Social Communication Skills and Autism Screening Initiative

Centre County Early Intervention
Laurie A Ragan M.S. CCC/SLP- Strawberry Fields Inc.
Vision of Early Intervention
Vision Not Achieved

Sammy

Lulu
Reflection

Bring to mind a child and recall the story of a vision not achieved.
My Vision Awareness - Fueled & Informed

- **Family Coaching** - County Grants through EITA
- **Autism Navigator** - Knowledge & Skills, Online Learning Community
- **Autism Navigator Mastery** – PA Pilot Cohort

Commitment: to enhance skills of other EI professionals
Problem

Disconnect between the Early Intervention vision and what was happening in practice.
Implement effective practices to identify and support children with early signs of social communication delays and ASD.

My Solution . . .
It Takes a Village

- Parents
- Family
- Friends
- Childcare providers
- Service Coordinator
- Independent Evaluators
- EI Providers
- Primary Physicians
- Specialty Physicians
- Private Therapies
- Intermediate Unit
Plan - Achieve the EI Vision

1. **Gain the Support** of Early Intervention Leadership

2. **Develop a Process** - systematic, collaborative, and user friendly

3. **Motivate, Educate and Empower** our Early Intervention Community

4. **Implementation**

5. **Evaluation**
It Takes a Village

SUPPORT
Green Light

- Employer: Strawberry Fields
- Centre County Early Intervention

1. Acknowledge the disconnect
2. Commit support, time and resources

February 2018
DEVELOP A PROCESS
Identify Effective Screening Tools

Tools

- Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales DP Infant Toddler Checklist (6 - 24 months)
- M-CHAT R/F (18 - 30 months)

Criteria

- Norm-referenced, validated
- Adequate sensitivity/specificity
- Parent participation
- Ease of use and free
Collaborative
Systematic
User Friendly Process
MOTIVATE, EDUCATE, EMPOWER
Method: Workshops

Phase 1: **Build a strong foundation**
- Summer 2018
- 4 Service Coordinators, 3 Independent Evaluators

Phase 2: **Grow the Initiative**
- Dec 2018
- Providers: 4 agencies, 36 Therapists/Special Instructors

- Attendance was **mandatory**
- Leadership from EITA, County, Agencies
Motivate the Team – Embrace the Vision

- Acknowledge the disconnect of the Vision and practice
- Create awareness of our roles in the disconnect
- Recognize our ability to impact the Vision
- Embrace the collaborative and ongoing process
Educate: Resources
## Educate: Screening Tools

**ITC – SCORING KEY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CSBS DP Infant-Toddler Checklist</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emotion and Eye Gaze</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Do you know when your child is happy and when your child is sad? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. When your child is happy, does he/she talk? (If yes, write: how often) 5 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Do your child smile or laugh while you are looking at them? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When your child sits or stands and has a toy in front of them, does your child look at the toy? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Do your child ask questions about people? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does your child treat others fairly? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does your child seem interested in other children? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your child understand simple instructions? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does your child use signs or gestures to communicate? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Motor</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your child play by touching objects? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does your child use a toy or object to explore? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Visual</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your child follow a moving object? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does your child use a toy or object to explore? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Symbolic</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Does your child use words to express themselves? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does your child use gestures to express themselves? 20 Y/N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reproduction of Sample Material</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**M-CHAT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Did you ever wonder if your child might be deaf?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Have you ever wondered if your child might be deaf?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Does your child ever need help when using a toy or object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Does your child ever need help with an object?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Empower: Resource Tools
Empower: Team Communication

Identification of

• Roles
• Responsibilities
• Timing
Empower: Family Communication

• Recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics
• County Initiative
• Offered to all families
• Participation is voluntary
• Screening Tools **DO NOT give a DIAGNOSIS**
• Identifies skills at risk for social communication delays
• Guides recommendations for further evaluation and intervention
Empower: Build Confidence

• Practice in the field
• Observation of team members
• Mentoring with colleagues
• Use of Job Aids and supports
IMPLEMENTATION
Systematic Process: Collaborative & User Friendly

Who

When

What

How
Protocol – Who and When

Service Coordinators, Evaluators:
Introduce during initial contact

Providers, Service Coordinators:
Monitor quarterly
Protocol – What and How

• **Screen** most beginning at 6 months

**Infant Toddler Checklist or MCHAT**
- Voluntary
- Professional Judgement

• **Share** appropriate resources and supports with families

• **Document & communicate** referral & results forms, IFSP, session notes, monitoring reports

