

1.3.2 Child Development: Connection to Services

Percentage of young children with identified concerns who are connected to services

Purpose

As important as screening is to identify developmental needs or delays, its value can only be realized if children with identified needs are successfully connected to services that help meet those needs. Measuring connection to services can open up opportunities for important conversations about: how children access needed developmental and behavioral health services, particularly in underserved areas; how care is coordinated when screenings and assessments indicate the need for early intervention services; how data are shared between provider types/systems; and the impact on children's outcomes.

Definition

Children's connection to developmental services is defined as the percentage of children with identified developmental concerns that were referred to and connected with related supports. (Count of young children connected to supports divided by the total number of children identified with developmental concerns.) Indication of need will vary by screening tool. Connected to services is defined as the completion of the initial in-person contact that includes the completion of intake and written consent for services.

Many of the data limitations discussed in the children's developmental screening measure apply to this measure too. Data in most places are available only at the program level and may be duplicated. To get good

data at the program-level, programs need to be able to track clients after a developmental screening. A unique identifier and/or data sharing would facilitate this tracking. Communities with a referral infrastructure, such as a data system that tracks referrals across different types of providers in the early childhood system, will be most successful at using this measure.

In the absence of a universal identifier linking case records, the workgroup expressed a preference for population-level data, which could be attained through state-level surveys asking parents about developmental screening, referrals, and connections to services. These data are generally not available at this point.

Opportunities

Additional opportunities include the following:

- ▶ Analyze program data from Health Resources and Services Administration's [Pediatric Mental Health Care Access Program](#) grantee states.
- ▶ Clarify ambiguity around distinctions between referrals, connection, and uptake of services.
- ▶ Analyze the full process of screening, referral to treatment, and connection to services to better understand system performance.
- ▶ Investigate opportunities with state-level surveys to collect population-level data for this measure.