The key to early detection of disabilities is quality surveillance and screening. Although surveillance and screening can occur in many different settings, it is especially important that they are linked to one location responsible for coordinating services, ideally the Medical Home. A Medical Home is an approach to providing high-quality, cost-effective health care in which the primary care physician works in partnership with the family. Care within a Medical Home is accessible, family-centered, continuous, comprehensive, coordinated, compassionate, and culturally effective. Coordination of all surveillance activities and screening services through the Medical Home would help reduce duplication of services and cost, while helping to prevent loss to follow-up.

Surveillance within a Medical Home is a flexible, continuous process, in which knowledgeable professionals perform skilled observations of children throughout the provision of health care. This is often done in consultation with families, specialists, child care providers, and other health care professionals. Effective surveillance:

- elicits and/or attends to parents’ concerns;
- obtains a relevant history of the child;
- includes a skillful observation of the child; and
- ensures that opinions are shared with other professionals involved in the child’s care.

Screening complements the surveillance process and is integrated to detect a particular condition or disease through the regular or periodic use of a professionally administered screening tool for all children, and/or when a parent raises a concern. The goals of screening are two-fold:

- to identify children in the general population who have special health care needs as early as possible so that they and their families can be given appropriate services to address those needs; and
- to continually screen children identified with special health care needs in order to identify or prevent secondary conditions that interfere with development and well-being.

There are several strategies to improve the link between screening and the Medical Home:

- For newborn screening, make every effort to identify the Medical Home prior to birth. Include this information with the specimen/test to facilitate the communication of results and follow-up with families.
- Ensure that the results of all screening performed outside of the primary care setting (e.g. school-based screening, community-based screening, etc) are communicated to the Medical Home in a timely manner.
Screening Resources

AAP Periodicity Schedule

AAP Policy Statements

AAP Endorsed Resources

Web-Based Resources
Bright Futures, American Academy of Pediatrics: http://brightfutures.aap.org/web/
National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Needs, American Academy of Pediatrics: www.medicalhomeinfo.org
  • Medical Home Training Program, Surveillance and Screening component
  • Medical Home Screening and Surveillance Program
National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management, Utah State University: http://www.infanthearing.org
National Newborn Screening and Genetics Resource Center: http://genes-r-us.uthscsa.edu/
Pediatric Development and Behavior. Educational module on developmental and behavioral screening: www.dbpeds.org
Prevent Blindness America: http://www.preventblindness.org/

This document was produced as an activity of the National Center of Medical Home Initiatives for Children with Special Needs, administered by the American Academy of Pediatrics with support from the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau, Health Resources and Services Administration (H02MC00073).