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**PROTOCOL - INFANT TODDLER CHECKLIST**

6 – 24 months

Also Complete M-CHAT @ 18, 24 and older

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initial SC</th>
<th>Initial and Annual Evaluation: SC/IE</th>
<th>Quarterly Review: Provider/SC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

- □ Does not qualify for EI
  - ITC: No concerns
- □ Does not qualify for EI
  - ITC: Concern one composite
- □ Qualifies for EI
  - Screening not completed due to time or age of child
- □ Qualifies for EI
  - Screening not completed due to professional judgment/family request
- □ Qualifies for EI
  - ITC: None or One Composite
- □ Qualifies for EI
  - ITC: Concern in two or more composites or total score

- □ Three Month Review
  - Screen: Using results refer to red boxes below for next steps
- □ Three Month Review
  - Offer screen unless professional judgement or family request is unchanged

- □ Rescreen at Quarterly
  - 3, 6, 9 & 12
  - ITC until 24 months and M-CHAT if: 18, 24, 30, 36
- □ Refer/Review Further Evaluation
  - IF S Flores – M-CHAT only
  - New QI at: 24, 30, 36
  - Continue ITC quarterly

- □ Document name of need to result on
  - * Results Form
  - * Referral Form
  - * Evaluation Report
  - * Session Note
  - * Progress Monitoring

2. Share resources and services appropriate for family
### Protocol – What and How

### Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention-Drug and Alcohol

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Function</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Email Address</td>
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<td>Date of IFSP</td>
<td>14th Day</td>
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### Social Communication Skills and Autism Screening

Center offers Early Intervention services, offering participation in a communication screening as part of our comprehensive and ongoing process and at regular intervals during services. This screening process will help identify behaviors that place children at risk for social communication delays and autism. It is not intended to provide a diagnosis but supports the need for Early Intervention, helps monitor skills and may guide recommendations for further evaluation. Participation in voluntary.

The results of your child’s screening are as follows:

**Infant Toddler Checklist (SB5-DF)**

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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>No Concerns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Low Risk</td>
</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Medium Risk</td>
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<td>High Risk</td>
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**MCCHAT-RP**

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**Observations/Comments:**

**Recommendations:**

- [ ] Hearing Evaluation
- [ ] Developmental Pediatric Evaluation
- [ ] Must be seen in 3 Months
- [ ] Other...

**Mental Health/Intellectual Disabilities/Early Intervention-Drug and Alcohol**

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EVALUATION
Evaluation: Professional Feedback

• Informal:
  • County and agency staff meeting
  • Personal communications

• Formal: Survey - June 2019
  • Implementation team members
Q: Describe your current level of confidence with implementation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>68%</td>
<td>Can lead the entire process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>Primarily observing a team member but also sharing information that supports the comments of another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4%</td>
<td>Has not had the opportunity to implement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q: What has increased your confidence in sharing information about early signs?

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>87%</td>
<td>Handbook - protocol, job aids, resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61%</td>
<td>Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52%</td>
<td>Opportunities to discuss at meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>Team Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44%</td>
<td>Observing the Service Coordinators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26%</td>
<td>Google Drive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q: What is happening w/difficult conversations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td>Strongly agreed or agreed that the Initiative has empowered them to help families not ready for difficult conversations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Service Coordinator: “It opened up conversations. Families are open to completing the screening and it can help engage a difficult conversation.”

Special Instructor: “It is stressful to discuss concerns. However, families felt supported when it was presented as standard best practice, a screening measure and resources were shared.”
Q: Share your thoughts on the Screening Initiative.

Independent Evaluator:

“I think the initiative has been a success. The confidence level of the team members has increased so much. The screenings have become part of the evaluation routine. In most cases, the family is receptive and eager to receive additional information about their child's development.”
Q: Share your thoughts on the Screening Initiative.

SLP:

“I think it has helped so much to have a **team approach** to this type of screening. I have really seen the **SC's** **jump in and take the lead** (even when we are both there during a session). This has been neat to see and has **helped the families** seeing that **we are all on board** with having these conversations.”
Q: Share your thoughts on the Screening Initiative.

