

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: August 16, 2019

To: Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., Chairman – Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: Mary Jo Meyers, Director, Department of Health and Human Services

Subject: **An informational report from the Director, Department of Health and Human Services, regarding audit results of the Birth to 3 Program**

Background

In early 2019, Hear Wisconsin and Vision Forward raised concerns about service access for children with potential hearing and vision issues as part of the Birth to 3 Program. DHHS takes these concerns extremely seriously. For this reason, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) initiated an audit of its four Birth to 3 agency providers in June. The four agencies reviewed include Curative Care Network, Milwaukee Center for Independence, Penfield Children’s Center, and St. Francis Children’s Center.

The audit was completed in early August and a summary of the findings is explained below and the full audit is attached to this report.

Discussion

DHHS Quality Assurance conducted the on-site review of the four B-3 agencies under contract with the Disabilities Services Division (DSD). Client records were reviewed to verify if the agencies were consistently completing all required documents as well as whether the agencies were following up to ensure the families with children with vision and/or hearing concerns were referred for service.

Summary of Findings

Scope of Client Record Review - A total of 141 records, dated January 1 to May 20, 2019, were reviewed for B-3 referrals and of these records:

- **58 records** were found to have vision and/or hearing concerns identified based on DHHS review of B-3 documents (this number includes potential vision and/or hearing concerns expressed by the family, agency service providers/therapists, medical professionals, etc.).

After reviewing these 58 records, DHHS staff determined that the agencies made the proper referrals and followed up with families of children with vision and hearing concerns. Please see the chart below for the breakdown:

# of Children	Outcome
26	Referred to vision/hearing medical professional (i.e., ophthalmologist, ENT, audiologist)
6	Referred by B-3 agency to HEAR Wisconsin or Vision Forward
17	Vision or hearing tested within normal limits or family chose not to pursue an evaluation
5	B-3 staff are continuing to monitor the concern or the evaluation and if Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs) are in progress
5	Family refused services or agency was unable to contact for ongoing updates
59*	

*Please note that one child has both a vision and a hearing concern and is counted twice in the following results.

DHHS found that DSD B-3 agencies (90% compliance: 52 out of 58 records) followed up with the family. For the remaining 10% of the records (6 out of 58) that were missing documentation related to initial vision or hearing concerns identified, DHHS requested clarification from the B-3 agencies. Subsequently, the agency followed up with families regarding the initial concerns and informed reviewers that three families no longer have concerns, one child has an upcoming hearing test scheduled, one family could not be reached, and one child still needs to be scheduled for a hearing test.

Recommendation

As a result of the audit, DHHS recommends DSD to require the following:

1. Completion of the State Vision and Hearing Checklists for all children referred to B-3 agencies.
2. B-3 agencies to ensure consistent follow up and full documentation of vision and/or hearing concerns.

Subsequent to the on-site agency reviews, DHHS conducted a satisfaction survey with 33 families with an overall score of 4.57 out of 5. A phone survey that consisted of eight questions/statements was conducted the families that had children referred to the Milwaukee County Birth to 3 Program in 2019 with a hearing or vision concern identified (a total of 50 families were in the survey sample with 33 families that completed the survey). Detailed results are included in the attached audit.

This report is informational, and no action is required.



Mary Jo Meyers, Director
Department of Health and Human Services

Attachment (1)

cc: County Executive Chris Abele
Raisa Koltun, County Executive's Office
Kelly Bablitch, County Board
Teig Whaley-Smith, Director, DAS
Steve Cady, Research Director, Comptroller's Office
Pam Matthews, Fiscal & Management Analyst, DAS



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August 1, 2019

Dear Ms. Meyers,

The Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)/Quality Assurance conducted an on-site review in June 2019 of the four (4) Birth to 3 (B-3) agencies under contract with Milwaukee County Disabilities Services Division (DSD). The review was initiated based on an email dated May 6, 2019 from the President/CEO and Executive Director of two former B-3 agencies to the County Board Chairman, Theodore Lipscomb, Sr., expressing concern regarding the ability of the current B-3 agencies to adequately serve children in Milwaukee County with hearing and/or vision loss. Subsequently, as outlined below, DHHS reviewed client records to verify if the four contracted B-3 agencies are consistently completing all required documents, as well as whether the B-3 agencies are following up to ensure the families with children with vision and/or hearing concerns are referred for service. In addition, DHHS reviewers contacted B-3 families to conduct a satisfaction survey.

