
Title: Early Identification: Promising Practices to Support Young Children with Disabilities and their Families



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(Guest Editor)

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Proposal

In western countries, approximately 17% of children are diagnosed with a developmental or behavioral disability such as autism and intellectual disabilities (IDEAdata.org, 2011). However, less than 50% of these children are identified prior to school entry, at which time more significant delays may have developed and precious intervention time lost. Children from ethnically diverse and poor families have less access to early screening services than those from middle class families, and are referred at a later time frame to needed services (Gibson, 2007; Thomas et al., 2007; Mandell et al., 2007). Although data are limited, there appears to be a significant under-identification of developmental delays in early childhood (Sices, 2007).

Screening for developmental-behavioral, medical, and social emotional delays is in dire need for systems change (Bricker, Macy, Squires, & Marks, 2013). A lack of consistent and comprehensive developmental screening is evident in a large number of communities. Public awareness initiatives are often ineffective and/or nonexistent. There is great variability in Child Find efforts, as well as little accountability built into monitoring its impact. Access to services is a limitation in many areas. In order to identify children with developmental concerns, screening assessment needs to be coordinated, better referral and public awareness procedures and policies are needed to provide a cohesive framework (Macy, Marks, & Towle, 2014).

The case for early and periodic screening using verified procedures and psychometrically sound measures rests on the premise that early detection of a problem, or potential problem, leads to prevention or intervention that produces effects that significantly exceed prevention or intervention efforts that occur later in a child's life. This critically important premise is not only relevant for children, but also operates across many disciplines and conditions.

We invite authors to submit original research as well as review articles to this special issue that will help early detection efforts. Potential topics include, but are not limited to:

1. review of published data analyzing measurement and assessment issues related to early identification of delay/disability,
2. linguistic and diversity considerations in early detection,
3. developmental and behavioral screening instrumentation,
4. advances in child find and/or cross sector collaboration,
5. practices that support families of young children during the early identification process.

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