

# Developmental Screening in Massachusetts: An Alliance between Early Childhood Programs & Pediatricians

## Webinar Case: Jackson's Story

Eighteen-month old Jackson comes to your office today with his mother, Jennifer for his routine health maintenance visit. You inquire into Jackson's history and ask his mother how he's doing. "He can drink from a cup, he likes to walk on his own, and he even uses a crayon to scribble on paper," she replies. "But I'm concerned because he doesn't point to show things and doesn't seem to have gained any new language since you saw him last at his 12-month visit." Jennifer then reaches into her bag and hands you a completed Ages & Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3) developmental screener. She explains that Jackson's playgroup facilitator at the local XYZ Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Center (CFCE) introduced the tool to her after participating in several playgroups as a way to monitor his development and educate the family about the importance of tracking milestones in young children. The XYZ CFCE is one of a network of CFCEs in Massachusetts that make developmental surveillance an important part of their practices. Jennifer completed the ASQ-3 developmental screening tool with the assistance of the playgroup facilitator, who then recommended that she bring the summary sheet to you, the pediatrician. She lets you know that the facilitator shared some community resources and activities she can do with Jackson at home as well.

You review the completed ASQ-3 and note that some of the concerns that Jennifer shared earlier are highlighted on the tool. Typically, you would conduct a routine developmental screening at key well child visits as recommended by the AAP, but because today is Jackson's 18-month well child visit, you choose to conduct an autism screening instead using the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers screening tool (M-CHAT-R/F) a validated tool approved by MassHealth as part of the Children's Behavioral Health Initiative. The screening results support concerns of a developmental delay or Autism Spectrum Disorder and thus indicate a need for further evaluation.

You and Jennifer discuss that the ASQ-3 has been an effective way for her to learn about age-appropriate milestones for Jackson in addition to highlighting any developmental concerns. You explain that the ASQ-3 in combination with the autism screener you used today indicates that further evaluation is needed and you carefully describe what this means. You ask your physician assistant to help Jennifer schedule an evaluation with a developmental specialist and then schedule a follow-up meeting to go over the results in 1-2 months. You refer Jackson to Early Intervention (EI) and explain that they can start therapy even without a diagnosis. You also schedule him for a hearing test even though his neonatal hearing screen was normal. You want to learn more about the local XYZ CFCE because they may serve more children in your practice. You plan on contacting Jackson's CFCE for more information about their programming and resources for families. You realize that you might have some important new partners in the community who may be able to provide information, programming, and support for families that you follow.

