



Foundations for Success

*Improving early childhood mental health
to support successful families and communities in Ramsey County*

Ages & Stages Questionnaire®: Social Emotional results January 2006

Foundations for Success is a five-year initiative designed to develop and implement a county-wide system for early childhood mental health services in Ramsey County. Funded by the Knight Foundation and coordinated by the Community Action Partnership of Ramsey and Washington Counties, the initiative promotes culturally competent and family friendly services. Services are developed and implemented by a collaboration of more than 100 community agencies, representing local foundations, government, parents, school districts, health, mental health, early childhood professionals, and the University of Minnesota.

The initiative is evaluated by Wilder Research. One component of the evaluation is an analysis of the results of the Ages & Stages Questionnaire®: Social Emotional (ASQ:SE), which is being used to screen children across the county for emotional or behavioral concerns. This report summarizes the results of 864 screening assessments completed through December, 2005.

Overview of the screening results

A total of 122 children (14% of all children screened) had scores above the clinical cut-off. Scores at this level suggest a need for additional assessment and possible referral for services.

Most of the agencies that have received screening materials through the initiative have not yet submitted any screening forms to Wilder Research. Screenings were submitted by only four agencies: Community Action Partnership of Washington and Ramsey County Head Start (45%), Saint Paul Public Schools (27%), North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools (11%), and Mounds View Schools (6%).

Most children with scores above the clinical cut-off were screened at the Community Action Partnership of Washington and Ramsey County Head Start (79%). Fewer of the children with elevated scores were screened at Saint Paul Public Schools (10%), Mounds View Schools (7%), and North St. Paul-Maplewood-Oakdale Schools (4%).

Almost half of the screening forms submitted were the 48-month version (48%). Most of the remaining forms were either the 60-month (37%) or 36-month (15%) questionnaires. The majority of the forms (94%) were completed in English. Five percent were completed in Spanish and less than one percent each was completed in Hmong and Somali.

The ASQ:SE has eight versions, each designed for children of a specific age. For example, the 24-month version of the ASQ:SE should be completed for children between the ages of 21 and 26 months. Actual age of the child was compared to the version used to determine whether the correct forms were used. Some forms did not include birth dates, making it impossible to check results. Thirty-five children were older than 66 months, making them too old for the 60 month version. Many children (N=172) had a screening completed that was one age level older or younger than appropriate; 24 had a form that was incorrect by more than one level.

Demographic characteristics of children screened

- Male children were more likely to receive high scores on the screening. Overall, males made up 46 percent of the children screened, but 59 percent of those with elevated scores.

- Children represented a diverse range of ethnic groups, including Caucasian/White (38%), African American (21%), Hispanic (12%), Asian (10%), Multi-racial (9%) and African born (4%).
- More than one-third of the children had parents born outside of the United States (37%). Most of these parents were born in Mexico, Somalia, Laos, Ethiopia, and Thailand. Seven percent of the children were born outside of the United States, especially Mexico, Thailand, and Nigeria.
- Most children (78%) spoke English at home. A total of 27 other languages were represented, especially Spanish (16%), Hmong (10%), and Somali (7%).

Other background information

The screening forms included a range of other questions about the child and family. The results of these questions can be summarized as follows:

- Most forms (86%) were completed by mothers. Fathers completed 12 percent of the forms. The remaining forms were completed by foster parents, grandparents, and others.
- Most individuals (87%) did not require any assistance to complete the forms. The remaining 13 percent required some assistance, such as help reading the form or answering questions.
- Children with disabilities were more likely to have high scores. Five percent of all children screened (and 13% of those with elevated scores) had a disability, especially speech problems. Eight percent of all children screened (and 16% of those with elevated scores) were receiving special services, such as speech therapy, special education, and occupational therapy.
- Approximately two-thirds of the families (69%) had annual incomes of \$24,000 or less. Children with higher family incomes were less likely to have elevated scores. Children with family incomes of more than \$40,000 made up 22 percent of the group screened, but only 6 percent of those with elevated scores.

- Most children (81%) weighed between six and nine pounds at birth.
- The average age of mothers at the time of the children's birth was 26. Twenty-two percent of the mothers were age 20 or younger.
- About half of the parents (48%) had a high school degree or less. Almost one-third (31%) had attended some college; while 22 percent had at least an associate's degree.
- Two percent of the children were adopted and another two percent were in foster care.

Conclusions and recommendations

- The number of screenings submitted to date is lower than anticipated and most agencies have not submitted any completed forms. Efforts should be made to ensure that all agencies are completing the screenings and are aware of the procedures for submitting completed forms.
- To ensure validity of the results, staff should check forms prior to administration to ensure that the form accurately reflects the child's age.
- The percentage of forms completed in languages other than English appeared low relative to the backgrounds of respondents. For example, 12 percent of the children were described as Hispanic and 16 percent spoke Spanish at home. However, only five percent of the forms were completed in Spanish. Staff should ensure that forms are completed in the language that is most comfortable for the respondent.
- Overall, 14 percent of the screenings have yielded elevated scores. The partnership should discuss whether these results align with their expectations and to consider the types of follow-up support or services that may be required to meet the needs of children. Additional information regarding the needs of families will be obtained through the follow-up survey that will be conducted with some families as part of the Foundations for Success evaluation.

For more information

For more information about this report, contact Cheryl Holm-Hansen at Wilder Research, 651-647-6424.

Author: Cheryl Holm-Hansen

JANUARY 2006