Parent and Staff Perceptions of a Tiered Approach to Developmental Services in Head Start

Gail Archie, Director, CCRC Head Start

Whitcomb Hayslip, Assistant Superintendent, Early Childhood Education, LAUSD

Bergen Nelson, MD
UCLA/ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Clinical Scholars Program
Background

• Early detection of developmental and behavioral concerns is important.

• Appropriate early interventions have the potential to improve functioning at school and at home.

• Despite recommendations, child health providers do inadequate developmental screening.
Background

• Early care and education settings may be important venues for screening, referrals, and coordination of services.

• Head Start is a model for comprehensive services delivered in preschool: screening, case management, service delivery and coordination.
A Tiered Approach (aka RTI~):

- **ALL** children receive quality instruction and are assessed for strengths and concerns (Tier 1)
- **SOME** children receive additional support to address concerns (Tier 2)
- **A FEW** children need intensive evaluations and interventions (Tier 3)
CCRC Head Start Multidisciplinary Team Meeting (MDTM) Model

Detection
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)
- ASQ:SE (social-emotional)
- Parent concern
- Teacher concern
- Enrollment, medical and dental screens

Decision-Making
- In-house referrals;
  - Weekly MDTM at headquarters:
    - Directors
    - LAUSD reps
    - Disabilities
    - Health
    - Mental health
    - Nutrition
    - Family advocate

Interventions and follow-up
- Special ed. referral
- Pre-referral services
- Health referrals
- Mental health
- Nutrition services
- Teacher supports
- Case Closed

Ongoing monitoring: Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP-R) x 3
Research Question

• What do Head Start parents and staff identify as the strengths and challenges of a tiered approach to developmental and behavioral services?
Methods

• Parent focus groups: 5 groups, 30 parents

• Semi-structured interviews with Head Start staff/ providers (total=40 staff to date):
  – Managers/ Area Directors, Center Directors, Family Advocates, Teachers

• Interviews and groups recorded, transcribed, and coded in ATLAS.ti
Question Domains

- Detection Process
- Decision Making
- Services

- Strengths
- Challenges

Ideas for changes, improvements, research projects
Results:
Detection Process

**Strengths:**

- **Staff**
  - Ongoing process
  - Many people involved
  - Raises red flags
  - Get to know children and families

- **Parents**
  - Raises awareness
  - Serves as a reminder
  - Opportunity to learn, address concerns, build trust
Sample Quotations: Staff

“Concerns can be raised by lots of people…I think because we will take a referral from anyone, I don’t think that we lose too many kids. I can’t imagine that anyone falls through the cracks.”

“I think the strength is working with the family, and not jumping to a conclusion. We’re getting to know children as people and making decisions with the family.”
Sample Quotations: Parents

“Sometimes you don’t notice if they can jump or stand on one foot…”

“The visit helped me pay more attention to my child.”

“They helped with setting goals with my daughter’s development.”

“The visit helped and also they get to know the teachers in a place where the children feel more secure.”
Results:
Detection Process

Challenges:

- **Staff**  Lots of paperwork, time
  Parents may not report accurately

- **Parents**  Unsure how to answer
  Raises worries
**Sample Quotations**

“Sometimes it is hard to understand the questions. Sometimes we wonder, is my child ok? Was that the right answer?” (Parent)

“I didn’t know how to answer those questions. I had to think and I didn’t know how to answer.

“Sometimes parents think you won’t take the child into the program if they express concerns about out of control behaviors…so they will say everything is fine.” (Staff)
Results: Services

Strengths:
• Staff and Parents:
  Parents are included
  Children show progress

Challenges:
• Staff and Parents:
  Barriers to participation
  Not enough just 1hr/ week
  Inadequate behavioral support
Sample Quotations

“They have trained me how to teach my daughter. Before I had no idea. Now I ask her more questions. I have learned a lot.” (Parent)

“I think it is great [SLIP], because the parent is there, there’s a professional who is providing strategies and direction, and things they can do at home.” (Staff)
Sample Quotations

“Probably the challenges are the behavior concerns. We can have a child who’s really able to access the curriculum, but is out of control, and it’s very hard to provide that child with the services they need.” (Staff)

“It is not ok for teachers to label the children as a problem child.” (Parent)
Conclusions

- Parent engagement is a strength of the detection process and service delivery.
- A broader range of responses should be available to meet the variety of needs.
- Enhanced responses to behavioral concerns and in-classroom support strategies would be beneficial.
- Currently brainstorming next steps.
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