



## The Developmental Screening & Enhancement Program (DSEP)

- A multi-agency collaborative system of care that addresses the developmental and social-emotional needs of children under age six who enter the Child Welfare Services (CWS) system in San Diego County
- Provides developmental and social-emotional/behavioral screenings, long-term facilitated case management, and direct intervention with children and caregivers.

## Why universal early screening and intervention is needed

- Infants & toddlers comprise 25-30% of child welfare entries into out-of-home placement.<sup>i</sup>
- One in three infants who exit child welfare will re-enter the system.<sup>i</sup>
- 80% of infants in foster care have prenatal drug exposure & 40% are low birth weight or premature.<sup>i</sup>
- Up to 61% of young children in foster care show signs of developmental delay, compared to 10% - 14% in the general population.<sup>ii</sup>
- 25% - 40% of young children in foster care show signs of social-emotional concerns, compared to 3% - 6% in the general population.<sup>iii</sup>
- As few as 3-40% (various studies) of children in foster care actually receive the developmental and/or mental health services that they need.

*"[DSEP] has been very helpful and has strived to help me with my foster child's case. [DSEP] has been our voice for our kids when no one else can help them or hear them." - Foster Parent*

## DSEP's Program Components

- Developmental & Behavioral Screenings: DSEP uses standardized tools to identify potential developmental and/or social-emotional/behavioral needs for all children under age six who enter Child Welfare Services. Developmental screenings are done using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire, Version 3 (ASQv3). Social-emotional screenings are done using the Ages & Stages Questionnaire Social-Emotional, Version 2 (ASQ-SE:2), and the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL) for children over 18 months of age.
- Child and Family Team Meetings: When needed, DSEP facilitates and/or participates in a Child and Family Team (CFT) meeting with family members, social worker, support persons, and service providers. During the CFT meeting, the team discusses the child's strengths and potential concerns, and possible services within the community to address any identified needs, and relevant case planning. In partnership with the family, an individualized action plan is developed that outlines next steps and the persons responsible.
- Individualized Care Plans: An "Individual Care Plan" (ICP) is prepared by DSEP and distributed to caregivers and social workers. The plan includes screening results, service recommendations, and developmentally enriching activities for the caregiver to implement.

- **Comprehensive Developmental Evaluation:** When a child’s developmental screening results indicate a concern for delay, DSEP connects the child to a licensed clinical psychologist for a comprehensive developmental evaluation. Results of this evaluation are incorporated into the child’s care plan.

*“[Through DSEP] I have learned that my child is resilient... Pushing him out of his comfort zone is important for his growth and advancement.” – Birth Mother*

- **Facilitated Case Management:** DSEP initiates referrals based on each child’s care plan, and facilitates linkage until the first appointment is attended.
- **Developmental Intervention for Children in Placement:** Caregivers may be offered in-home developmental “Caregiver Coaching” to educate and motivate caregivers to implement developmentally enriching activities.
- **Behavior Services:** For children with an identified social-emotional/behavioral need, a Behavior Specialist may provide in-home support to the caregiver to ensure stability of the placement and provide caregivers with tools and strategies to promote positive social-emotional development.

**Impact (Fiscal Year 2016)**

- Over 92% of all children ages 0 to 5 years 11 months who were eligible for DSEP services received a screening.
- 50% of children screened showed a developmental and/or social-emotional concern based on standardized screening tools.
- 89% of children with needs were successfully linked to services by the time their DSEP case closed.
- Caregivers who completed DSEP behavior services showed decreased stress based on a standardized measure (Parenting Stress Index-Short Form version 3). 47% of caregivers scored borderline of clinical at baseline, but only 14% did at post-test.

**DSEP Contact Information**

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<sup>i</sup> First & Palfrey, 1994; Reams, 1999 Rosenberg, Zhang, & Robinson, 2008; Stahmer et al., 2005  
<sup>ii</sup> First & Palfrey, 1994  
<sup>iii</sup> Stahmer et al., 2005

