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**POSTER ABSTRACT****Taking a Community Approach to Developmental Monitoring and Screening  
for Early Identification of Developmental Delays and Disabilities**

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According to data collected in the National Health Interview Survey (NHIS) between 2009 and 2017, approximately 1 in 6 children (17%) aged 3-17 were diagnosed with a developmental disability in the United States. This data also showed that the percentage of children diagnosed with a developmental disability increased from 16.2% between 2009-2011 to 17.8% between 2015-2017.<sup>1</sup> Children are at an increased risk of developmental delay if they are low income, non-white, or negatively impacted by social determinants of health or adverse childhood experiences.<sup>2</sup>

To identify children with delays, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends developmental screenings be conducted at pediatric well visits, when children are aged 9, 18 and 30 months.<sup>3</sup> However, only about one-third of parents with children aged 9 to 36 months report that their children received screening from their physician.<sup>4</sup> Lack of screening results in several developmental disabilities remaining undiagnosed before a child enters school, inhibiting the ability to offer beneficial early intervention services.<sup>3,4</sup>

Developmental monitoring combined with developmental screening has been proven more effective in identifying children with delays.<sup>5</sup> Developmental monitoring, also known as developmental surveillance, is the process of observing a child's developmental progress to see if milestones are reached at the expected time.<sup>3</sup> This approach promotes individuals who are familiar with the child, such as parents, early educators, teachers, clinicians, etc., to monitor developmental progress and advocate for the child if milestones are not met.<sup>3</sup> Monitoring promotes parental engagement and facilitates an increased awareness of the child's development by all individuals interacting with the child. This awareness of development allows individuals to raise concerns with parents, physicians or refer to intervention services directly, as physician referrals are not required.<sup>6</sup>

To make a difference in identifying children as early as possible, developmental monitoring and screening need to be completed by early care and education providers, early intervention providers and community childcare workers. Partnering with all entities that work with children birth to five is essential for true progress. Education and training on developmental monitoring and screening combined with communication between service providers is recommended for coordinated care.

In the United States, most infants and toddlers of working families receive non-parental care, with an increased trend towards center-based care; however, low-income families are more likely to utilize home-based care.<sup>7</sup> Low income families are also more likely to have unstable child care, resulting in a negative impact on social-emotional development and kindergarten readiness.<sup>8</sup> Targeting center-based early care educators and at home daycare providers for education of developmental monitoring and screening would reach the population most at risk.

Due to the increased prevalence of developmental disabilities in children and demonstrated shortcomings of screening as a sole strategy for their identification, developmental monitoring should be more widely embraced as a collaborative strategy for identification and referral to intervention. Thus, combining monitoring and screening as the universal approach and extending the effort to the community as a whole, places the responsibility of child outcomes on us all.