

From the Doctor's Office: California Pediatrician Survey on Early Childhood Developmental Screening



Preliminary Report on Findings

June 2017

Conducted in partnership with Center for Early Learning at Silicon Valley Community Foundation,
First 5 San Mateo County, Children & Families Commission of Orange County,
American Academy of Pediatrics California Chapters, Watch Me Grow and Silicon Valley Community Foundation



Screening of Developmental Milestones is Critical

As young children grow, they adapt how they play, learn, speak, act and move. Change and growth are measured by a child reaching developmental milestones during an expected timeframe, and if those milestones are not reached when expected it can raise concerns about the child's development.

According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), one in four children in the United States from birth through age five is at risk for a developmental delay. Similar data from [Children Now](#) show that one in four children in California under the age of 6 is at moderate or high risk for developmental delays.

Pediatricians play an important role in the identification of delays in a child's growth and development. Regular and reliable screening during well-child visits, starting at birth, can help identify problems or potential problems early. The use of a validated tool to screen at regular, repeated intervals has been shown to improve the identification of delays more than observation or surveillance alone.^{i,ii} Early identification and connection to high-quality early interventions have been shown to change a child's developmental trajectory and be more effective and less costly when they are provided earlier in life.ⁱⁱⁱ

American Academy of Pediatrics Recommendation on Universal Developmental Screening and Surveillance

The **American Academy of Pediatrics** released a policy statement in 2006, most recently revised in 2014, that recommends:

- Developmental surveillance at every well-child visit
- Developmental screening using a formal, validated tool at 9, 18, and 30 months or whenever a parent or provider expresses concern.

Surveillance is a continuous process whereby a knowledgeable professional observes a child during the provision of health care.

Screening is the use of validated and reliable tools for the purposes of identifying children who may need more comprehensive evaluation.

2016 Survey of California Pediatricians on Practice of Early Childhood Developmental Screening

The Center for Early Learning at Silicon Valley Community Foundation conducted a survey of California pediatricians in fall 2016 to understand the current landscape of pediatricians' use of developmental screening and surveillance during well-child visits. The survey focused on practice, attitudes, beliefs and barriers.

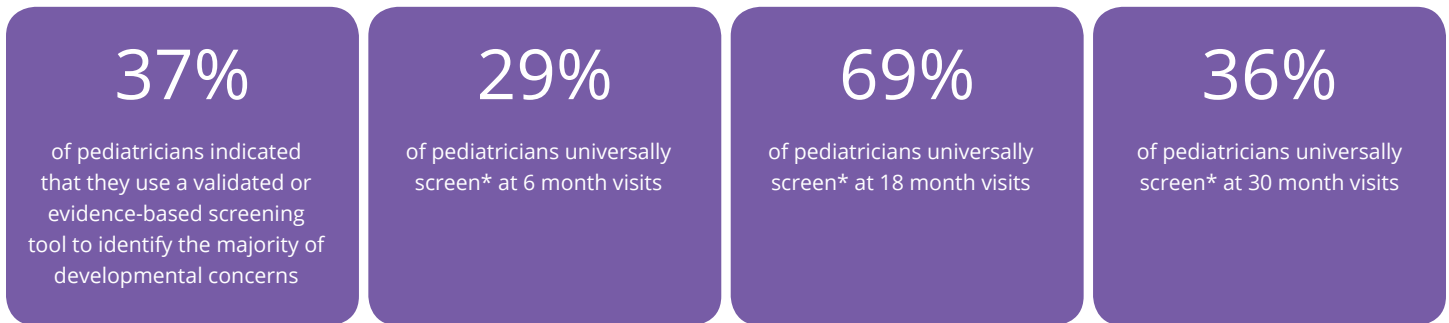
Survey Methodology

In partnership with Learning for Action, an evaluation and research firm, the Center created the survey tool with input from several pediatricians and early childhood experts throughout California. A link to the survey was distributed to pediatricians via an email sent through the four American Academy of Pediatrics chapters in California. Physicians surveyed were asked to report how strongly they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements. The information below reflects the results from the survey.

Preliminary Findings



Current landscape



*Universally screen is defined as screening 95 percent of children.

Pediatricians' barriers to conducting developmental screenings for all children



Next Steps

To better understand how all young children can receive reliable and consistent developmental screenings, the Center will conduct community conversations with pediatricians throughout 2017. Findings from the online survey and focus groups will be compiled into a comprehensive report. For more information, please contact cel@siliconvalleycf.org.

ⁱ <http://www.aafp.org/afp/2011/0901/p544.html>

ⁱⁱ Palfrey et al. J Pediatr. 111:651-655, 1987; Squires et al. JDBP. 17:420-427, 1996.

ⁱⁱⁱ Proven Benefits of Early Childhood Interventions http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_briefs/2005/RAND_RB9145.pdf

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