

Diversity Fellowship Capstone: Somali Community Health Workers

Authors: Sahra Dahir CHW; Kawther Musa CHW; Jibril Mohamed M.A.; Paula Rabidoux, Ph.D., CCC-SLP
Institutions: OSU Nisonger Center, SomaliCAN
Contact Info: Paula.Rabidoux@osumc.edu



THE OHIO STATE
UNIVERSITY
NISONGER CENTER

Background

Trainees at Nisonger Center have historically been mainly white (87% over the past 5 years).

Central Ohio is home to the second largest population of Somali immigrants in the country.

Goals of this project were:

1. To increase diversity among trainees,
2. To address barriers to early diagnosis and treatment (healthcare disparities) of Somali children with suspected developmental delay,
3. To improve cultural and linguistic competence of trainees

In collaboration with a local Somali community outreach organization we recruited and enrolled two Somali Community Health Workers in an integrated curriculum of coursework and interdisciplinary clinical training to address these goals.

Need

The *Minneapolis Somali Autism Spectrum Disorder Prevalence Project* (Hewitt, et al., 2013) identified startling outcomes:

1. One in 32 Somali children ages 7 – 9 years were identified as having ASD
2. Somali children were more likely to have an Intellectual Disability and ASD
3. The age of first diagnosis was 5 years.

Methodology

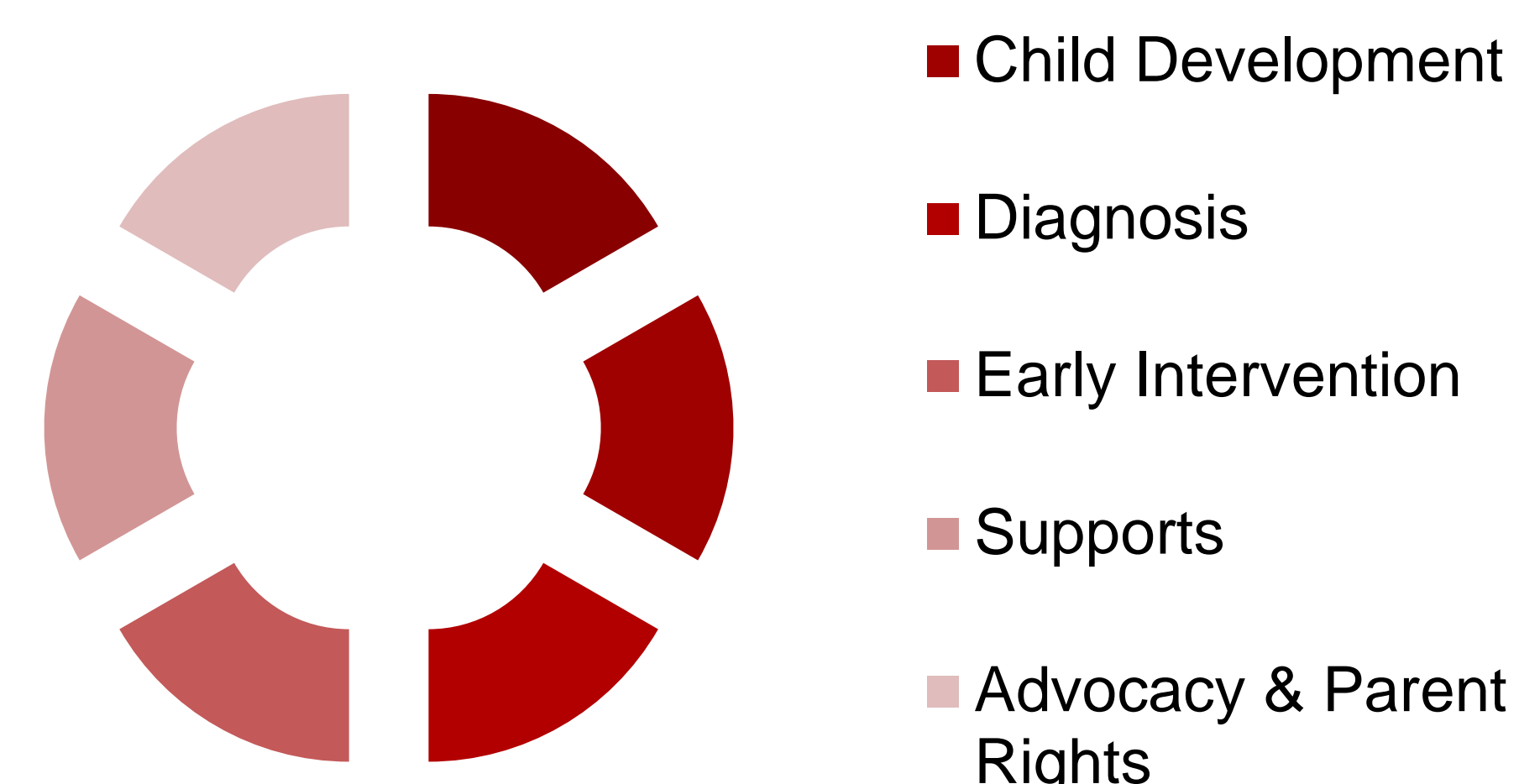
Collaborate with the Somali Community Access Network (SomaliCAN) to recruit two licensed Community Health Workers interested in ASD/DD.

- Enroll the Somali Community Health Workers (SCHW) in interdisciplinary training classes on ASD/DD and interdisciplinary diagnostic clinics;
- Develop and disseminate bilingual resources on ASD/DD
- Identify healthcare barriers to early intervention for Somali children and families.

Outcomes

Develop and disseminate accessible local resources

Resource topics



Barriers to Early Treatment

Individual

- Language barriers
- Lack of knowledge about existing resources
- Competing time demands for families with multiple children
- High levels of poverty pose significant challenges to accessing care

Provider

Lack of culturally and linguistically proficient providers

- Mistrust of providers
- A large proportion of Somali students attend charter schools that are so under-resourced that they are unable to identify and serve students with special needs

Community

- Negative social perceptions and stigma associated with developmental disabilities
- Lack of social support systems for families

Institutional

- Complex and difficult to navigate healthcare systems
- Long wait lists
- Lack of responsiveness to the needs of refugees and minority groups

Solutions

- Train more Somali professionals on evidence-based approaches to working with people with developmental disabilities in order to bridge to trust and access gaps.
- Train current providers on how to work with diverse cultures and refugee populations
- Reduce stigma of ASD/DD
- Developing social support groups
- Develop accessible bilingual resources



Xarunta Nisonger
Xarunta Caafimaadka ee
Isku-dhafan (Interdisciplinary Clinics)

Xarunta Kormiinka ee Isku-dhafan
(Interdisciplinary Developmental Clinic)

Xarunta Ootismka Da'da Dugsiga iyo Kormiinka
(School-Aged v Autism and Developmental Clinic)

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