Physical Therapist

“I’m happy to say that overall my experience has been very positive and that the majority of my clients’ parents have wanted to have the screening performed. I did have one set of parents choose not to pursue additional therapy despite recommendation from myself, another PT and the SC. Instead, they were left with plenty of resources and contact information.”
Reflection – In the past . . .

To start a conversation, Interventionist waited for the right moment or . . . hoped the family would initiate the conversation or . . . hoped someone else would do it!
Reflection – Now . . .

- We have conversations with all families, beginning at the first meeting
- Or within the first three months with > 90% of families
- More than one team member continues the conversation
- Supports and resources for all
- Less stress in the village!
Evaluation: Family Feedback

• Informal:
  • Conversations during visits

• Formal: Surveys via listserv-June 2019
  (URL, QR for online, paper copies)
  • Providers followed-up during home visits
Family Feedback: Conversations

- Felt positive to learn we were using “best practices”
- Liked that the screening tools were quick and easy to do
- Felt supported by their EI team
- Appreciated the opportunity to discuss concerns
## Family Feedback: Surveys

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96%</td>
<td>Understood this process did not <strong>diagnosis</strong> their child</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80%</td>
<td>Described the on-going process as a good idea</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q: When concerns were identified during the screening what did you do?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>88%</td>
<td>Requested a variety of additional services:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• More Early Intervention Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ABA services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Psychology services – sleep, eating, behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• <strong>Specialized evaluation</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q: How did you feel about participation in the screening?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rate</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Validated concerns of family or others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23%</td>
<td>Identified concerns family did not have</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>73%</td>
<td>Felt positive about reviewing and talking about their child’s development even when concerns were identified that family did not see.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12%</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the recent past . . .

When a difficult conversation unfolded about early signs . . .

- Families expressed a variety of emotions,
- Families, armed with little information, turned to extended family/friends, and physicians and
- Sometimes left the EI program
- Lost trust in the system or
- Elected not to pursue additional interventions
Vision was not Achieved
Since implementation …

Difficult conversations happen slowly . . .

• Families express a variety of emotions
• Families have the information they need when talking to friends, family, and physicians
• They feel supported by their EI Team
Outcome:
100% have remained in service with many requesting additional services and seeking further evaluation.

Vision of Early Intervention Achieved!
UNANTICIPATED OUTCOMES
Eligibility for Services

• Initial and Annual Evaluation
  • Results used to support Informed Clinical Opinion.

• Transition to 3 - 5 services
  • IU #10 accepts eligibility results completed within 6 months.

• Not Eligible for Services - Families Report
  • Awareness of needs, importance of monitoring
  • Knowledge of resources to explore other supports
Family Dynamics

• Families have shared that this experience has enlightened their awareness of characteristics in their other children.

• Parents express pride that social communication skills were a strength for a child who had other developmental concerns.
Local Awareness

- When working in multiple counties, team members are sharing our resources with families and professionals.
- Offering the opportunity for screening and providing resources during Community Developmental Screenings.
- Workshop held for a local preschool on Early Signs and Resources.
Local Awareness

- Child Care Centers - requesting resources
- Intermediate Unit Speech Team
- Children’s Team - requests to learn more: Penn State Extension, Nurse Family Partnership and Parenting Plus
- Administration at Centre County MH/ID/EI Board Meetings
Beyond Centre County

- EITA Leadership
- Developmental Medicine Center in PA
- Faculty in Communication Sciences at the University of Alabama
- Autism Navigator Authors
Provider personal impact

• New professional relationships across agencies
• Reduced stress when having difficult conversations
• Team pride in the multiple layers of impact
CHALLENGES
Challenges

- Resources required for development and implementation
  - time, skills, funding
- Coordination of the plan across multiple agencies
- Resistance to change and new responsibilities
- Obtaining baseline data
- Sustaining and scaling the Initiative moving forward
A Successful Initiative - Thanks to . . .

- Leadership of Centre County EI and Strawberry Fields Inc.
- Professionals from Strawberry Fields and Centre County EI Team
- Leadership of EITA
Resources

• CSBS-DP: Infant Toddler Checklist – Prizant, Wetherby
• MCHAT-R/F – D. Robins
  http://mchatscreen.com/
• First Words Project - http://firstwordsproject.com
• Autism Navigator - https://autismnavigator.com
• Autism Speaks - https://www.autismspeaks.org
• CDC – Learn the Signs. Act Early.
  https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html
• EITA enrollment in Autism Navigator