

Sources of Information About Parent Appraisals of Child Behavior and Development

Carl J. Dunst and Donna M. Snyder

This *Milemarkers* bibliography includes selected references to sources of information about parent appraisals of their children's behavior and development. Parent appraisals include the observations, opinions, judgments, and concerns of parents that involve subjective and objective assessments of child functioning. The references should be useful to practitioners who use information provided by parents and other primary caregivers as part of early identification procedures used to determine eligibility for early intervention or preschool special education.

The observations, descriptions, opinions, judgments, and concerns of parents and other primary caregivers regarding child behavior and development can be important information for part of the evaluation and assessment requirements of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C Early Intervention Program (2002). As part of meeting the evaluation and assessment requirements of the Act, parents are in the best position to know their children's unique needs and strengths. Therefore, parents' appraisals of their children's capabilities and functioning are important sources of assessment information that can be used for and contribute to eligibility determination.

This *Milemarkers* includes selected references to sources of information pertaining to parents' appraisals and evaluations of their children's behavioral and developmental functioning (Glascoe & MacLean, 1990). A review of the literature with a focus on parental appraisals of child behavior and functioning useful for early identification purposes identified three categories of parental appraisal practices: (1) parental concerns leading to help seeking by parents or referrals by professionals (Glascoe, 1999), (2) parental judgments and estimates of child capabilities and functioning (Glascoe, 1998), and (3) parent/professional congruence in the assessment of child behavior and development (Suen, Logan, Neisworth, & Bagnato, 1995). Parental appraisal practices are one type of early identification activity (Dunst & Trivette, 2004) that constitutes the focus of research and practice at the Tracking, Referral and Assessment Center for Excellence (www.tracecenter.info).

Parent Appraisals

Parental Concerns

Parental concerns are subjective judgments of child behavior and development usually expressed in terms of

the quality or quantity of functioning that is perceived to be atypical or "not like that of other children" (Glascoe & Dworkin, 1995). Parents' concerns about their children's development and social and behavioral functioning are often the basis for seeking professional advice and guidance (e.g., Ellingson, Briggs-Gowan, Carter, & Horwitz, 2004). Physician responsiveness to parental concerns, in turn, is often the foundation for a referral for further evaluations, therapy, or intervention (Dulcan et al., 1990).

Beauchesne, M. A., & Kelley, B. R. (2004). Evidence to support parental concerns as an early indicator of autism in children [Electronic version]. *Pediatric Nursing*, 30(1), 57-67.

Diamond, K. E. (1993). The role of parents' observations and concerns in screening for developmental delays in young children. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education*, 13, 68-81.

Dulcan, M. K., Costello, E. J., Costell, A. J., Edelbrock, C., Brent, D., & Janiszewski, S. (1990). The pediatrician as gatekeeper to mental health care for children: Do parents' concerns open the gate? [Electronic version]. *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry*, 29, 453-458.

Ellingson, K. D., Briggs-Gowan, M. J., Carter, A. S.,

Milemarkers is a publication of the Tracking, Referral and Assessment Center for Excellence (TRACE) funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs (H324G020002). Opinions expressed in this publication are those of TRACE and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Department of Education. TRACE is a major initiative of the Center for Improving Community Linkages, Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, www.puckett.org. Copyright © 2004 by the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute. All rights reserved.

