Epidemiological Study of Developmental Progress in Vulnerable Oklahoma Families

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**Background:**

Early detection of childhood developmental disorders (autism, child sexual behavior issues) and child abuse potential offer parents many benefits. Early detection of these developmental disorders give parents the abilities to build upon the strengths their child already has while improving areas of weakness. The earlier intervention occurs, the better the opportunity for success for the child. When child abuse potential is detected prior to an occurrence, parents can receive help through one of the home-based parenting programs that are available in Oklahoma.

**Methods:**

This evaluation is a part of a bigger research study that is evaluating home-visiting program in accordance with the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home-Visitation (MIECHV) evaluation. This study is employing an in-home longitudinal survey to vulnerable families in four Oklahoma counties (Oklahoma, Tulsa, Muskogee, and Comanche). This portion of the evaluation looked specifically at the epidemiology of vulnerable early childhood populations with regards to developmental delays via psychometric evaluation of screening instruments for autism, child sexual behavior problems, and child abuse and neglect potential.

Participants were recruited based on their eligibility for one of the home-based parenting programs available in Oklahoma. Depending upon the age requirements of the measures, eligible participants were given the opportunity to complete the following measures with regards to their youngest child at the time of participation: the Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (MCHAT) the Autism Spectrum Rating Scales (ASRS), Communication and Symbolic Behavior Scales (CSBS), Brief Child Abuse Potential Inventory (BCAP), and selected child sexual behavior questions from the Child Behavior Checklist (CBCL).

**Results:**

With 1204 initial surveys completed, 17% of the eligible participants were in the “at risk” classification on the MCHAT with males and females being evenly split (n=240). Of those who met the age requirements for the ASRS (n=180), 26% were in the “extreme risk” category (males: 48%, females: 50%, unreported gender: 2%). Of the autism screeners, the CSBS had the largest eligible population (n=658). The CSBS identified 18% “at risk” with males having a higher percentage then females (57% vs 43%).

The BCAP child abuse scale indicated that 18% fell into the “at risk” category (n=574).

The survey asked the following 5 questions from the CBCL with affirmative responses being reported as “Somewhat True” and “Very True or Often True”:

* Does your child play with his/her sex parts in public? (CBCL 59) 3%
* Does your child play with his/her sex parts too much? (CBCL 60) 4%
* Do you think your child has sexual problems? (CBCL 73a) 0%
* Do you think your child thinks about sex too much? (CBCL 96) 0.5%
* Does your child with to be the opposite sex? (CBCL 110) 0.6%

**Conclusions:**