Developing a Collaborative Training to Increase Developmental Monitoring & Improve Child Outcomes
Bethanne Vergean & Mary Beth Bruder, Ph.D.
The University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities
The Connecticut Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental and related Disabilities Program

• Improving outcomes for children is a shared responsibility across professionals, agencies, and settings.
• One way to improve outcomes for children, especially those at risk for developmental delays, is to connect them and their families/caregivers to services including Birth-to Three.
• Children served by child welfare programs are one population in need of this important connection and child welfare professionals need to develop the knowledge and skills to make these connections.
• Act Early Ambassadors expand the reach of the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” program and support their respective state’s work toward improving early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including autism.
• The CT UCEDD in conjunction with CDC Act Early Ambassador for CT have worked with the CT Department of Children and Families (DCF) to develop a training for child welfare social workers on Learn the Signs. Act Early. (LTSAE) since early 2019.
• LTSAE is a CDC initiative which aims to improve early identification of children with autism and other developmental disabilities so children and families can get the services and support they need.
• LTSAE provides resources such as the Milestone Tracker App, Checklists, Milestone Moments Booklets, and others and are available in multiple languages.
• LTSAE provides guidance and resources for Early Childhood Educators, WIC programs, Medical Professionals, and Home visiting programs.

Methods
• All 2019 trainings were 3 hours and were held in-person.
• The training utilizes practice-based methods where participants watch videos and discuss how they would document the developmental milestones that they observe within the DCF framework for reporting.
• It also which includes key questions to ask parents or caregivers, and recommendations for virtual visits, which are taking the place of in-person visits during COVID-19.
• To date 322 have participated in-person and 56 participants have participated virtually. Over 900 DCF workers will be trained by January 2021.

These are the objectives for the training:
1. State why monitoring infants and young children’s development and identifying developmental concerns early are essential.
2. Recognize developmental milestones that are age appropriate for infants and young children age 0-5 years old.
3. Identify "red flags," that may be behavioral or developmental markers suggesting the need for further evaluation.
4. Describe the process of making a referral to an appropriate agency to meet the needs of the infant or child.
5. Practice appropriately documenting interactions and observations for infants and young children (age 0-5) and families during home visits and face to face to meetings in a case-based activity.

Results
• Data analysis is on-going as trainings are on-going.
• Based on data from 213 participants, there was a significant difference on knowledge assessments between pre-training (M = 2.76, SD = 1.18) and post-training (M = 3.29, SD = 1.15), t(213) = -5.545, p < .001.
• When asked, “What is the most important thing you will take away from this training?” participant responses include:
  • “…to observe children in here and document based on observation of child’s development.”

Discussion and Next Steps
• The CT UCEDD, CDC Act Early Ambassador for CT, and the DCF have established a partnership to mandate this training for all new DCF workers as part of their Workforce Academy.
• This serves as one example of how a unique partnership can improve systems for developmental monitoring, early identification, and intervention, especially for children who are served by the state child welfare system.
• COVID-19 LTSAE funding will expand work with DCF to implement, plan to address the identified barriers around early identification due to pandemic.

References
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: Learn the Signs Act Early https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html

Acknowledgements: The development of this poster was supported, in part, by funding from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (Award #T73MC30115) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Community Living, Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AIDD) (Award #90DDUC0071) awarded to the University of Connecticut Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities Education, Research, and Service, and a collaborative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Association of University Centers on Disabilities (NU380T000280). The opinions expressed, however, are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Departments.