to ensure that children have medical homes where they can receive coordinated care.

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) compliant Care Coordination System.
- Explore the feasibility of using the 211 LA County model in statewide efforts to strengthen coordination between child welfare 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) in community-based agencies so as to 2-1-1.
- Provide resources to 2-1-1 programs in California to replicate the 211 LA County model and build local community service 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

“Child Find” Efforts and Coordinated Services

- 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 also at an extraordinarily high risk for a delay or a disability.
- Most parents who participated reported that their children do not have medical homes or regular childhood medical check-ups where developmental issues might be identified.
- 211 LA County’s formal partnership network builds cross-disciplinary partnerships to improve integration of care, promote effective communication, and encourage collaboration. As new families are identified, the effort 211 LA County was able to build and extend this network.

Research Supports Universal Developmental Screening

The importance 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 2 years of age, yet most do not receive early intervention services from low-income and ethnic minority families until they are 5 years or 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 improve outcomes and reduce costs.

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 knowing when to take their child to the doctor’s office. 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 whose children they are eligible. Families 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.

Over 7,000 calls monthly to 211 LA County are from parents or caregivers with children under 5 years old. 211 LA County callers are disproportionately low-income, homeless, and ethnic minority: 47% Latino, 30% African-American. Four out of five families have monthly household incomes below $2,000 and over three-quarters are uninsured. Over 7,000 calls monthly to 211 LA County are from parents or caregivers with children under 5 years old. 211 LA County callers are disproportionately low-income, homeless, and ethnic minority: 47% Latino, 30% African-American. Four out of five families have monthly household incomes below $2,000 and over three-quarters are uninsured.

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The importance 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 2 years of age, yet most do not receive early intervention services from low-income and ethnic minority families until they are 5 years or 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 improve outcomes and reduce costs.

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 knowing when to take their child to the doctor’s office. 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 whose children they are eligible. Families 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.

Over 7,000 calls monthly to 211 LA County are from parents or caregivers with children under 5 years old. 211 LA County callers are disproportionately low-income, homeless, and ethnic minority: 47% Latino, 30% African-American. Four out of five families have monthly household incomes below $2,000 and over three-quarters are uninsured. Over 7,000 calls monthly to 211 LA County are from parents or caregivers with children under 5 years old. 211 LA County callers are disproportionately low-income, homeless, and ethnic minority: 47% Latino, 30% African-American. Four out of five families have monthly household incomes below $2,000 and over three-quarters are uninsured.
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 most children are identified at 4 years of age or later.
- Special education costs for a child with an autism spectrum disorder can cost $1,000 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.

211 LA COUNTY DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING AND CARE COORDINATION

**IMPROVING ACCESS TO EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION**

**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 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. 211 LA COUNTY is a nonpartisan, 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 211 ZERO TO THREE, please visit our website.

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