

Implementation of a Developmental Screening Program in a Childcare Setting

LINDSEY HURST, BSN, RN & MARIAN MALONE, DNP, APRN, CPNP-AC/PC, EBP-C

BACKGROUND

- As many as 1 in 6 children ages 3-17 have a developmental or behavioral disability, and the rate is increasing.^{4,5,30}
- Early childhood is the best time to intervene for developmental delays due to neural flexibility.⁷
- Over 60% of children in the United States are in a childcare setting outside their home daily.¹³
- The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends, at minimum, that developmental screening with a standardized tool be conducted at 9, 18, and 30 months.^{10,16}
- According to recent evidence, these recommendations are not followed, with a national compliance rate of 30.4%.¹¹

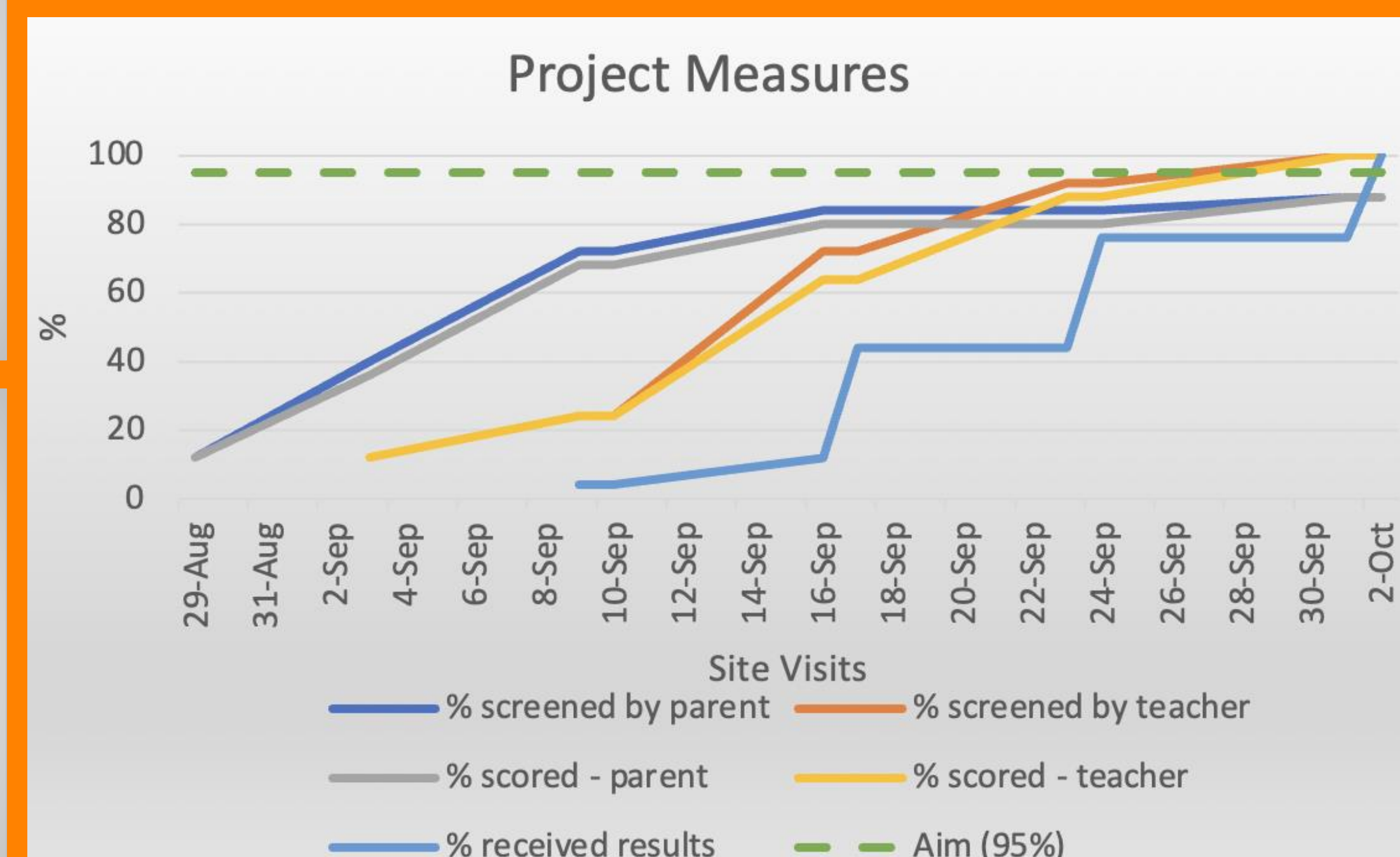
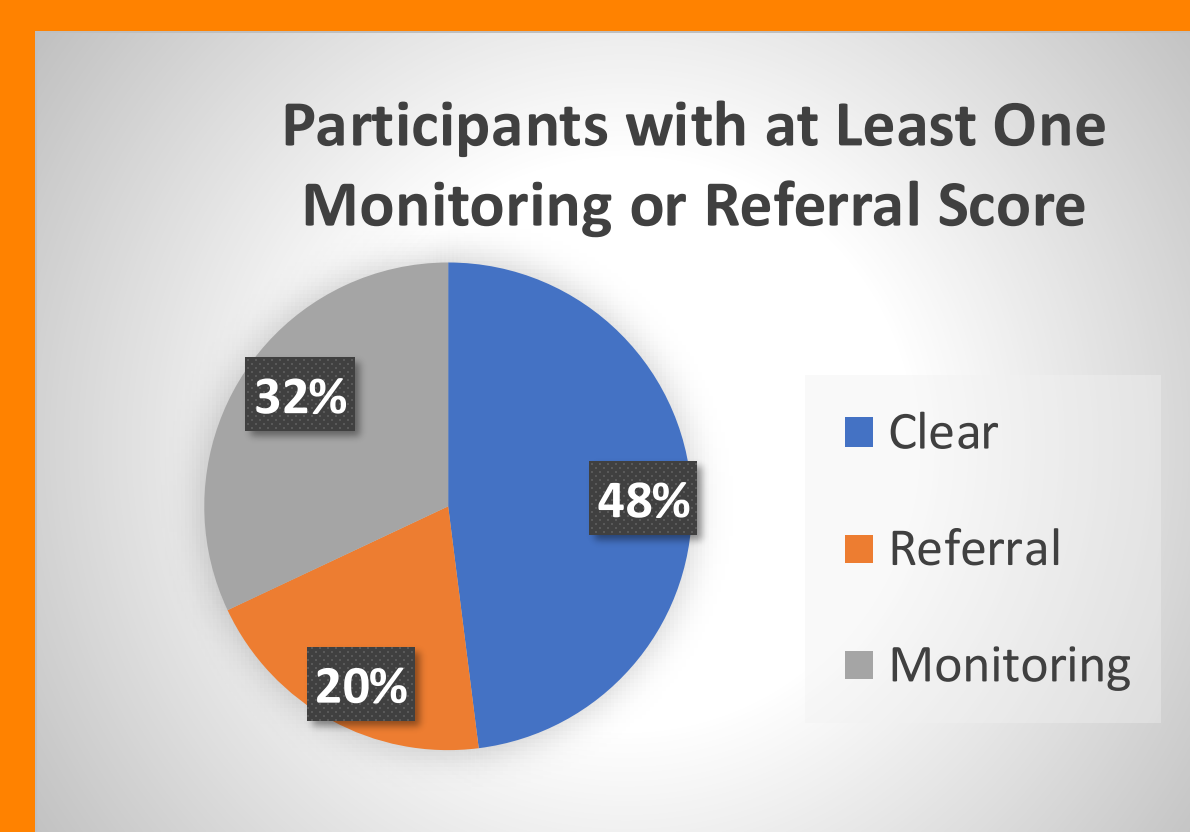
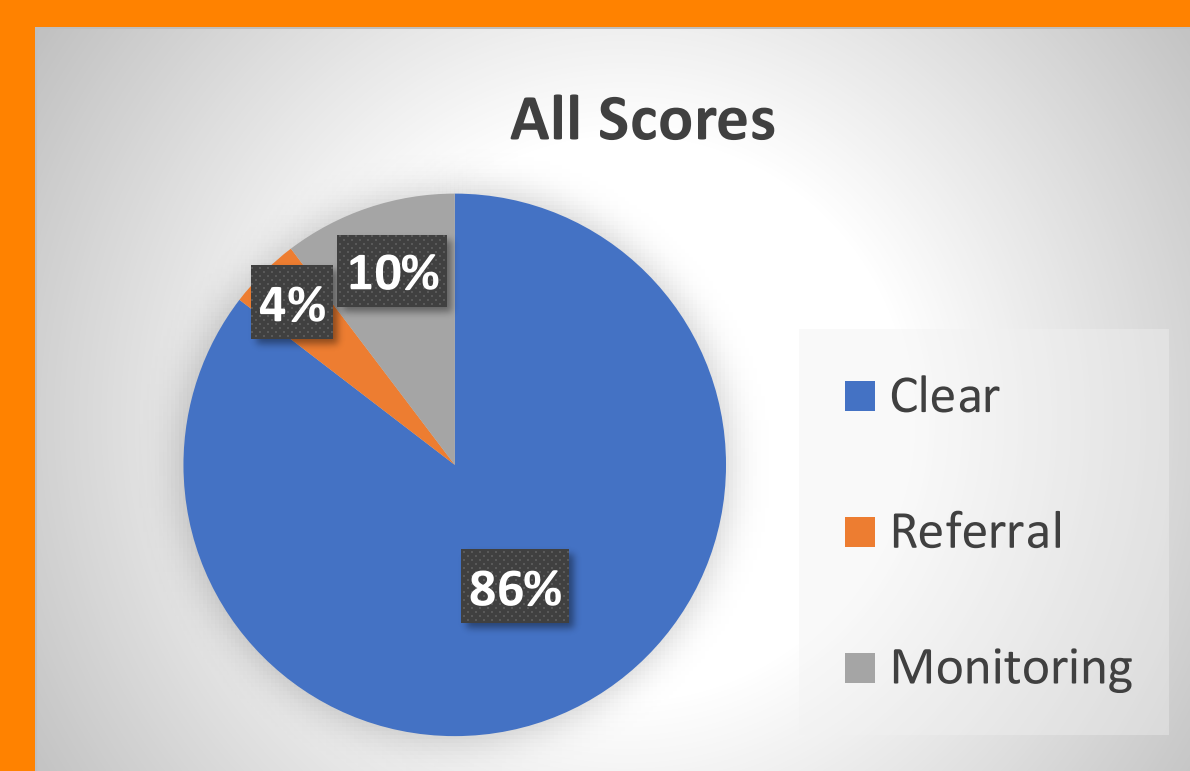
LOCAL PROBLEM

