

Improving Rates of Early Childhood Screening through an Early Relational Health Approach

Early Relational Health

Safe, stable, nurturing relationships (SSNR) are vital signs in early childhood. Adults with higher positive childhood experiences (PCE) have lower odds of depression and poor health outcomes after accounting for social health risks and adverse childhood experiences.¹

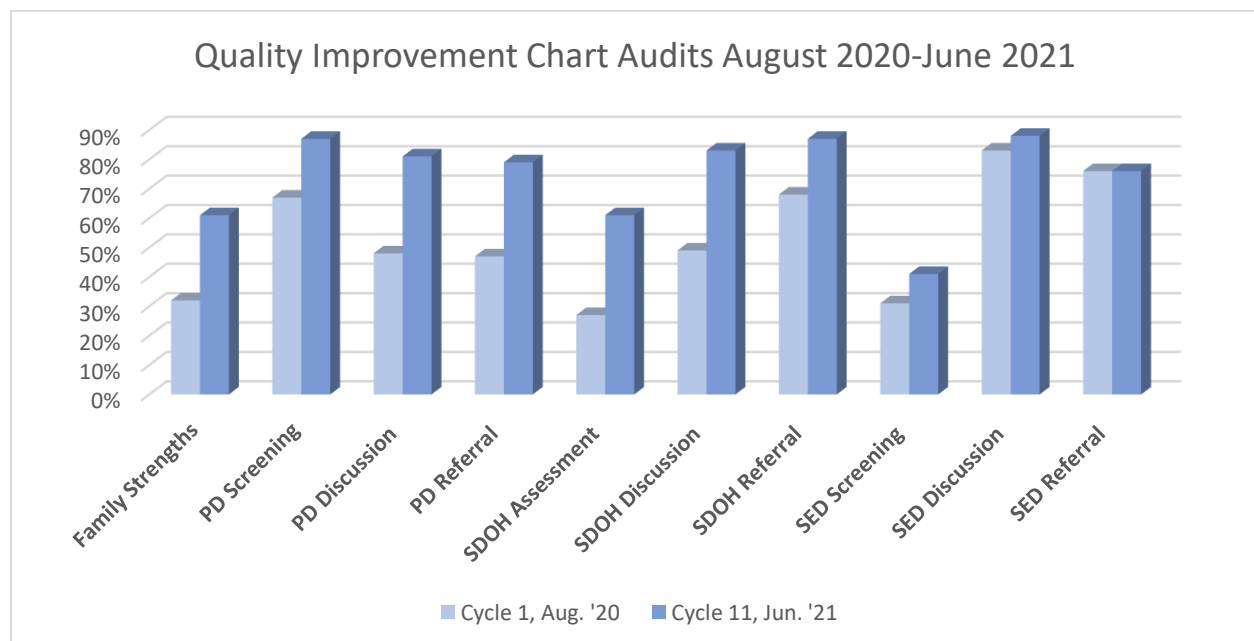


Adults with 0-2 PCE are **4x** more likely to report depression or poor mental health compared to 6-7 PCE¹

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [recommends](#) a public health approach to promote SSNR and reduce the impact of adversity, stress, and trauma in early childhood to improve lifelong physical and mental health challenges.

Addressing Social Health and Early Childhood Wellness

From August 2020-June 2021, the AAP Addressing Social Health and Early Childhood Wellness (ASHEW) project engaged 7 AAP Chapters and 66 pediatric primary care practices in a Model For Improvement learning collaborative. The primary aim was to use early relational health principles to screen, counsel, refer, and follow-up at 90% of well child checks ages 6-months-5 years old for perinatal depression (PD), social drivers of health (SDOH), and social-emotional development (SED).



Key Findings for Improvement



Advance equity through family partnership. Strength-based, family-centered discussions promote resilience to protect against adversity. Family advisors are transformational equity agents to create welcoming, safe, and inclusive workflows and office environments.



Innovate care models to address health delivery systems barriers. Health care delivery systems are based on adult chronic care and require innovative models of care and improved technology, data, and payment for healthy child development.



Accelerate patient data reporting by planning customization in advance. Standard electronic health records (EHRs) do not capture necessary data and require custom workflows and data entry/reporting. Determine capabilities and customization in advance with senior leadership, information technology, and community partners to accelerate data for improvement.

AAP Chapters Removed Barriers by

- Breaking down siloes and spurring innovation through their technical assistance networks
- Speeding up primary care pediatric partnerships with quality referral sources
- Identifying and supporting practice family advisors to advance health equity
- Activating change to Medicaid policies and value-based payment strategies



Pediatric and Public Health Workforce Development



The STAR Center improves the health, wellness, and development of children through practice and system-based interventions to increase rates of early childhood screening, counseling, referral, and follow-up for developmental milestones, perinatal depression, and social determinants of health.

- STAR Center [CME](#)
- [STAR Center Counseling Simulations](#)
- [Getting Started Guide](#)
- [Screening Tool Finder](#)
- ASHEW Implementation Guide
- ASHEW Family Advisor Guide
- [ASHEW Practice Transformation](#)
- ASHEW EQIPP

Partner with AAP To Reframe the Public Health Approach to Child Development

As the foremost early childhood partner across communities, states, and national organizations, AAP will

- Foster cross-sector collaborations reflecting the intersectionality of systems and health outcomes to operationalize a public health approach to social drivers of health
- Center the experiences and values of families into strategies and models for change
- Expand national, state, and regional teams to implement and measure change

1. Bethell C, Jones J, Gombojav N, Linkenbach J, Sege R. Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health in a Statewide Sample: Associations Across Adverse Childhood Experiences Levels. *JAMA Pediatric*. 2019; e193007.
 2. Preventing Childhood Toxic Stress: Partnering With Families and Communities to Promote Relational Health. Andrew Garner, MD, PhD, FAAP; Michael Yogman, MD, FAAP Committee on Psychosocial Aspects of Child and Family Health., Section on Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics, Council on Early Childhood.