



LA County Early Identification
& Intervention Group

EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND INTERVENTION - *WHICH FUNDING CATEGORY DOES IT FIT INTO?*

Simple question ... Complicated answer ...

Early identification and intervention for children with developmental delays, disabilities and other problems (ranging from ADHD to learning, mental health, behavioral and social-emotional) fits into a lot of funding categories, but none exclusively. To illustrate...

Recently we had the opportunity to describe the work of the Los Angeles County Early Identification and Intervention Group from two very different perspectives:

- **As a Health Disparity Issue:** The LA County Department of Public Health submitted the attached three-page description to the National Association of City and County Health Officials (NACCHO) as a model for reducing health disparities among maternal and child health populations.
- **As a Women's Issue:** For a recent hearing of the California Commission on Women, I submitted the attached three pages making the case why early identification and intervention is a *women's* issue.

We could just have easily and honestly described early identification and intervention . . .

- **As a School Readiness Issue** – Schools pick up the tab when a child comes to them with an unaddressed problem, whether it is a neurological problem (such as autism) or a mental health or behavioral problem.
- **As a Child Welfare Issue** – Kids in the child welfare system are at least four times more likely to have a disability than a child living with one or both parents.
- **As a Health Issue** – Many disabilities and developmental delays have substantial health costs – costs that only grow if they fester unaddressed into adolescence and adulthood.
- **As a Juvenile Justice and Crime Prevention Issue** – A huge proportion of kids (and adults) in our justice system have serious learning problems, mental health problems, or both. If these problems had been effectively addressed when they first surfaced, our jail cells and courtrooms would be a lot less crowded today.

2195 Beverly Glen Place ◦ Los Angeles ◦ CA ◦ 90077 ◦ 310-441-2345

Margaret Dunkle, Convener ◦ MargaretDunkle@aol.com ◦ MCD729@aol.com

- **As a Disability Issue** – Early identification and intervention can sometimes prevent lifelong disability or at least help the person live a better and more productive life.
- **As a Maternal and Child Health Issue** – Many disabilities and developmental delays could be prevented or lessened if women, especially pregnant women, got the best possible care and took better care of themselves.
- **As a Social Services, Welfare and Public Assistance Issue** – Many people receiving public assistance would be self sufficient today if they had gotten help for a problem (from depression to a learning difficulty) years before.
- **As a Budget or ROI Issue** – While we need better research on the risk-management and return-on-investment of early identification and intervention, the evidence we already have – from the National Research Council’s *Neurons to Neighborhoods* to the cost-effectiveness data from Head Start and Pre-School – makes a solid case that doing more today for young kids today has a huge societal and individual payoffs 10 or 20 years down the road.
- **As an Early Childhood Issue** – While the early childhood systems are where young kids are (from child care to Head Start, Pre-K and Kindergarten), the issue of early identification and intervention has received scant attention – and, even then, has not typically been addressed either effectively or efficiently.

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As long as this list is, it still isn’t exhaustive. The issue of early identification and intervention has the strength – also the weakness – of touching many categories, funding streams, levels of government, professions and perspectives.

All are important, even essential. And each alone is not enough.

It will take a broad coalition and efforts across all these spheres to propel real improvement. It is a missed opportunity if any of the perspectives above insists on “exclusive ownership” or “senior partner status” for early identification and intervention. The proverbial *half a loaf*...

The trick to long-term and profound improvement is to have all of these multiple perspectives “own” and contribute to a shared goal of early identification and intervention – with each partner making progress in its own arena, while also cheering on and trying to understand progress in everyone else’s bailiwick.

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