



U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Final Recommendation Statement on Screening for Speech and Language Delays and Disorders in Young Children

Task Force concludes evidence on screening is insufficient

WASHINGTON, D.C. – July 7, 2015 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today published a final recommendation on screening for speech and language delays and disorders in children age 5 years or younger. This recommendation states that the current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of routine screening for speech and language delays and disorders in young children. This is an I statement.

The Task Force looked at evidence on whether routinely screening all children under age 5 for speech and language delays and disorders leads to improvements in speech, language, or other outcomes, such as academic achievement. It found that more evidence is needed on whether formal screening in primary care settings accurately identifies children who need interventions and whether identification ultimately results in important benefits.

Grade in this recommendation:

- I: The balance of benefits and harms cannot be determined.

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“Learning to speak and use language correctly is a complex process and a critical component of child development,” said Task Force member Alex Kemper, M.D., M.P.H., M.S. “We need a better understanding of how to identify at-risk children in primary care settings and which treatments are effective once children with speech and language delays and disorders are found.”

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement was posted for public comment on the Task Force Web site from November 18 to December 15, 2014. The final recommendation and evidence summary for this topic are available in the July 7th issue of *Pediatrics* and are posted on the Task Force Web site.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of all Americans by making evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

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