Autism Speaks Early Access to Care Community Screening Event: Description and Preliminary Outcomes

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**Background**

Early screening is an important first step to identifying children at risk for an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and can lead to earlier diagnosis. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends ASD screening at 18- and 24-months, yet many children are not screened do to lack of access to care, poor clinician compliance with screening guidelines, and limited availability of culturally and language appropriate screeners. Such factors underscore the need for innovative approaches to screening.

**Objectives**

To describe the model, clients served by, and preliminary outcomes of the Autism Speaks community screening event that took place in Los Angeles on September 7th, 2013 in partnership with local, community-based organizations.

**Methods**

**Outreach:**
- Available in English and Spanish
- Locally posted flyers, information on Autism Speaks website, local donated TV and radio media

**Registration:**
- Families were asked to call in to register in advance
- Walk-in appointments were accepted as space allowed
- All families completed:
  - Parents’ Evaluation of Developmental Status (PEDS)
  - Development history form
  - Contact form
  - Satisfaction questionnaire
- Depending on the child’s age, families completed:
  - Communication and Symbolic Scales – Infant Toddler Checklist (CSBS-ITC; ages 0-15 months)
  - Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT; 16-48 months)
  - Social Communication Questionnaire (SCQ; 4+ years)

**Screening event:**
- Met with a licensed clinician:
  - Discussed screening results
  - Received recommendations and referrals
- Visited a resource fair of community service providers:
  - Department of Education
  - Department of Mental Health
  - Head Start
  - State early intervention services
  - University clinics
  - Advocacy groups
- 2-1-1 Los Angeles County conducted follow-up
- Assisted in accessing services
- Data is for six months post event

**Follow-up:**
- Close to 24% of children were referred to additional services
- Almost all (98%) children were referred to additional services
- 92% of families were Hispanic or Latino

**Sample Characteristics:**
- Seventy one children from 66 families were seen by a total of 24 clinicians.
- 77% of appointments were conducted in Spanish
- 92% of families were Hispanic or Latino.
- The average age of the children seen was 5 years (range: 9 months – 13 years).
- Caregivers of 27 children reported that their child had previously received a developmental disability or mental health diagnosis.

**Screening:**
- PEDS: parents endorsed an average of 5.1 (SD=1.8) areas of concern. All parents reported at least one concern.
- SCQ: 53% of children were above the clinical cutoff, and the average score was 7.9 (SD=4.5).
- CSBS: 80% scored above the clinical cutoff, and the average score was 7.9 (SD=4.5).
- M-CHAT: 93% scored above the clinical cutoff, and the average score was 16.0 (SD=7.3).

**Follow-up post-event:**
- Mean overall satisfaction score was 4.5 (SD=1.2), with 1 being not satisfied and 5 very satisfied
- Families of 13 children (18%) could not be reached.
- Families of 47 children (66%) reported that they were receiving services
- Among this group, 63% reported receiving new services.
- Families of 11 children (15%) had been given additional follow-up referral resources post-screening.

**Results**

**Conclusion**

This event was developed through a unique collaboration between universities, nonprofits and public agencies. Many families needed assistance understanding their healthcare and educational rights and options, and accessing care. Community screening events including direct access to clinicians and local service providers can significantly enhance outreach to traditionally underserved communities. The dedication from multiple community service providers speaks to the potential for developing a sustainable outreach system.

Thank you to our partners!

- Marianne Sullivan
- 2-1-1 Los Angeles County
- Children’s Hospital of Los Angeles
- UCLA Center for Autism Research and Treatment
- Magnolia Place
- Special Needs Network
- Learning Rights Law Center

**Table 1: PEDS - % of Parent Reported Areas of Concern**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Area</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expressive language</td>
<td>54 (76)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receptive language</td>
<td>46 (65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine motor</td>
<td>34 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross motor</td>
<td>28 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior</td>
<td>57 (80)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>55 (77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptive skills</td>
<td>39 (55)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
<td>47 (66)</td>
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</tbody>
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**Table 2: Referrals Given By Clinicians**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Referral</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autism diagnostic evaluation</td>
<td>30 (48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional center</td>
<td>29 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental, cognitive, or learning evaluation</td>
<td>24 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td>24 (39)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech and language services</td>
<td>16 (26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavior evaluation/treatment services</td>
<td>11 (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical follow-up</td>
<td>9 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health services</td>
<td>9 (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early intervention services</td>
<td>7 (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social skills intervention</td>
<td>5 (8)</td>
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