Scope of Client Record Review

141 total records reviewed for B-3 Referrals dated Jan 1, 2019 -May 20, 2019 including:

- 100% of client records that specifically identified vision and/or hearing as a possible concern on the B-3 Referral = **61 records**
- 5% sample of client records per agency of the remaining B-3 Referrals (with a minimum of 5 records) = **80 records**

In addition, 100% (total of 3) of the client records were reviewed for children who were transferred to one of the current B-3 agencies in 2019 from HEAR Wisconsin or Vision Forward Association.

Documents Reviewed (required and non-required B-3 documents)

The review consisted of reviewing the following required documents: B-3 referrals, screenings, evaluations, Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), and progress notes, as well as non-required documents: state vision and hearing checklists.^{1,2}

Based on the documentation review, DHHS found that DSD B-3 agencies (90% compliance: 52 out of 58 records) followed up with the family, as necessary, to ensure children with vision and/or hearing concerns were referred for respective services.

For the remaining 10% of the records (6 out of 58) that were missing documentation related to initial vision or hearing concerns identified, DHHS requested clarification from the B-3 agencies. Subsequently, the agency followed up with families regarding the initial concerns and informed reviewers that three families no longer have concerns, one child has an upcoming hearing test scheduled, one family could not be reached, and one child still needs to be scheduled for a hearing test.

¹ DHS, *Typical Vision and Typical Hearing Developmental Milestones*, F-00726, and F-00727

² To date, DSD has not required B-3 agencies to use the Vision and Hearing state checklists



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Summary of Client Record Review

Document Completion (141 Total Records reviewed)

1. 100% of all DSD required documents were completed (documents listed on page 1 of Report).
2. Vision and Hearing state checklists were not consistently completed.
 - a. Two (2) of the four (4) agencies reported they are using the state checklists regularly.
 - b. One (1) agency reported using state checklists starting June 1, 2019.
 - c. One (1) agency reported they are not in practice of using the state checklists at this time.

Documented Vision and/or Hearing Concerns

58 records (out of 141 total records reviewed) were found to have vision and/or hearing concerns identified based on DHHS review of B-3 documents (this number includes potential vision and/or hearing concerns expressed by the family, agency service providers/therapists, medical professionals, etc.).

Outcome and Results of Identified Concerns (58 records)

Note: one (1) child has both a vision and a hearing concern and is counted twice in the following results

- **45%** (26) children; seen by vision/hearing medical professional (i.e., Ophthalmologist, ENT, Audiologist)
- **10%** (6) children; referred by B-3 agency to HEAR Wisconsin or Vision Forward
- **29%** (17) children; vision or hearing tested within normal limits or family chose not to pursue an evaluation
- **9%** (5) children; B-3 staff are continuing to monitor the concern or the evaluation and IFSP are in progress
- **9%** (5) children; family refused services or agency was unable to contact for ongoing updates

Agency Follow-up Related to Vision and/or Hearing Concerns

Based on the documentation review, DHHS found that DSD B-3 agencies (90% compliance: 52 out of 58 records) followed up with the family, as necessary, to ensure children with vision and/or hearing concerns were referred for respective services.

- **75%** (39 out of 52) of the records fully documented follow-up measures taken.
- **25%** (13 out of 52) of the records lacked follow-up documentation at the time of the on-site review. B-3 agencies provided further information, upon request, to support that follow up steps were taken.

For the remaining 10% of the records (6 out of 58) that were missing documentation related to initial vision or hearing concerns identified, DHHS requested clarification from the B-3 agencies. Subsequently, the agency followed up with families regarding the initial concerns and the following information was provided:

- Two (2) families no longer have concerns and chose no further testing
- One (1) child has a scheduled upcoming hearing evaluation
- One (1) child had hearing evaluated (test results were normal)
- One (1) family was unable to be reached for follow-up
- One (1) child still needs to be scheduled for a hearing test; his pediatrician wrote that he needed to be re-screened for hearing per 2/6/19 evaluation summary.



