Children's Hospital of Philadelphia PolicyLab

How Developmental Screeners for Spanish-speaking Children Help with School Readiness in 200 Words

Health Equity

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While August is a month of anticipation for many children starting kindergarten, the process of preparing for school starts much earlier in a child's life. Part of ensuring kids are ready for that first day involves regular screening for developmental milestones such as speaking in sentences and knowing colors.

Receiving an accurate screening can be particularly difficult for Spanish-speaking families. Without a translated, validated screener, providers may seek interpretation or translation services that can be time-consuming, or pass on screening altogether based on the misconception that delays in Spanish-speaking children must be related to dual-language learning.

Our team set out to assess the validity of two Spanish-language development screeners—the Survey of Well-being of Young Children (SWYC) and the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, Third Edition (ASQ-3). We found that both screeners were accurate enough for use, but in the process, we also discovered that many toddlers screened had delays in the use of their home language. Early Intervention, which is available in every state, is an effective strategy in mitigating these delays.

With validated, Spanish-language screeners, health care and child care providers are equipped with tools to identify these delays and refer families to Early Intervention. Furthermore, they present an opportunity for providers to emphasize families' important role in supporting early language learning. Giving families access to these screeners is one more assurance that a dual-language child will have the same chance as their peers to

enter school ready to learn.

This post is part of our "____ in 200 Words" series. In this series, we tackle issues related to children's health policy and explain and connect you to resources to help understand them further, all in 200 words. If you have any suggestions for a topic in this series, please send a note to PolicyLab's Strategy & Communications Manager Lauren Walens.