- An East Tennessee childcare center does not yet have a process in place for screening or referring for developmental concerns.
- The project site enrolls 40 children between the ages of 4 months and 5 years old.
- This project aims to create a program in this center that implements a process to conduct developmental screenings, outline referrals, and further developmental support.

METHODS

- The Evidence-Based Practice Improvement Model is used as the guiding framework.¹⁴
- Literature search and critical appraisal demonstrated strong evidence in support of Ages and Stages Questionnaires as the screening tool. Good evidence was found in support of a childcare center as the screening setting.
- Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles were conducted for decision-making during the project.
- Participation rates, screening rates, referral rates, and rates of sharing results with parents were measured upon each site visit over a 6-week period.

Developmental screenings conducted in a childcare setting led to **earlier identification and intervention** for potential developmental disabilities or delays.



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INTERVENTIONS

- Parental permission was required to participate.
- Screenings were completed using the Ages and Stages Questionnaires for General and Social/Emotional Development by the child's parent and teacher.^{24,25,28}
- Staff was educated on the process of obtaining permission, screening, scoring, referring, and sharing results.
- Children with a score below the cutoff in any category were referred to their primary care provider for further assessment.
- Results were shared with parents via letter, along with suggested learning activities and milestone checklists specific to their age and screening results.

RESULTS

- There were 25 participants, with a participation rate of 62.5%. slightly below the aim of 75%.
- 22 of 25 children received screenings by a parent, while 25 of 25 children received screenings by a teacher. An overall screening rate of 94%, just shy of aim of 95%.
- All 25 participants had returned screenings scored and results were sent to their parents. Scoring rate and results sharing rate of 100%, above the aim of 95%.
- 5 students were referred to their health care provider, a referral rate of 20%. All students with a screening score below the cutoff were referred, leading to a referral compliance rate of 100%.

CONCLUSIONS

- Developmental screening using a standardized tool resulted in an increase in earlier identification and referral for developmental delays within one childcare center.
- The project site has the resources and training to continue the established screening program, and it intends to do so.
- Early identification and intervention for developmental delays can optimize developmental potential and outcomes.