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Other Comments Related to Review

1. 23 total diagnoses (11 vision and 12 hearing) were found as part of the record review (out of a total of 141 records)
 - 61% (14) - seen by vision/hearing medical professional (i.e., Ophthalmologist, ENT, Audiologist)
 - 26% (6) - referred by B-3 agency to HEAR Wisconsin or Vision Forward
 - 4% (1) - IFSP in progress
 - 9% (2) - unknown, parent refused services
2. Ten (10) children, as reported by the four contracted agencies, were referred to HEAR Wisconsin or Vision Forward since January 2019 for hearing and/or vision services.
3. Based on DHHS review of the three (3) client records who were transferred to one of the current B-3 agencies in 2019 from HEAR Wisconsin or Vision Forward Association, 100% of the records showed the B-3 agency followed proper protocol related to services.

Recommendations

DHHS recommends DSD to require the following:

1. Completion of the State Vision and Hearing Checklists for all children referred to B-3 agencies.
2. B-3 agencies to ensure consistent follow up and full documentation of vision and/or hearing concerns.



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Survey Results

Subsequent to the on-site agency reviews, DHHS conducted a satisfaction survey with thirty-three (33) families with an overall score of **4.57**. A phone survey that consisted of eight (8) questions/statements was conducted with thirty-three (33) families that had children referred to the Milwaukee County Birth to 3 Program in 2019 with a hearing or vision concern identified (a total of 50 families were in the survey sample with 33 families that completed the survey). See table below for survey results.

Table below reflects survey results, as well as overall counts and averages

All responses are on a 1-5 scale (Likert Scale):

8 Survey Statements:	Families who have had a hearing/vision concern since 1/1/19	Families who have NOT had a hearing/vision concern since 1/1/19	Overall
Total Families Completed Survey	19	14	33
1. The Birth to Three staff listened carefully to what the needs of my child were.	4.82	4.71	4.77
2. The Birth to Three staff discussed hearing and/or vision services with me for my child.	4.31	4.36	4.33
3. The Birth to Three staff were able to answer my questions and communicate with me and my child effectively.	4.65	4.71	4.68
4. Since January 1 st , 2019, have you had any concerns about your child's hearing or vision? (Y/N)	19	14	Y=19 N=14
5. The needs of my child were met and I am receiving quality vision/hearing services.	4.50	NA	4.50
6. I know my child is getting the best vision/hearing services through the Birth to Three program.	4.50	NA	4.50
7. Are you receiving any services in partnership with or outside of Birth to Three for your child's hearing/vision concerns? (Y/N)	Y=18 N=1	NA	Y=18 N=1 NA=14
8. How would you rate your overall experience with your Birth to Three providers?	4.82	4.43	4.65
Survey Average	4.60	4.56	4.57

Scale	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Very dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neutral	Satisfied	Very satisfied



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Comments reported during Survey

Positive Comments

- "Love our provider, she works really well with him."
- "Therapist is great and he interacts better with [Therapist] than anyone else."
- "Very satisfied. He is making great improvements."
- "Very professional and warm staff. I feel comfortable and they are easy to relate to."
- "Incredibly satisfied and happy we are able to work with HEAR WI."
- "Initial screening was very thorough and she was very kind. I appreciated that."
- "My child sees an audiologist at Children's and HEAR WI will be joining soon. I'm very satisfied, they do a good job."
- "The Therapist sees him at daycare and she calls and texts me to update me and let me know how it goes."
- "HEAR WI started coming to sessions within the last two weeks. I am happy and thankful for services."

Other Comments

- "There are no hearing issues, she is just developing slower than her twin."
- "Vision and hearing services were mentioned but not discussed."
- "I can't remember if vision or hearing services were discussed."
- "I do not always feel that me and the Therapist are on the same page about my child's needs."
- "It is hard to coordinate appointments with [Agency] and HEAR WI."
- "I do not recall having any interactions with Birth to Three."
- "Our first therapist was patronizing and we were not satisfied. She dodged our questions and concerns. I don't appreciate that the current therapist continues to talk about Autism Spectrum. It's not helpful."
- "There is room for improvement. I got new staff because I was unhappy with them. Not productive and not communicating well. New staff are also inconsistent with scheduling and late for sessions."
- "I was moving at the time of the referral so I declined services. I need to schedule a hearing test for him."

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns at (414) 289.5853.

Sincerely,

Milwaukee County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)
Dennis Buesing
Contract Administrator

cc: