

# Physician's Developmental Screening Project Final Report

## Executive Summary

The Children and Families Commission of Orange County (the Commission) supports a number of projects that promote developmental screenings in the county. These projects share the ultimate goal of assuring that "All children in Orange County will have recommended developmental/ behavioral screenings at milestone ages with linkage to appropriate services." The Physician's Developmental Screening (PDS) project, which is funded by the Commission, addresses barriers to the expansion of screening during primary care visits.

To assist local physicians in implementing developmental screenings, the Commission partnered with the OCMA, American Academy of Pediatrics Chapter 4, and Help Me Grow Orange County. Through this collaboration, 119 providers were trained on validated screening tools endorsed by the AAP and recommended by the Commission. Participating physicians received Continuing Medical Education (CME) credits for attending a six-hour training session; paper or electronic screening tools; six months of ongoing technical assistance to support practice change and the use of standardized tools; referral resources and financial recognition for participation and data collection.

### Methodology:

An online survey was created using Survey Monkey, which collected information on the number of screenings conducted, screening results, and referrals made. Of the 119 providers who were trained on using developmental screening tools, 71 (60%) actually implemented developmental screenings in their practices and received requests to complete and submit data collection. Of these 71, 32 providers (45% of those receiving a request) submitted the first Data Collection Survey at 3 months and of those, 11 (34% of those who submitted the first survey) submitted the second Data Collection survey at 6 months.

### Results:

- **Screenings:** An estimated 8,911 children went in for a well-child visit during the time of data collection and 5,248 of them received a developmental screening—59% of children 0-5 years of age received a developmental screening when visiting their physicians.
- **Concerns:** More than three-quarters (78%) of the children screened had no concerns or risk factors present. An additional 9% were in the Monitoring Zone (or PEDS Path B, C, or D), and 14% had an ASQ indicating the need for further assessment (PEDS Path A).
- **Referrals:** There were 156 children whose screenings indicated no concerns or risk factors who received some type of referral (4% of children with no concerns/risks). An additional 115 children who were in the ASQ Monitoring Zone or PEDS Path B, C, or D received a referral (25% of children with this score received referrals) and 142 of the children whose ASQ indicated a need for assessment, or PEDS Path A, received a referral (20% of children with risks received referrals).
- **Referral Sources:** 141 referrals were provide to Help Me Grow; 104 referrals to the Regional Center of Orange County; 43 referrals to school districts and 85 to "other" referral sources.

## Key findings:

The survey responses analyzed in this report may encourage physicians to implement developmental screenings in their practices as well as to make systems changes. There are a few key findings from the data that warrant additional activities and recommendations.

**Finding #1:** A major barrier for conducting a screening was that the parent declined to fill out the ASQ or PEDS. Another major reason screenings were not conducted was because the age-interval was not one recommended by AAP (9-, 18-, and 24- or 30-month visits).

→ **Recommendation 1:** Educate parents about the value of having a developmental screening conducted on their child.

→ **Recommendation 2:** Support physicians' implementation of business practices that make the use of screenings more effective.

**Finding #2:** Only 20% of children whose screenings indicated risk and 25% of children in the "monitor" zone were actually referred for services.

→ **Recommendation:** Continue to outreach to physicians about the value of linking children who are identified with risks to further assessments and early intervention services.

**Finding #3:** Local physicians are aware of Help Me Grow (89% of respondents) and use the agency for referrals.

→ **Recommendation:** Continue educating doctors about Help Me Grow services. Once practitioners know about it, they tend to use it.

**Finding #4:** Physicians want more information on the outcomes once the referrals are sent to the Regional Center, school districts, or other service agencies.

→ **Recommendation 1:** Develop a mechanism with Help Me Grow to improve communication between physicians making a referral and the referring agencies.

→ **Recommendation 2:** Support Help Me Grow in developing Care Coordination that not only provides referral information to the parents and the child's primary care physician but also the outcomes once a parent has been confirmed "eligible" and/or "connected" to a service.

A final recommendation concerns the overall use of developmental screenings. As the county, state and nation are moving towards health system improvements, the leadership in Orange County should consider continued participation in discussions related to developmental screenings, recognizing them as an essential preventative health strategy.