

DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

KEY FINDINGS

Meaningful Standardized Measure Remains Elusive

In Tacoma, babies and young children may be screened for developmental delays and disabilities in numerous ways and places. They may receive screening at their pediatrician's office by a social service agency, through TPS' federally mandated ChildFind program, or as they enroll in a TPS preschool. Two confounding issues persist, however, as we attempt to identify a measure for this indicator: Efforts to raise awareness of the importance of early screening are not as pervasive as they could be, and a lack of standardized measures and coordination remain barriers to tracking and reporting.

Public health partners in Pierce County are beginning to track and measure developmental screening, but Graduate Tacoma has not had the capacity to collect or analyze that data.

There are bright spots:

- ChildFind offers free confidential screenings to all Tacoma families for preschool-aged children. The number of children served through this program has increased since 2014 thanks to a growing number of referrals from other agencies, such as Child Protective Services, faith-based organizations, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), physicians, and private child care programs. Together, these providers remain intent on increasing awareness of their services in the community, reaching a higher percentage of children in need of screening, and reaching them earlier.

- The Pierce County Early Intervention Program screens children from birth to age three.
- TPS preschools screen children on their own and may refer them to the more rigorous ChildFind screening if delays are suspected.
- Efforts are underway throughout Pierce County and across Washington state to build and support a more robust system of care coordination among healthcare providers to link, synchronize, and deduplicate services for families and children. Pierce County's Project Child Success – and its backbone organization First 5 Fundamentals – are instrumental in these efforts.

Screening and evaluation services exist in our community and people are working to build a stronger network, but there remains a need here for a standardized developmental screening system for children ages birth through kindergarten.

GET INVOLVED!

- **Identify** local screening resources for families and children ages birth to three. Call 253.798.3790.
- **Connect** families and preschoolers to screening resources. Call 253.571.2610.
- **Link** families and children enrolled in TPS to in-school screening. Call 253.571.1224.



DIG DEEPER:

Visit GraduateTacoma.org/Data to dig deeper into the data!

