



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

Research Notes



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A web-based database was created by the Child Welfare Training Program in July, 2009 for counties to store their information on children being screened according to the state mandate. This database serves multiple purposes. First and foremost, it is a tool for counties to use in order to be compliant with the CAPTA mandate. Secondly, it allows the researchers at the University of Pittsburgh to determine the population of children being screened across the state. The database provides various reporting functions that enable counties to track when children are due for follow-up screenings, review the number of children whose screening shows a concern on the screening tools, and the number of children who are referred to EI for further evaluation.

This is the third edition in a series of Research Notes that address study topics concerning Pennsylvania's screening initiative. This Research Note is the first to describe children who have been screened, including their demographic information and specific areas of concern. Children that have been entered into PA's Developmental Screening database from July, 2009 to March, 2010 are described.

Note: Data are from 42 of PA's 67 counties (63%)

Comments from Fellow CYS Workers Regarding Database Usage:

"What has been one of the greater benefits about this database is that it is very user friendly and easy to navigate and for those reasons, it's a task that is very easy to check off of one's to-do list. And the structure of the survey makes it easy on caseworkers when I'm sitting with them to fill it out because it is information they know off the top of their head and it takes less than 5 minutes to complete, which in the time-crunched world of a caseworker is a blessing."

**-Valerie Capobianco, Program Specialist I,
Chester County**

"We intend to begin using the database primarily to notify caseworkers when screenings are due. This tracking will be the biggest advantage to our work. We integrated the database by requiring caseworkers to complete the forms and forward them to a data entry person, who will enter, then notify them of upcoming screening due dates."

**-Jane Palmer, Supervisor in Family
Services, Tioga County**

"The tickler system will be a great advantage for NCCYS and hopes are to run this report on a weekly basis and distribute it to supervisors as a reminder for the workers that a screening is due."

**-Jennifer Willard, Director of Social Services,
Northumberland County**

Introduction:

In September 2008, the state government implemented a policy that all children under age 3 who are substantiated for maltreatment be screened using the Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ™; Squires et al., 1999)¹ and its Social-Emotional version (ASQ:SE™; Squires et al., 2003)². The ASQ is a series of age-appropriate questionnaires designed to identify children who need further developmental evaluation.

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 study includes 3 components: interviews with child welfare (CW) and early intervention (EI) providers, the statewide screening database, and interviews with a random sample of children's caregivers concerning their experiences with screening.

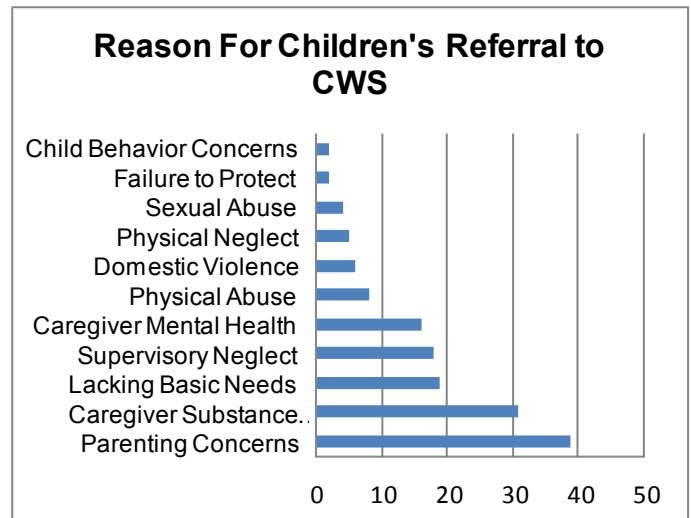
Results:

Child Demographics

By March 2010, 738 children were entered into PA's Developmental Screening database. Of these children, 79.4% are under the age of three. Gender is evenly split with 49.2% males and 50.8% females. The majority of children are white (82%), with African American and Bi-racial comprising 9.9% and 3.7%, respectively. Most children (83%) are from rural counties, precisely mirroring the composition of all PA counties. **We really need all counties to use the database to describe children and their developmental needs statewide.**

Parenting concerns were listed as the most frequent reason a child is referred to CYS (38.5%), followed by caregiver substance

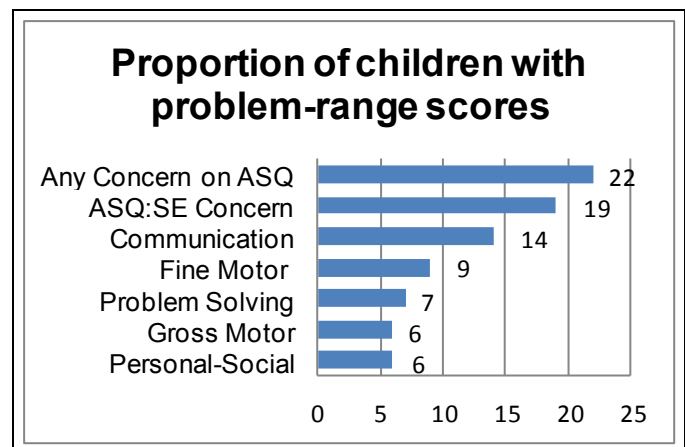
abuse (30.5%), lacking basic needs (19.4%), and supervisory neglect (18.4%). The table below details the frequency of the reasons for referral.



Note: 16.6% of children had "other" listed as the reason for referral.

Developmental Screening Results:

The ASQ developmental tool screens children for 5 types of concerns: Communication, Fine Motor, Gross Motor, Personal-Social, and Problem Solving. Results of children screened to date show that 22% score in the problem-range in at least one developmental area. Most commonly, children's concerns are with Communication skills (13.7%), Fine Motor (9.3%), and Problem Solving (7.3) skills. The proportion of children with ASQ: Social-Emotional scores in the problem-range is 18.7%.



Boys had slightly higher rates of ASQ and ASQ:SE problem scores compared with girls. Over one-half of boys (53%) had problem-range scores on either the ASQ or ASQ:SE, compared with 44% of girls.

Summary

Rates of Early Intervention (EI) eligibility are 2 to 4% of all 0 to 3-year-olds nationally (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). While not all children screened in PA will qualify for EI or other pre-kindergarten services, results clearly point to high levels of need. Screening increases detection rates of developmental and other problems (Jee et al., 2010). Most importantly, child welfare and EI providers need on-going communication and coordination to develop and carry out service plans with families that meet both developmental and maltreatment-related concerns.

References

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