Children's Hospital of Philadelphia
PolicyLab

First Large-scale Study of Universal Autism Screening

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Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) now affects at least 1 in 59 children in the U.S. Because of the prevalence of ASD, it is recommended to universally screen young children for autism so they can be diagnosed at an early age, yet there are insufficient data on children who screen negative and no study of outcomes from true universal screening. Children's Hospital of Philadelphia's (CHOP) Center for Autism Research in collaboration with PolicyLab researcher Kate Wallis, MD, MPH, PolicyLab Program Manager Elizabeth Brooks, MPH, MSSP, and PolicyLab researcher Marsha Gerdes, PhD, conducted the first large-scale study of universal screening for autism in a real-word primary care setting and found that the most widely used screening tool, M-CHAT/F, is less accurate than previously shown, but still a valuable tool for early detection. The researchers also revealed significant disparities in detecting early autism symptoms in racial/ethnic minority and low-income children, which is consistent with previous research and the focus of their next stage of work.

Their findings suggest that clinicians should continue to screen using the M-CHAT/F while being aware this this tool can miss some children diagnosed with ASD. Be sure to read the full study published in *Pediatrics*, a Spectrum news article on the findings of the study and CHOP's press release, which quotes a few of the researchers.

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