

“Good Beginnings” - increasing early childhood developmental surveillance for children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Backgrounds.

Background

Children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds are at increased risk of developmental problems going undetected prior to school entry, thereby missing early intervention opportunities. Two demonstration projects placed early childhood developmental surveillance clinicians in supported playgroups with high number of CALD families, in Rockdale and Botany.

Objectives

This project evaluated an integrated care model to improve: (1) knowledge relating to child development among non-health child and family workers; and (2) identification and referral of children from CALD background at developmental risk. The model comprised: (1) co-locating a Child and Family Nurse (CAFN) to undertake early childhood developmental surveillance in supported playgroups; and (2) training playgroup staff on child development and use of NSW Health developmental surveillance tools, as an entry point for parents to child health and developmental services.

Method

Mixed methods - qualitative data was collected from parents, early childhood workers, CAFNs, Paediatricians, and managers in the demonstration projects. De-identified activity data from participating Early Childhood services, CAFNs, Developmental Assessment Services (DAS) and Community Paediatric services was analysed.

Results

In Rockdale, 44% (n=62) and in Botany 41% (n=98) of children screened had one or more significant developmental concerns identified. Most common concerns were in expressive language and behaviour. As demonstrated by referral data, the project was found to facilitate identification of CALD background children at developmental risk, who would otherwise have been missed. Co-location and an integrated team-based approach increased parental follow up of referrals and ongoing engagement with early childhood health, and developmental assessment services.