



## Quick Facts About Early Identification and Intervention

One million. That's the staggering number of neural connections that are formed *per second* in a child's brain during his or her first few years.

The development of a child's brain – and his or her accompanying developmental milestones – is a remarkable and profoundly significant process. Increasingly, research is shedding an ever-brighter light on the importance of both developmental surveillance and screening in children from birth to 5 years old.

Developmental or behavioral disorders, including speech delays, vision or hearing impairment and learning disorders, as well as disorders like autism, are often not identified until children are already in school, meaning several important years have already passed without early intervention, resources or family support. And yet, we know that the earlier such delays are identified, the results are improved for the child and the costs are lower for the system of care.

Since it was founded more than 20 years ago, First 5 Orange County has placed a major focus on the importance of early identification and intervention through developmental and behavioral monitoring in our youngest children.

A growing body of research and practice shows that a comprehensive early identification and intervention system – one that incorporates developmental screening as part of well-child checks and is supported by community based organizations and other providers – produces optimal results for our youngest children.

## Why You Should Care

- It is estimated that one in four children ages 0 to 5 is at risk for a developmental delay or disability. Early identification and appropriate treatment vastly enhances their chances of achieving developmental milestones, being ready for school, and enjoying long-term success and overall well-being.
- High-quality learning opportunities lay the foundation for children's long-term success. Research makes it clear that early school readiness is critical to setting children on the best possible path for success. Developmental screenings help ensure children are achieving developmental milestones and receiving resources and/or services if and when needed.
- There is still much work to be done to improve system coordination and make sure every child gets critical linkages to services. Additional work can be done to better share results and data within and across systems such as healthcare and education. By sharing important information across systems, a child's full range of needs can be better and more seamlessly addressed.

## First 5 Orange County Position Statement

First 5 Orange County strongly believes that developmental surveillance and screening are critically important to identifying developmental concerns and ensuring appropriate and timely linkage to early intervention services that pave the path toward children's long-term health, happiness and success.

Our goal in First 5 Orange County's Developmental Screening Initiative (DSI) is earlier identification and connection to intervention and resources. To get there, we will continue to play a leadership and advocacy role and work with community partners to ensure all children receive developmental screening (at recommended intervals) and are connected to resources and interventions as early as possible.

## Action Plan

In fiscal year 2017-18, nearly 15,000 children received developmental or behavioral screenings as a result of First 5 Orange County initiatives and early-childhood services partnerships. Our action plan aims to increase access to developmental screenings and promote the importance of these early screenings by:

- Working in partnership with American Academy of Pediatrics-Orange County Chapter and other community partners to cultivate champions and develop system-level changes that remove barriers to screening in primary care practices and other settings, and connect children and families with needed resources and services earlier, more efficiently, and more effectively.
- Providing adequate training and quality improvement for providers.
- Supporting the Governor's proposal to reimburse healthcare providers for screening children with a validated and standardized screening tool.
- Supporting development of a streamlined data infrastructure for simplified and coordinated care across sectors, including healthcare providers with electronic health records and early educational systems with individualized data records, so that there is increased interconnectivity among providers.