Background

- Poverty-related disparities in language development / school readiness begin very early in infancy (Hart & Risley, 1995).
- Need for effective interventions prior to school entry

Pediatric primary care is an ideal platform for reaching families prior to school entry. (Box 1)

Approach

- City-wide early literacy initiative: City’s First Readers
- Initiated and funded by the New York City Council
- Connect evidence-based programs promoting early literacy across multiple platforms: Pediatric primary care (Box 2), Home visiting, Community, Early Childhood Education.

Evaluation Questions

1) Is CFR successful in linking different platforms?
   - Can pediatric-based programs (ROR, VIP) link families to community-level programs (e.g., libraries?)
   - Are library participation rates higher in communities with referrals from pediatric care than in communities without these linkages?

2) Does linking programs provide added value?
   - Do families who are touched by more than one program show enhanced engagement in early literacy activities compared to families touched by a single program?
   - Does participation in community-level programs provide enhanced benefits to child development compared to participation in pediatric programs alone?

City’s First Readers

- City’s First Readers (CFR; cityfirstreaders.com) brings together nine partner programs, across four platforms
- Each independently-operating program provides services to high-need NYC families using a unique set of strategies
- Through CFR, these programs are connected, with increased cross-platform linkages and referrals

Box 2: Evidence-based programs promoting school readiness in pediatric primary care

Reach Out and Read (ROR)
- Health care providers counsel families about the importance of reading aloud; provide children’s books at each visit
- Waiting room volunteers and staff model reading activities
- Documented impacts on parent reading aloud and child language (High et al, 1999; Mendelsohn et al., 2001)
- Wide dissemination to 25% low income children 6m-5yrs

Video Interaction Project (VIP)
- Builds on Reach Out and Read.
- Promotes enhanced parent-child interactions in reading aloud and play.
- Families meet with interventionist at each well-child visit.

Goals

Enhance potential of pediatric primary care for promoting early literacy and school readiness by:

- Reinforcing literacy messages from pediatric providers through linkages between programs in pediatric care (ROR, VIP, Box 2) - synergizes with programs in other platforms
- Maximize utilization and impacts of early literacy resources in the community through referrals from pediatric primary care

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Enhanced Strategy

- Increased opportunities for reading aloud and play
- Internalization of messages about importance of shared reading
- Development of parenting skills, generalization of behaviors
- Social support network with goals around early literacy

Motivation/Values

- Families and children are immersed in an environment that values and supports early literacy

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