

Well-Child Visits & Developmental Screenings

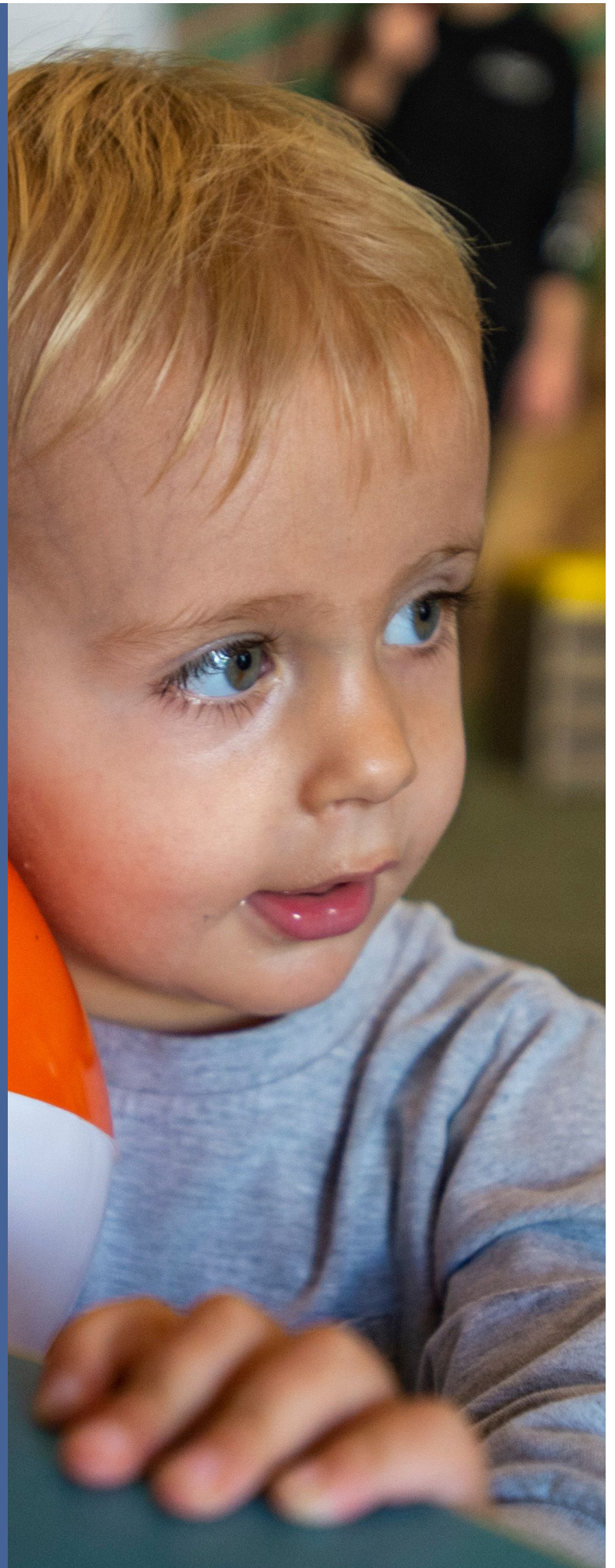
CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES ARE IMPROVED AND THE COSTS ARE LOWER FOR THE SYSTEM OF CARE WHEN DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS ARE IDENTIFIED EARLY AND FAMILIES RECEIVE HELP.

Often when people think of well-child visits they think of shots, and while immunizations are an important part of preventative care, developmental screenings are also a critical part of certain well visits.

All children develop and grow differently, but there are certain milestones that help families know whether their child is on track or if they need some early intervention and supports to help with their development. When children get their well visits, they do better.



FIRST 5
ORANGE COUNTY



THE FACTS

An estimated
1 in 6
children in the US have a developmental disability.¹
Yet, in California,
Only 3%
of infants and toddlers receive early intervention services.²

43%
Less than Half
of children in Orange County with Medi-Cal insurance received the recommended 6 or more well visits in the first 15 months of their life.

