The Oklahoma Early Access Project:

A Retrospective Analysis on the Impact of Capacity-building Efforts for Developmental Monitoring and Screening

About the Project

The Mission of the Oklahoma Early Access Autism Project is to increase statewide capacity for early identification of Autism Spectrum Disorder and to improve access to needed services, particularly in underserved communities. Project goals were achieved by promoting community awareness of autism and related disabilities and training early childhood professionals in developmental monitoring and screening.

The Early Access project was initiated in 2011 and began by developing a screening model that would build on existing screening services. Our goal was to develop a model for screening and resource referral that was flexible enough to be implemented in a variety of settings and would also minimize barriers to participation for providers and families.

Early Access Team

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Early Access Training Process

- Autism Awareness Training including basic information on autism, developmental monitoring, and early identification. This training is geared to a broad audience but has also been expanded to include basic autism support strategies.
- In-depth Screening Training for small Community Screening Partner Teams, focusing on screening for children 16 months to 8 years, utilizing autism screening instruments and developmental screening as well as providing families with appropriate resources, referrals and supports.
- Hands-on Screening Practicum for Community Screening Partners.

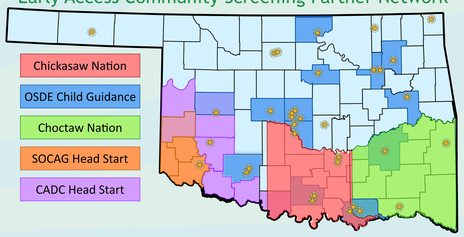
Tools Utilized

Developmental Monitoring
- CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early. materials

Developmental Screening
- Ages & Stages
- Developmental Profile 3

Autism Screening
- M-CHAT R/F
- ASRS
- SCQ

Early Access Community Screening Partner Network



Oklahoma Early Access Autism Project

Leading Change Together

As a capacity-building project, collaboration with a variety of partner organizations has been key to the implementation and success of Early Access. Primary financial support for the project has been provided by an on-going contract with the Developmental Disability Council of Oklahoma with additional support from partners including the Carolyn Watson Rural Oklahoma Community Foundation and the Act Early State Systems Grant. We have also benefitted from ongoing participation in the CDC's national *Learn the Signs. Act Early. (LTSAE)* Network through Early Access team-member and LTSAE Oklahoma Ambassador, Dr. Bonnie McBride.

Developmental Disabilities Council of Oklahoma

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Carolyn Watson RURAL Oklahoma Community Foundation

In the process of developing our Community Screening Partner Network, we have initiated and expanded collaborations with a variety of early childhood service providers and agencies, including Head Start agencies, Oklahoma State Health Department Child Guidance teams, childcare providers, home visitation programs, and various tribal programs and agencies.

Outreach & Awareness

In order to build a network of contacts and identify potential Community Screening Partners, our early efforts focused on casting a wide net through broad-based awareness activities and included free screening clinic days throughout the state, conducted by our team and community and autism awareness trainings events & materials.

Cascading Partnerships

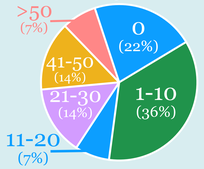
Example: During our initial screening clinic campaign we established a partnership with the Chickasaw Nation Child Development Center, which led to expanded partnerships within the Nation as well as to eventual partnership with 8 other tribes through personal contacts and intertribal collaborations such as the Oklahoma Tribal Childcare Association.

Oklahoma State Department of Health · Head Start · the Chickasaw Nation · The Great Seal of the Choctaw Nation · Delaware Tribe of Indians Lenape · SafeCare Stronger Families | Brighter Futures · Latino Community Development Agency · northcare · SoonerSuccess Building, Supporting Inclusive Communities · EDUCARE

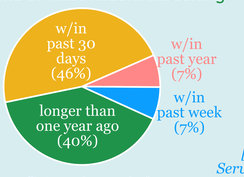
Lessons Learned

Over the past eight years, the Early Access project has trained and supported 38 Community Screening Partners throughout Oklahoma. The lack of existing services (particularly in Oklahoma's many rural and otherwise underserved communities) has meant that opportunities for making significant progress were plentiful, as were challenges and learning opportunities. Working with a diverse set of partners has necessitated that our project provide a flexible suite of services and supports. Our experience has also highlighted the need for further development of coordinated solutions to ensure the long-term sustainability and impact of the project and our Community Screening Partner Network.

A recent survey of our Community Screening Partners has provided preliminary data regarding the impact of our project as well as qualitave feedback to inform our future efforts to improve and expand the project.



"We have screened close to 80 children in the past two years, and around 23% were referred for further evaluation. It has been a great asset in helping families with early intervention."



"Meets the needs for children struggling in Head Start classrooms and provides referrals and resources to help these families get the help and assistance they need."

"People (especially doctors) are unaware that we are doing [screenings] here. More outreach is needed. When we get a positive screening, parents are often in limbo for 6-12 months waiting to be evaluated."

"Doctors, teachers, [Department of Human Services], and other healthcare providers are very happy that we have this service."

"Follow-up trainings will be needed, due to lack of actual use of the autism screening training."

Challenges & Barriers

- Staff availability and turnover at Community Screening Partners organizations.
- Coordination of communication and data collection across agencies
- Lack of local services and resources for families post-screening

Next Steps

- Increased and ongoing support for Community Screening Partners
- Technology-based solutions for data collection and more training
- Continued advocacy for expanding rural supports and services

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