



Developmental Screening in Pennsylvania Child Welfare Services (Ages & Stages)

Research Notes



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Issue 1 (August 20, 2009). The Who and How of Developmental Screening in Pennsylvania Child Welfare Services

Interviews have been conducted with child welfare workers in each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties. Thanks to all of you for completing these interviews and managing the database that will help us learn more about the needs of very young children and their families who are referred to PA child welfare services.

This is the first of a series of Research Notes that will address questions asked about through this research. The current Research Note reports results concerning: 1) which children are being screened, statewide? and (2) who conducts the screening?

Introduction:

Twenty percent of children who are maltreated as infants and toddlers enter school with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) signifying special education needs, compared with 7% of kindergarteners nationally (Office of Special Education & Rehabilitative Services, 2003; Scarborough & McCrae, 2009). Yet, just 13% of these children with poor developmental scores in infancy and toddlerhood receive early intervention services (Casanueva, Cross, & Ringeisen, 2008).

Amendments to the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) now require improved coordination between child welfare and

early intervention to ensure that maltreated children with developmental needs, such as speech and fine motor problems, receive early intervention services.

Standardized Screening:

In September, 2008, Pennsylvania implemented a policy that all children under age 3 who are substantiated for maltreatment be screened using the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ™) and its Social-Emotional version® (ASQ:SE™). This meets the federal CAPTA requirements just described. PA's policy also encourages screening for all children younger than age 5 who are receiving child welfare services. The ASQ is a series of age-appropriate questionnaires designed to identify children who need further developmental evaluation.

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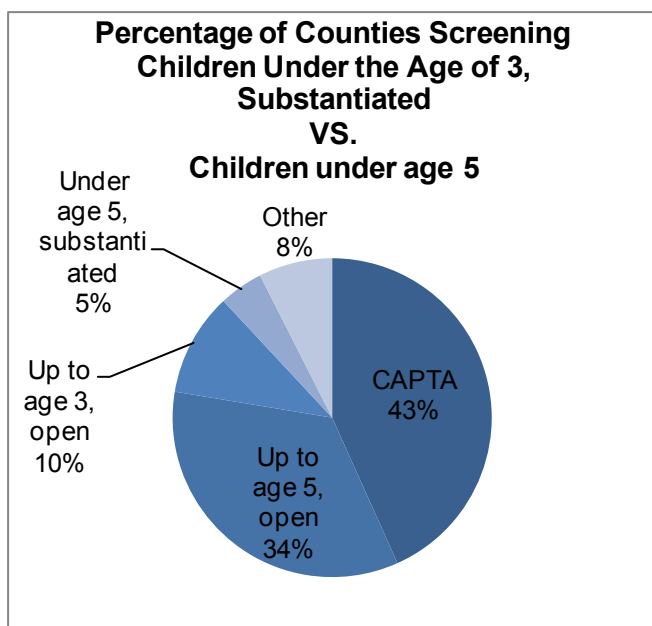
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Research:

Research is being conducted by the University of Pittsburgh, School of Social Work to understand county, child, and family needs concerning screening and early intervention. The 3-phase study began in May, 2009. Key research questions are: (1) What policies and procedures do counties adapt to implement the screening; (2) what are children's developmental and social-emotional needs, statewide; (3) is screening conducted in a manner that engages families and is culturally competent; and (4) to what extent does screening lead to children receiving early intervention services?

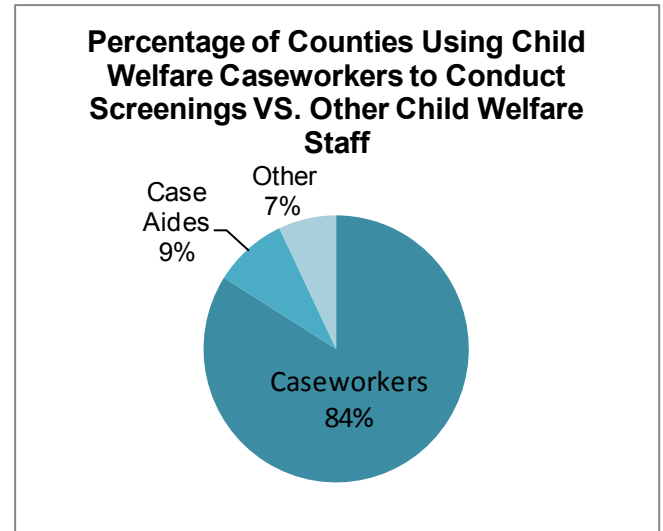
Results: What percentage of agencies screen children addressed by CAPTA only versus a larger group?

Slightly less than one-half of agencies (43%) screen children outlined in CAPTA only (under age 3, substantiated). One-third of agencies (34%) screen all children up to age 5 who are receiving agency services. The remaining agencies screen children under age 3 (10%) or under age 5 (5%) with substantiated maltreatment, or some other designated group (8%), such as all children in foster care. About one-half of agencies (52%) also screen other young children in the household.



Who conducts screening?

In 67% of counties, child welfare workers conduct the ASQ screenings. Most often, caseworkers conduct the screens (n=38), while in 8.9% of agencies case aides conduct the screens. The remaining three counties have other staff conduct the screenings.



In most agencies, screening is conducted by workers in both intake and on-going or foster care service units (53%). In about one-third of agencies (31%), screening is conducted by on-going or in-home workers only, and in the remaining agencies, screening is conducted by Program Specialists or Coordinators (7%) or "other" units or workers (9%).

References

- Casanueva, C.E., Cross, T.P., & Ringeisen, H. (2008). Developmental needs and individualized family service plans among infants and toddlers in the child welfare system. *Child Maltreatment, 13*, 245-258.
- Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (2003). *Twenty-fifth Annual Report to Congress on the Implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. U.S Department of Education.
- Scarborough, A.A., & McCrae, J.S. (2009). School-age special education outcomes of infants and toddlers investigated for maltreatment. *Children and Youth Services Review*.

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