

## Sources of Information About Health-Care Professional Screening Practices

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This *Milemarkers* bibliography includes selected references to developmental and behavioral screening practices conducted by health-care professionals in both primary-care offices and community settings useful for identifying the presence of developmental delays or conditions that place children at high risk for delays. Sources of information concerning developmental screening by health-care professionals, including physician screening practices, nurse screening practices, and the use of other personnel to screen in health-care settings, are included. This information should be useful to early intervention and preschool special education program personnel who are responsible for early identification activities.

The conduct of screening activities is one of the major early identification activities used to identify infants and young children who may be eligible for Part C early intervention or Part B(619) preschool special education services. Screening activities are brief assessment procedures that are designed to identify children who should receive more comprehensive assessments (Meisels, 1989). A variety of individuals perform these activities to identify infants and young children who may have an unrecognized problem that might cause a significant delay or disability. According to Halfon et al. (2004), developmental screening by health-care professionals can be important sources of early identification information.

A review of the screening practices literature finds that screening practices used by health-care professionals can be organized into several major categories: general developmental screening by health-care professionals, physician developmental screenings, nurse developmental screenings, and developmental screening practices conducted by non-medical personnel within a medical-care practice. This *Milemarkers* includes selected references to research and practices in each of these categories that practitioners responsible for conducting early identification activities should find useful for improving early identification practices. Developmental screening practices by health-care professionals are one type of early identification practice (Dunst & Trivette, 2004) that constitutes the focus of research and practice at the Tracking, Referral and Assessment Center for Excellence ([www.tracecenter.info](http://www.tracecenter.info)).

### Health-Care Professional Screening Practices

#### Developmental Screening

Developmental screening by health-care professionals is one practice that can identify children with develop-

mental or behavioral concerns who need further evaluations. A variety of health-care professionals including, but not limited to, physicians and nurses often participate in these kinds of screening practices. When conducted by physicians and nurses, developmental screening is seen as one part of a larger process of developmental surveillance that is defined as an "ongoing and systematic collection of data relevant to the identification of a disorder over time by an integrated health system" (Baird et al., 2001, p. 468).

Accurate early identification of children with developmental and behavioral problems requires the use of a combination of techniques, including standardized screening tools, parent self reports, and repeated assessments over time (Okamoto, 2003). The American Academy of Pediatrics' (2001) policy statement on developmental surveillance and screening of infants and young children not only provides the reader with definitions of both surveillance and developmental screening, but also offers guidance regarding the development of a process that is likely to lead to the early identification of children at risk for or with developmental delays.

American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on Children with Disabilities. (2001). Developmental surveil-

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### Physician Screening

Physicians are in a unique position to identify children's behavioral, developmental, and psychosocial problems because of their ongoing knowledge of children's development and their relationship with the children's parents (Sices, Feudtner, McLaughlin, Drotar, & Williams, 2003). The sources listed in this section of the bibliography provide the reader with information concerning physician screening procedures including brief formal assessments of the child's development, informal observations made during routine examinations, and interviews with or scales completed by the parent about their child's development and behavior.

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### Nurse Screening

One of the challenges physicians face in screening for developmental disabilities or delays, particularly within their primary-care practices, is the time it takes to administer and score screening tools. An alternative to physician screening is the use of nurses to administer and score screening tools, with the physicians then interpreting and presenting the results to the families. Collin (1995) maintains that nurses can identify possible problems while preparing for the physical exam, talking with the parents, and observing the child's behavior. Nurses constitute a valuable resource for effective screening in a clinical setting, but also are effective screeners in home or community settings. Romeo (2002) provides an overview of the practices involved in nurse screening.

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### Screening by Non-Medical Personnel in Medical Settings

A variety of models have been developed that use non-medical paraprofessionals and professionals to conduct developmental screenings in primary-care settings for early identification of developmental disabilities or delays. The developmental specialist model, which employs a specially trained non-medical individual as the primary screener, has been systematically implemented and tested in at least two different initiatives (Eggbeer, Littman, & Jones, 1997; Zuckerman, Parker, Kaplan-Sanoff, Augustyn, & Barth, 2004). Another screening strategy that has been developed for use by non-medical personnel uses a multi-tiered screening process that begins with a general screening, followed by a more in-depth screening process if concerns are identified from the first-tier screening. Sources listed in this section of the bibliography provide the reader with information concerning these different models.

Capone, A. *Essential partnerships: Creating partnerships between pediatric practitioners and early developmental interventionists for child find*. Burlington, VT: University of Vermont Center on Disability and Community Inclusion and The University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research and Service (UCEDD).

### Summary

Developmental screening performed by health-care professionals is an important source of early identification of infants and young children who may be eligible for Part C early intervention or Part B(619) preschool special education services. This *Milemarkers* includes selected references to research and practices as well as methods and procedures for health-care professionals conducting developmental screening in both primary-care offices and community settings. The material in this bibliography should be useful for practitioners responsible for conducting early identification activities.

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