- & Horwitz, S. M. (2004). Parent identification of early emerging child behavior problems: Predictors of sharing parental concern with health providers. *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, *158*, 766-772.
- Glascoc, F. P. (1996). Parents' concerns about children's development: Prescreening technique or screening test? *Pediatrics*, *99*, 522-528.
- Glascoc, F. P. (1999). Using parents' concerns to detect and address developmental and behavioral problems. *Journal of the Society of Pediatric Nurses*, *4*, 24-35.
- Glascoc, F. P. (1999). A method for deciding how to respond to parents' concerns about development and behavior. *Ambulatory Child Health*, *5*, 197-208.
- Glascoc, F. P. (1999). The value of parents' concerns to detect and address developmental and behavioural problems. *Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health*, *35*(1), 1-8.
- Stickler, G. B., Salter, M., Broughton, D. D., & Alario, A. (1991). Parents' worries about children compared to actual risks. *Clinical Pediatrics*, *30*, 522-528.
- Thompson, M. D., & Thompson, G. (1991). Early identification of hearing loss: Listen to parents. *Clinical Pediatrics*, *30*, 77-80.
- Triggs, E. G., & Perrin, E. C. (1989). Listening carefully: Improving communications about behavior and development: Recognizing parental concerns. *Clinical Pediatrics*, *28*, 185-192.
- Finch, J. R. (2002). *Screening for developmental and behavioral disabilities is cost-effective when parents fill out standardized forms*. Retrieved August 26, 2004, from University of Michigan Department of Pediatrics, Evidence-Based Pediatrics Web site: www.med.umich.edu/pediatrics/ebm/cats/devdelay.htm.
- Forsyth, B. W. C., Horwitz, S. M., Leventhal, J. M., Burger, J., & Leaf, P. J. (1996). The child vulnerability scale: An instrument to measure parental perceptions of child vulnerability. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology*, *21*, 89-101.
- Glascoc, F. P. (1998). *Collaborating with parents: Using parents' evaluation of developmental status to detect and address developmental and behavioral problems*. Nashville, TN: Ellsworth and Vandermeer Press.
- Glascoc, F. P. (1998). The value of 'parents' evaluations of developmental status in detecting and addressing children's developmental and behavioral problems. *Diagnostic*, *23*, 185-203.
- Henderson, L. W., & Meisels, S. J. (1994). Parental involvement in the developmental screening of their young children: A multiple-source perspective. *Journal of Early Intervention*, *18*, 141-154.
- Ireton, H., & Glascoc, F. P. (1995). Assessing children's development using parents' reports: The Child Development Inventory. *Clinical Pediatrics*, *34*, 248-255.
- Oliver, B., Dale, P. S., Saudino, K. J., Petrill, S. A., Pike, A., & Plomin, R. (2002). The validity of a parent-based assessment of cognitive abilities in three-year-olds. *Early Childhood Development and Care*, *172*, 337-348.
- Pillai-Riddell, R. R., Badali, M. A., & Craig, K. D. (2004). Parental judgments of infant pain: Importance of perceived cognitive abilities, behavioural cues and contextual cues. *Pain Research and Management*, *9*(2), 73-80.
- Skellern, C., Rogers, Y., & O'Callaghan, M. (2001). A parent-completed developmental questionnaire: Follow up of ex-premature infants [Electronic version]. *Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health*, *37*(2), 125-129.
- Squires, J., Bricker, D., Heo, K., & Twombly, E. (2001). Identification of social-emotional problems in young children using a parent-completed screening measure. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, *16*, 405-419.
- Squires, J., Nickel, R. E., & Eisert, D. (1996). Early detection of developmental problems: Strategies for monitoring young children in the practice setting. *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics*, *17*, 420-427.

Parent/Professional Congruence

The extent to which parents and professionals make similar judgments regarding child behavior and development (congruence) or whether each provides a different point of view regarding a child's capabilities and functioning has been the focus of research for many years (Bagnato, 1984). Bagnato et al. (in press) concluded, based on their review of the parent/professional congruence literature, that parents and professionals generally agree regarding child behavior and development but that each makes a unique contribution to the understanding of important aspects of child capabilities.

- Bagnato, S. J. (1984). Team congruence in developmental diagnosis and intervention: Comparing clinical judgment and child performance measures. *School Psychology Review, 13*, 7-16.
- Bagnato, S. J., & Neisworth, J. T. (1985). Assessing young handicapped children: Clinical judgment versus developmental performance scales. *International Journal of Partial Hospitalization, 3*, 13-21.
- Blacher-Dixon, J., & Simeonsson, R. J. (1981). Consistency and correspondence of mothers' and teachers' assessments of young handicapped children. *Journal of the Division for Early Childhood, 3*, 64-71.
- Dinnebeil, L. A., & Rule, S. (1994). Congruence between parents' and professionals' judgments about the development of young children with disabilities: A review of the literature. *Childhood Special Education, 14*, 1-25.
- Geiger, D. M., Smith, D. T., & Creaghead, N. A. (2002). Parent and professional agreement on cognitive level of children with autism [Electronic version]. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 32*, 307-312.
- Gradel, K., Thompson, M. S., & Sheehan, R. (1981). Parental and professional agreement in early childhood assessment. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 1*(2), 31-39.
- Johnson, D., Poteat, G. M., & Kushnick, T. (1986). Comparison of mental age estimates made by pediatricians and mothers of preschool children. *Journal of Pediatric Psychology, 11*, 385-392.
- Meltzer, L. J., Levine, M. D., Hanson, M. A., Wasser, R., Schneider, D., & Sullivan, M. (1983). Developmental attainment in preschool children: Analysis of concordance between parents and professionals. *Journal of Special Education, 17*, 203-213.
- Sexton, D., Hall, J., & Thomas, P. J. (1983). Multisource assessment of young handicapped children: A comparison of a diagnostician, teachers, mothers, and fathers. *Diagnostic, 9*(1), 3-11.
- Sexton, D., Thompson, B., Perez, J., & Rheams, T.

