Rationale for an Early Childhood System Supporting Developmental Screening

(Nobel Prize winning University of Chicago Economics Professor James Heckman)

+ **Invest**
Invest in educational and developmental resources for disadvantaged families to provide equal access to successful early human development.

+ **Develop**
Nurture early development of cognitive and social skills in children from birth to age five.

+ **Sustain**
Sustain early development with effective education through to adulthood.

= **Gain**
Gain a more capable, productive and valuable workforce that pays dividends.
Goal of the Initiative

To ensure that Norwalk children enter Kindergarten developmentally ready to learn by:

- Utilizing developmental monitoring (ASQ), tracking and promotion from birth to age 5
- Identifying children with developmental or behavioral concerns and providing interventions to meet their needs.
Why do formal developmental screening?

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<tr>
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<th>Without screening tools</th>
<th>With screening tools</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Developmental Delays</strong></td>
<td>30% identified</td>
<td>70-80% identified</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palfrey et al, 1994</td>
<td>Squires et al, 1996</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mental Health Problems</strong></td>
<td>20% identified</td>
<td>80-90% identified</td>
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Developmental Screening: Why Norwalk is using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)?

- Validated tool with diverse populations
- Family-friendly: A tool for parents
- Used with general and at-risk populations
- Fosters parents’ understanding of development (promotes development)
- Endorsed by American Academy of Pediatrics
- Has been used as an outcome measure in public health studies, home visiting programs and Early Head Start
The Initiative’s Unique State & Local Partnership

This Grossman Family Foundation grant supports a unique state and local partnership consisting of:

State partners
- Child Development Infoline & CT Help Me Grow
- The Center for Social Research, University of Hartford
- The CT Help Me Grow Advisory Committee

Community partners
- Family and Children’s Agency
- Norwalk ACTS

Organizations represented on the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) Steering Committee and on the Advisory Committee
Structure
• Established a CQI steering committee responsible for implementing, monitoring and evaluating the early childhood system.
• Agreed to utilize one central data system (CDI’s ASQ System) for inputting all ASQ screens in the community allowing for data linkages and longitudinal data analysis.

Objectives
• Integrate the Child Development Infoline/Help Me Grow service delivery system in the City of Norwalk.
• Establish a multi-level sustainable infrastructure for screening, tracking, and promoting early childhood development for children from birth to age 5.
• Conduct research evaluating the impact of developmental screening.
• Design tools to inform and support replication efforts.
ASQ Developmental Indicators - What Are We Measuring?

% of children on track and % who stay on track over time

% of children at potential risk for delay and % with reduction in delay over time

% of children at strong risk for delay and % with reduction in delay over time
Norwalk’s Challenges

Source: Community Profile report by Initiative Researcher and Evaluator, Marcia Hughes, Center for Social Research, University of Hartford

Socioeconomic status is the biggest predictor of children’s well-being and readiness for school.

Children, as a group, are overrepresented among the poor. Young children, in particular, are the most vulnerable.

Thirty-six percent (N= 2,222) of young children citywide are living at less than 200 percent of Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

There are 1,087 infants and toddlers who are living below 200 percent of the FPL
  • 228 children under 3 years are receiving quality child care (20%)
  • 170 are receiving home visiting services (15%)
Building a System Supporting the ASQ

Developed a coalition of the willing, began our work with those already utilizing the ASQ in different sectors.

Developed messaging about the value of developmental screening based on research – how the investment in an early childhood system will create better long-term outcomes for the children of Norwalk and reduce the need for costly spending in our city.

Hired an ASQ Community Liaison who works for Family & Children’s Agency – one community level staff person who is responsible for supporting and overseeing all providers utilizing the ASQ, engaging new providers in the work, and being the face of developmental screening for Norwalk.
How Are We Doing: System’s Infrastructure

Developed a Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) process for our work using Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles.

Developed tiered interventions to support children’s development in all settings.

Established an Advisory Committee to support this work in the community (increase awareness).
Building a System Supporting the ASQ

Created a tiered interventions framework

For children developmentally on track:
    provide developmental promotion activities

For children with a potential risk for delay:
    provide additional activities related to area in monitoring zone

For children at high risk for delay:
    make referral for a formal evaluation to Birth to Three or Preschool Special Education Services
Norwalk has a common agenda (children will enter kindergarten developmentally ready to learn) and a shared measurement (ASQ).

A centralized ASQ data system through CDI provides data on how children are developing over time.

The ASQ has created a common language and shared understanding of child development between parents, early care and education providers, home visitors, and pediatricians.

Shifting ASQ completion from provider to parent enhances parents understanding of their child’s development and empowers parents.

Having one person (ASQ Liaison) overseeing the work is a key to success – human capital is the key to building system level change in a community.

Having a partnership with the Norwalk Early Childhood Council and Norwalk Public Schools helped create a system for developmental screening and gave credibility to our work with both families and providers.
The Norwalk Early Childhood Council adopted a policy requiring School Readiness programs to use the ASQ at enrollment at age 3 and 4.

ASQs are being completed by parents and teachers each school year—data being used to drive classroom instruction and as a framework for parent-teacher conferences.

All staff in all Norwalk home visiting programs are utilizing the same new 2-step ASQ administration model.

Parents are taking the lead in completion of each ASQ with the support of their home visitors, helping them gain a better understanding of their child’s development.

We are partnering with Norwalk Public Schools around tracking children’s development.

ASQs are now included in the kindergarten registration packets allowing for longitudinal data analysis and collaboration with NPS around what the data tells us about the needs of students entering kindergarten.
How Are We Doing:

The data
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Tracking Administration of ASQ Screening: 2013-2019</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL NUMBER OF ASQS (2013-2019)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NUMBER OF CHILDREN with at least 1 screen</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH REPEAT SCREENS (Tracked over time)</strong></td>
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## Tracking Administration of ASQ Screening: Number of ASQs per Year (2013-2019)

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<td>2013</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>2,213</td>
<td>1,931</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Authority</td>
<td>Head Start</td>
<td>Home Visiting</td>
<td>School Readiness</td>
<td>Preschool</td>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>771</td>
<td>2,486</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>1,748</td>
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Outcome of ASQ Screenings: Comparison of First ASQ to Last ASQ (2013-2019) (N=1,055)

- Below: First ASQ 21.50%, Last ASQ 13.20%
- Monitoring: First ASQ 29.70%, Last ASQ 13.90%
- Above: First ASQ 48.80%, Last ASQ 72.90%
What’s Next

Reach children sooner by expanding our touchpoint partners to include:

All Our Kin *(CQI member)*

The Norwalk Housing Authority *(CQI member)*

Center-based infant and toddler programs

The Norwalk Health Department *(Advisory Committee member)*

Norwalk Hospital

Norwalk Community Health Center

Pediatric practices

Faith-based organizations
What’s Next

Recruit parents into leadership positions.

Strengthen the relationship with the Norwalk Public School District.

Integrate the ASQ into Norwalk’s Basics campaign.

Continue to:
  o Inform policy
  o Promote and use tiered inventions.
  o Carry out our data development agenda.
Thank you