



MHSA INNOVATION CONCEPT # 1 Draft Version 2/11/10

SANTA CLARA COUNTY MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES ACT

Early Childhood Universal Screening

This project would increase access to screening and early intervention for young children with social and emotional delays and developmental concerns by piloting the use of a new computer-based screening tool in primary health care settings in the Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System.

The project will contribute to learning by testing whether the use of an electronic version of a standardized developmental screening tool instead of a paper-based version results in increased utilization of recommended universal screening practices.

1. Problem

In 2005 the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control reported that 17% of children in the United States have a developmental or behavioral disability such as autism, mental retardation, and Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder. In addition, many children have delays in language or other areas which impact school readiness. However, less than 50% of these children are identified as having a problem before starting school, by which time significant delays may have already occurred and opportunities for treatment have been missed. Santa Clara County does not have a universal screening system for identifying children with delays, disabilities, and behavior concerns. This means that many children in this county are missing a vital opportunity for early detection and intervention.

A new solution is needed to ensure that more of the 153,740 children under the age of six in Santa Clara County have access to screening for potential developmental concerns and delays and early intervention in order to protect their mental health.

While the use of standardized tools for developmental screening during well child screenings is an established best practice that has been recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics, the implementation of the practice is hindered by issues related to accessibility.

2. Barriers

County pediatric staff have expressed concerns about the length of time and staffing necessary to facilitate the completion of paper-based screening tools. Health care providers have until recently lacked access to convenient screening tools that are designed to be administered in a timely and effective way in a primary care setting. Electronic screening tools have only recently become available in languages other than English.

3. Purpose

Of the four essential purposes for Innovation consistent with the Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) guidelines, this project seeks to increase access to early intervention services by piloting an innovative approach to identifying children with developmental delays and social and emotional concerns using electronic screening tools placed directly in one of the institutions most frequented by children and their families - pediatrician's offices.

4. Description of the project

This project would pilot the innovative approach by placing computers with developmental screening software in selected outpatient clinics within the Santa Clara Valley Health and Hospital System. The screening tools to be used are the Ages and Stages Questionnaire and Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social and Emotional (available in Spanish and English.) Parents/guardians would complete the tool prior to meeting with their child's pediatrician as part of their routine well-baby/well-child check.

The project provides a unique opportunity for parents by directly providing them with information about appropriate developmental age level tasks, areas for growth, and activities they can do with their child to strengthen the child's skills. The pediatrician is provided with computer generated screening results prior to the child's appointment and will be able to provide immediate follow-up to parents on the same day during the appointment.

The project will also include a mechanism for linkage to a developmental pediatrician or other specialist when concerns are detected. In addition, provisions will be made for feedback to be provided to the child's pediatrician about results of specialized evaluations and early intervention services accessed by the child's family.

5. Contribution to Learning

The project will contribute to learning by testing whether the use of an electronic version of a standardized developmental screening tool instead of a paper-based version results in increased utilization of recommended universal screening practices.

6. Expected Outcomes and Project Measurement

Learning Outcomes

The project will contribute to learning by testing whether the use of an electronic version of a standardized developmental screening tool instead of a paper-based version results in increased utilization of recommended universal screening practices.

Service Outcomes

The project will result in an increase in the number of children served in county pediatric clinics who receive screening and intervention for social and emotional delays and developmental concerns. It is also expected that parents and caregivers will expand their knowledge base and capacity to participate actively in their child's healthy development.

Project measurement will be conducted throughout all stages of project implementation using one or more of the following measures:

- Consumer, family and service provider pre and post surveys
- Data collection
- Project team meetings to evaluate progress and problem solve
- Quantitative and qualitative analysis
- Reports to stakeholders

7. Project Duration and Estimated Cost

\$250,000 per year for 2 years