First Connections:
Developing Replicable Models to Reach Underserved Communities for Autism Screening in Young Children

Marian Williams, PhD (presenting)
Irina Zamora, PsyD, Marie Kanne Poulsen, PhD, Barbara Y Wheeler, PhD

USC University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD) and California Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (CA-LEND)
Introduction

First Connections

- 3-year project, began January 2014
- Funded by First 5 Los Angeles
- Partnership:
  - USC University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (Training and Technical Assistance Lead)
  - Three Federally Qualified Health Centers:
    - AltaMed
    - Eisner Pediatric
    - Northeast Valley Medical Center
  - Two family service agencies:
    - Foothill Family Service
    - Westside Children’s Center
  - Family Resource Center:
    - South Central Los Angeles Regional Center FRC
• Train staff at six community agencies to conduct developmental screening with children ages birth to 5 years using ASQ-3, ASQ: SE, and M-CHAT-R
• Develop work flows and algorithms to ensure universal screening and linkage for underserved and ethnic minority children living in poverty
• Provide parent education, using CDC Learn the Signs Act Early materials
• Develop relationships between medical and family service providers and family-run resource agencies and ethnic minority parent organizations
• Develop strategies to link young children with early intervention and reduce access barriers
• Train CA-LEND interdisciplinary trainees to provide TA and conduct community research
Screening Algorithm: Birth through 2 Years

ASQ-3 & ASQ:SE

Optional: M-CHAT-R at 15 to 30 months

All: review screening results and CDC Developmental Milestones booklet with parent

Score

Below cutoff

Gray Area

Over Cutoff

ASQ-3 or M-CHAT-R: any domain over cutoff

Measure

ASQ: SE over cutoff

Low incidence disability?

Y

Re-screen in 3 months

N

Referral Options:
- Early Head Start
- Parent Education group
- Parent Support group
- Baby & Me

Refer:
- School District Low Incidence Disabilities (Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Vision Impairment, Orthopedic concern)
- Family Resource Center

Refer:
- Regional Center Early Start
- Family Resource Center
- Parent Education group
- Parent support group

Refer:
- Infant mental health program
- Family Resource Center
- Parent Education group
- Parent support group

First Connections
July 2014
UCEDD Resources

Los Angeles County Line
  LA County

Disability Specific Resources
  All items (9)

Family Resource Centers
  All items (10)

First 5 ASD Pilot Site
  All items (6)

Regional Center
  All items (7)

Ethnic Focus Education and Support...
First Connections:  
Early Identification of Autism and other Developmental Disabilities in Underserved Communities

**Funding**  
[First 5 LA logo]

**Training and TA**  
USC UCEDD at CHLA

**Community Agencies**  
- AltaMed  
- Eisner Pediatric  
- Foothill Family Service  
- Northeast Valley Health  
- So Central LA Regional Center’s Family Resource Center  
- Westside Children’s Center

**Partners**  
- 211 Los Angeles County  
- Family Resource Centers Network Of Los Angeles County

**Resources**  

**Activities**

- Screen ages birth to 5 years with ASQ-3, ASQ:SE, M-CHAT-R
- Train staff in screening, linkage, outreach, parent education
- Educate and support parents
- Link families with resources
- Identify and reduce barriers
- Disseminate replicable models

**Outcomes**

- More providers competent to screen young children
- Community linkages increase
- Young children access early intervention & early childhood mental health services
- Parents recognize developmental milestones and needs
- Parents get support to meet children’s special needs

**Impact**

- Universal screening is routine in Los Angeles County across service sectors and communities
- Working relationships between medical agencies and family resource agencies lead to supported families
- Families experience seamless linkage to early intervention services
Results

Project just began, but early outcomes include:

• Development of model for universal developmental and autism screening by medical providers through integration with electronic medical record

• Development of model for developmental and autism screening within diverse family service agencies reaching young children in ethnic minority, monolingual, and low income communities

• Outreach and linkage model including Family Resource Centers, ethnic-focus parent partner organizations, disability-specific organizations, parent peer support, and clients rights advocates

• Creation of opportunities for CA-LEND interdisciplinary trainees to learn to provide TA, conduct community-based research, and develop policy briefs related to early screening and intervention for autism and other developmental disabilities
Conclusions

• Partnerships with diverse types of provider agencies leads to synergy/different perspectives on
  – Work flows for different settings and types of providers
  – Ways to use technology to enhance follow-through and sustain change
  – How to reach and engage ethnic minority families from different communities

• CA-LEND interdisciplinary trainees conduct meaningful leadership projects when linked with existing community and training grants; consider ways that trainees can:
  – Join with a faculty member to conduct training and TA activities
  – Write policy briefs using input from grant partners
  – Collect data to evaluate community-based projects
Discussion

• Ways to build in sustainability from beginning of grant-funded project
• Ways to integrate LEND trainees in grant-funded projects so they learn all aspects of grant administration, development, and implementation
• Ideas for dissemination of project findings to constituents in legislature that make funding decisions

For more information contact:
Marian Williams at mwilliams@chla.usc.edu