



Policy and Practice Barriers and Solutions to Early Identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder in the California Early Intervention System

Background

- Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) can be reliably diagnosed at age 18 to 24 months (Woolfenden et al., 2012).
- Early, intensive intervention for ASD leads to optimal developmental outcomes** (Clark, et al., 2018; Zwaigenbaum et al., 2015).
- Parents of children later diagnosed with ASD typically had concerns by age 18 months.
- The typical age of diagnosis of ASD occurs at age 3 – 5 years, after the early intervention window.**

Methods/Sample

- Telephone interviews with 18 early intervention/Part C managers
- Included 86% of the geographic areas of California
- Interview focused on:
 - Children younger than 3 years
 - How and when screen for ASD
 - How and when conduct diagnostic assessments for ASD
 - Interventions provided when ASD suspected
 - Reasons for the policies/procedures

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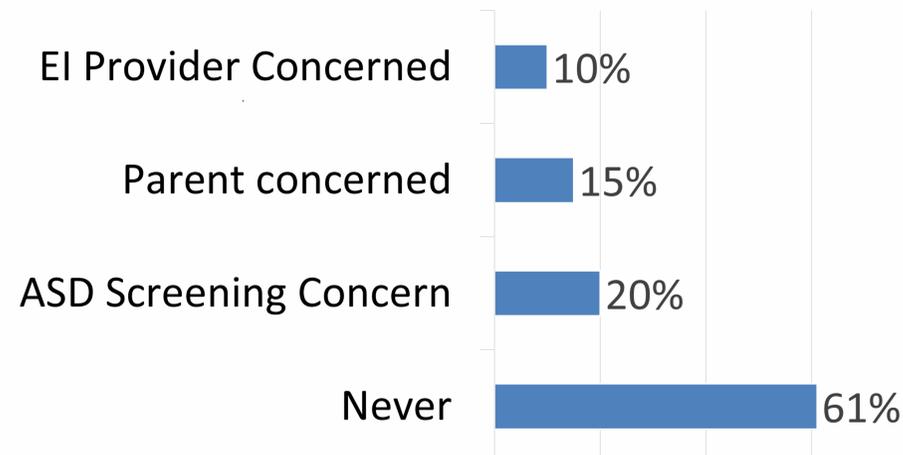
Champions For Our Children

Findings

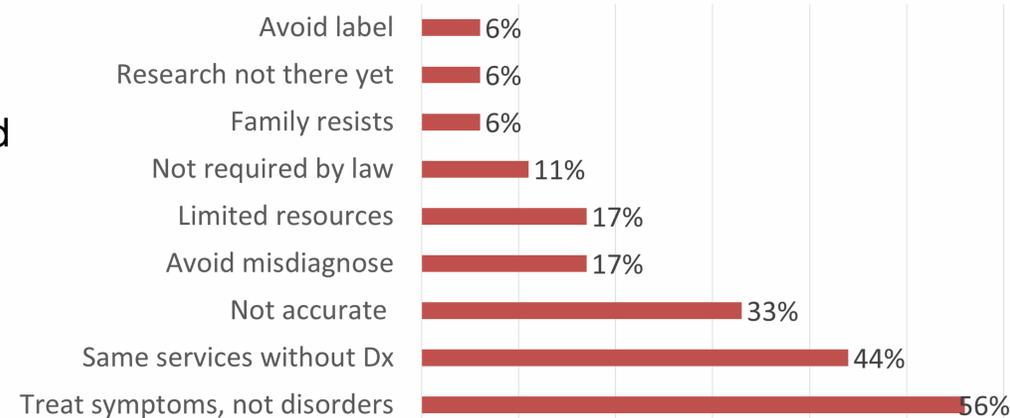
ASD Screening

- 85% of agencies screen for ASD
- Most use the M-CHAT-R

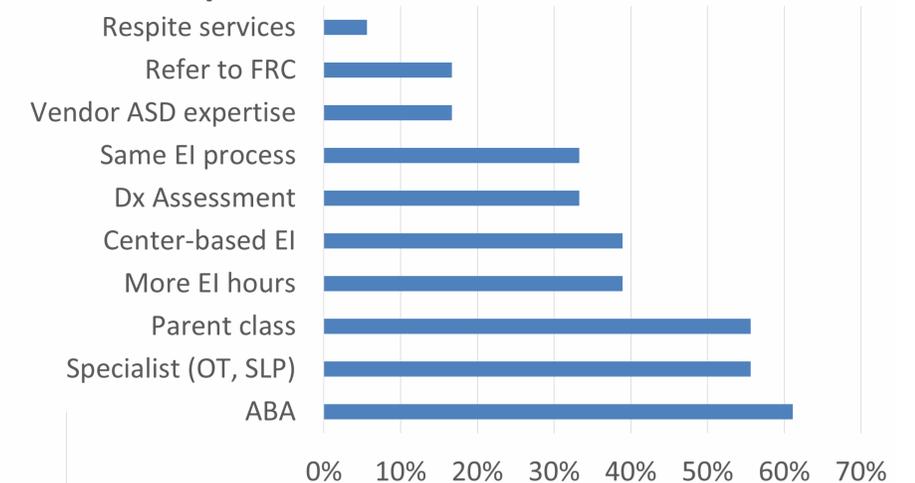
ASD Diagnostic Evaluation < 3 years: When are they done?



Reasons for Not Assessing ASD



Early Start Services Offered for Suspected or Confirmed ASD



Conclusions

- Most children are screened for ASD but few EI agencies do ASD evaluation before age 3
- Reasons for not screening suggest need education re current research
- Early identification practices are not aligned with best practice recommendations

Recommendations

- Review match between best practice guidelines and EI policies/practices
- Educate policymakers and program managers about latest research
- Identify range of ASD-specific interventions that should be included in EI