



June 24, 2018

Ms. Allison Schuck  
Managing Director  
IL Children's Mental Health Partnership

Dear Alli:

The Psychotherapy Action Network's Children's Committee supports efforts to help families identify and respond to the developmental and social emotional needs of their children. As professionals with extensive mental health experience with children and their families, we are writing to thank you for spearheading the mental health perspective on the implementation of SB 565.

We believe that the success of this law will be significantly affected by the way in which the information from these screenings is conveyed to the families and professionals who will follow up on these screenings. As the committee works to implement the law, we would like to ask that you consider the following points and bring them to the attention of the committee. We offer these ideas to support the goals of this law on behalf of children and their families.

- 1. Screenings have both strengths and challenges in identifying social and emotional aptitudes and difficulties.**
  - a. Screenings have the advantage of being relatively easy to administer and this can be done in multiple sites.
  - b. The findings of screenings are generally based on manifest behavior and symptoms. Screenings generally do not identify the underlying causes of these behaviors or symptoms. The causes may derive from differing pathways. Since the appropriate intervention depends more on the causes than overt behavior, it is important to look beyond the descriptive information from screenings.
  - c. Because screenings occur in the course of development, a screening may capture a moment in time, rather than the overall developmental trajectory.
  - d. To support forward development, it is critical to not pathologize behaviors or symptoms and to avoid a common result of this, the overuse of medication to manage behavior and symptoms rather than address underlying causes.
  - e. Personnel who will administer screenings should be trained to do this.

- 2. Successful outcomes of screening depend on providing information to families and professionals so it can be used effectively.**
  - a. Parents often experience stress and concern when learning of the findings from a screening, so conveying this information in a manner that supports the family is critical. The professional must be able to establish a trusting relationship with the family.
  - b. The likeliness of a family following through on recommendations will be significantly increased with continuity of care. The family should be followed through the process by one trusted professional, ideally the one who interpreted the results for the parents. Otherwise, families may misconstrue or ignore the information and may not be able to obtain the appropriate care.
  - c. Families will need information about the cost of further evaluation and treatment. Services should be fully covered by public and private insurance.
  
- 3. Only with adequate resources for further intervention and amelioration can screening for social and emotional development be effective.**
  - a. Access to evaluation and treatment are inadequate in many communities, especially some of the most impoverished neighborhoods. Families will need to know how and where they can obtain services recommended as a result of these screenings.
  - b. Inadequate access to service is likely to lead to the harmful over-prescription of psychotropic medication for young children.
  - c. The scarcity of resources will need to be addressed because it is likely to be the most significant cause of failure of the intent of the screening law.

The Psychotherapy Action Network's Children's Committee is ready to help work on these issues in any way that may be helpful to you and to the implementation team.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Regards,

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Children's Committee, Psychotherapy Action Network  
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