(1990). Maternal versus professional estimates of developmental status for young children with handicaps: An ecological approach. *Topics in Early Childhood Special Education, 10*(3), 80-95.

- Suen, H. K., Logan, C. R., Neisworth, J. T., & Bagnato, S. (1995). Parent-professional congruence: Is it necessary? *Journal of Early Intervention, 19*, 241-252.

Summary

Parents' concerns and assessments of their children's behavior and development can contribute to the information needed to ascertain eligibility for early intervention or preschool special education. This *Milemarkers* includes selected references to research and practice, and methods and procedures, for taking full advantage of parents' knowledge about their children's strengths, capabilities, and needs. The material in this bibliography should be useful toward practitioners' responsibility for conducting early identification activities.

Acknowledgments

Appreciation is extended to Theresa Owenby for typing, Teresa Imfeld for editing, and Kaki Roberts for final formatting of the manuscript.

References

- Bagnato, S. J. (1984). Team congruence in developmental diagnosis and intervention: Comparing clinical judgment and child performance measures. *School Psychology Review, 13*, 7-16.
- Bagnato, S. J., Matesa, M., Smith-Jones, J., & Fevola, A. (in press). Foundations for using clinical judgment in early intervention. *Cornerstones, 1*(2).
- Dulcan, M. K., Costello, E. J., Costell, A. J., Edelbrock, C., Brent, D., & Janiszewski, S. (1990). The pediatrician as gatekeeper to mental health care for children: Do parents' concerns open the gate? *Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry, 29*, 453-458.
- Dunst, C. J., & Trivette, C. M. (2004). Toward a categorization scheme of child find, referral, early identification and eligibility determination practices. *Trace-lines, 1*(2). Available from <http://www.tracecenter.info/products.php>.
- Early Intervention Program for Infants and Toddlers with Disabilities, 34 C.F.R. § 303 (2002).
- Ellingson, K. D., Briggs-Gowan, M. J., Carter, A. S., & Horwitz, S. M. (2004). Parent identification of early emerging child behavior problems: Predictors of sharing parental concern with health providers.

Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine, 158, 766-772.

Glascoe, F. P. (1998). *Collaborating with parents: Using parents' evaluation of developmental status to detect and address developmental and behavioral problems*. Nashville, TN: Ellsworth and Vandermeer Press.

Glascoe, F. P. (1999). Using parents' concerns to detect and address developmental and behavioral problems. *Journal of the Society of Pediatric Nurses*, 4, 24-35.

Glascoe, F. P., & Dworkin, P. E. (1995). The role of parents in the detection of developmental and behavioral problems. *Pediatrics*, 95, 829-836.

Glascoe, F. P., & MacLean, W. E. (1990). How parents

appraise their child's development. *Family Relations*, 39, 280-283.

Suen, H. K., Logan, C. R., Neisworth, J. T., & Bagnato, S. (1995). Parent-professional congruence: Is it necessary? *Journal of Early Intervention*, 19, 241-252.

Authors

Carl J. Dunst, Ph.D., is Co-Principal Investigator of the Tracking, Referral and Assessment Center for Excellence (TRACE) and Research Scientist at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute in Asheville, North Carolina (dunst@puckett.org). Donna M. Snyder, B.A., is a Research Assistant at the Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute (dsnyder@puckett.org).