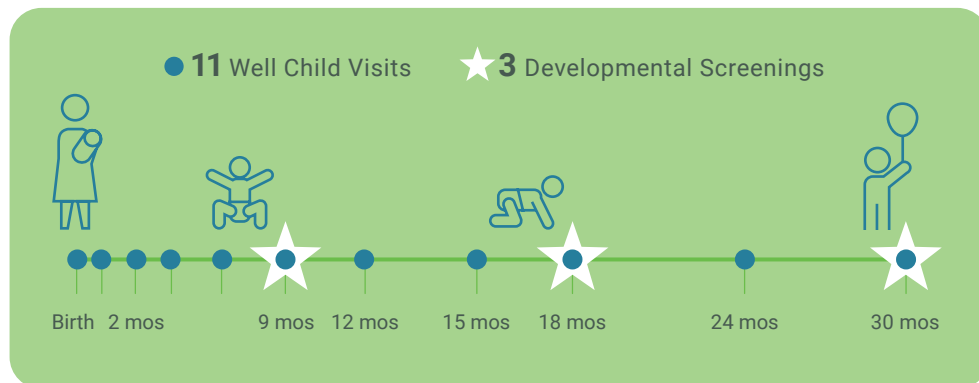
25%
1 in 4
children in Orange County with Medi-Cal insurance received a developmental screening in the first 3 years of life (25%).


1. Benjamin Zablotzky et al., "Prevalence and Trends of Developmental Disabilities Among Children in the United States: 2009–2017," *Pediatrics* 144, no. 4 (October 2019): <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2019-0811>.

2. "IDEA Section 618 Data Products: Static Tables," US Department of Education (webpage), accessed September 19, 2022, <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-c-child-count-and-settings-table-1/resources>.

Well-Child Visits & Developmental Screenings in the First 30 Months:

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends parents/caregivers bring their children in for 11 well visits between birth and 2½ years old. As part of those well visits, children should receive three developmental screenings at 9, 18 and 30 months. The use of a validated developmental screening tool is a great way for the parent/caregiver and healthcare provider to partner and monitor the child's development, and to identify any areas of concern so they can be connected with needed resources as early as possible.




1,000,000
neural connections are made per second in a child's brain during their first few years (Harvard Center on the Developing Child).

California's Investment in Developmental Screening

In the past, providers were not financially incentivized for conducting screenings even though they were required by Medi-Cal as part of well visits. Beginning in 2020, Proposition 56 enabled providers to receive supplemental incentive payments for developmental screenings using a standardized tool. Consequently, we saw significant improvement in the percentage of children receiving developmental screenings in Orange County. Funding for developmental screening incentive payments has since been moved to the state General Fund.

"As a primary care pediatrician, I consider early childhood developmental screening to be one of the most important aspects of routine well child visits. By identifying children who are at risk, we can connect them to services at a young age and allow them to grow to their full potential."

*Reshmi Basu, MD, FAAP President,
AAP-OC Chapter.*

THE NEED

Developmental or behavioral challenges, including speech delays, vision or hearing impairment, learning disabilities, and autism, are often not identified until children are already in school. This means several important years have passed without early intervention, resources, or family support.

System challenges impact families and healthcare providers in a number of ways. To increase the number of children that receive well-child visits, developmental screenings, and early intervention, families and providers need the following:

Families Need:



- Solutions that make it easier to get well visits (e.g., office hours expansion)
- Culturally competent healthcare providers
- Awareness that developmental screenings are part of the services they should receive in well visits
- Help with navigation and connection to services and resources tailored to their needs and insurance
- Greater availability of services without long wait lists

"One thing that would really help would be to allocate enough time with parents in well visits, especially when children are younger."

OC Parent

"Scheduling well visits has been a challenge. Our provider works for a big practice and there is a critical window for making appointments – it has to be at just the right time a few weeks in advance but not too far in advance or they can't schedule. If you wait too long to call, you end up getting the appointment late. And on top of that the times are difficult with work."

OC Parent

Healthcare Providers Need:



- Continued financial incentive to make it feasible for them to conduct developmental screenings as part of well visits
- Training on developmental screenings with a validated tool
- Places to refer children who they find have developmental delays
- Confirmation/validation that the resources they refer families to was successful

"When my oldest was three I was really concerned because he still wasn't talking and we never got help until he got to school. In school they gave him a test and he got an IEP and now has been in speech for three years and is doing better."

OC Parent

STRATEGIES AND SOLUTIONS



First 5 Orange County is working with partners to:

- Shared developmental screening goals for Orange County as well as timely data to help us know if we are making progress
- A well-coordinated system of care with adequate capacity for services and supports that families need
- System improvements that address what we hear families and providers need
- A shared messaging platform so that families and providers hear consistent messages about well visits and developmental screening



First 5 Orange County supports the following:

- Adequate financial compensation to providers for all elements of a well visit
- Continued expectations and incentives for Medi-Cal managed care plans to support well-child visits and developmental screenings
- Advocacy to ensure managed care plans place a priority on prevention and intervention for young children
- Investment in evidenced-based models that improve families' engagement in well-child visits (e.g. HealthySteps, DULCE)
- Ensure continuous Medi-Cal benefit for children ages 0 to 5