First Connections: Developing Replicable Models to Reach Underserved Communities for Autism Screening in Young Children
Marian E. Williams, PhD, Irina Zamora, PsyD, Marie Kanne Poulsen, PhD, Barbara Y Wheeler, PhD

Project Summary

First Connections is a 3-year project, funded by First 5 Los Angeles. This collaboration of six community based agencies and the USC UCEDD as the Training and Technical Assistance provider is:

* Developing replicable and sustainable models for autism screening in young children in underserved communities
* Linking families with early intervention services
* Educating parents about developmental milestones and the early intervention service system

The Problem

* Physicians do not routinely use quality screening instruments
* Children from low income and ethnic minority communities are diagnosed with autism late, missing a critical early intervention window
* Children from low income families who are identified with a developmental delay are less likely to receive appropriate services

CA-LEND Trainees

Beginning next training year, CA-LEND interdisciplinary trainees will have opportunities to:

* Provide training and TA to partner agencies from their own discipline perspective
* Co-lead parent education groups
* Conduct research to evaluate the models for their CA-LEND Leadership Project
* Write policy briefs to promote early screening and identification of autism in underserved communities

Examples of Alternative Models

**AltaMed:** Develop screening within electronic medical record to support providers in universal screening and referral processes according to AAP guidelines.

**Foothill Family Service:** Integrate developmental screening and parent education groups within array of family serving programs, including Early Head Start, Mental Health Program and Teen Parent program. Establish partnerships with minority parent organizations, Family Resource Centers and other community organizations. Expand capacity to reach linguistically diverse families.

**South Central Los Angeles Regional Center Family Resource Center:** Expand Child Find through outreach and screening at libraries, community centers and family resource centers.

Funding

First 5 Los Angeles
Training and TA
USC UCEDD at CHLA

Community Agencies

AltaMed
Eisner Pediatric
Foothill Family Service
Northeast Valley Health
South Central LA Regional Center’s Family Resource Center

Partners

211 Los Angeles County Family Resource Centers Network
Of Los Angeles County

Logic Model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Funding First 5 Los Angeles Training and TA USC UCEDD at CHLA</td>
<td>- Screen ages birth to 5 years with ASQ-3, ASQ:SE, M-CHAT-R -- Train staff in screening, linkage, outreach, parent education -- Educate &amp; support parents -- Link families with resources -- Identify and reduce barriers -- Disseminate replicable models</td>
<td>- More providers competent to screen young children -- Community linkages increase -Young children access early intervention &amp; early childhood mental health services -- Parents recognize developmental milestones and needs - Parents supported to meet children’s special needs</td>
<td>- Universal screening is routine in Los Angeles County across service sectors and communities -- Working relationships between medical agencies and family resource agencies lead to supported families - Families experience seamless linkage to early intervention services</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Support for this project provided by a grant from First 5 Los Angeles and California Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

Support for this project provided by a grant from First 5 Los Angeles and California Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

For additional information, please contact Marian E. Williams, PhD, mwilliams@chla.usc.edu

University of Southern California University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities at Children’s Hospital Los Angeles