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Parents as Teachers Impact on Early Detection of Developmental Delays



Child and caregiver screening is one of the four dynamic components of the Parents as Teachers evidence-based home visiting model. Screening provides regular information about each child's health and developmental progress, increases parents' understanding of their child's development, and identifies strengths and abilities, as well as potential areas of concern, like developmental delays.

When indicated, screening can provide the springboard for additional assessments. Some children may be referred for additional services or further evaluation for health conditions, developmental disorders, or

disabilities. When needed, early intervention can enhance the parent-child relationship, resulting in improved family functioning and long-term positive effects on child development outcomes.¹

Children in Parents as Teachers provides early detection of developmental delays and connection to services.

- Parents as Teachers identifies approximately 26,000 children with one or more potential developmental delays or health, hearing, or vision concerns annually.²
- Of the 70,000+ children screened, 15% were referred to additional assessment, and 44% of those referred received follow-up services.²
- More than one-half of the Parents as Teachers children observed with developmental delays overcame these delays by age 3.³
- 2023-2024 National Survey of Children's Health findings showed that 36.5% of children, ages 9 through 35 months, received a developmental screening using a parent-completed screening tool, as compared to 76% Parents as Teachers children receiving developmental screenings in PY 2023-2024.^{4,5}
- 93% of children in the Family and Child Education (FACE) program in tribal communities, which includes Parents as Teachers, received developmental screening.⁶ 26% of these children had identified concerns, and half of those children were referred for services.⁶ The most frequently identified concerns were related to language/communication.⁶

Parents as Teachers supports child health by facilitating use of healthcare services.

- Children enrolled in Parents as Teachers were more likely to be fully immunized for their age.⁷ In 2024-2025, 77% of 19–35-month-olds in Parents as Teachers were reported as up to date on immunizations.²
- Parents as Teachers children were more likely to meet American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) well-child visit recommendations.⁸
- Parents as Teachers participation was significantly related to well-child visit attendance rates compared to non-Parents as Teachers children.⁹
- Caregivers in Parents as Teachers showed improvement in health care literacy indicators, like use of information, use of prenatal care, child well care, child sick care, child dental care, and child immunizations.¹⁰



Early identification can change a child

“A Parent Educator (PE) started working with a family when their child was 15 months old. There was a concern about the child’s language development, so the PE referred the family to Tiny K, a Kansas Early Childhood intervention. The child received services and was diagnosed with apraxia, a rare motor-speech disorder. Since then, Parents as Teachers, Tiny K, external therapists, and school staff have worked diligently to help this now almost 5-year-old child become verbal. The upcoming school year will focus on kindergarten readiness and transition. This story shows how early identification of developmental concerns, long-term early intervention, collaborative teamwork, and endless work from parents can change a child and family’s life. This child was non-verbal until 4 years old and now speaks to everyone! We are so proud of this family and PE!”

— Parent at Southeastern Idaho Public Health (Pocatello, ID)

References

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