

## Public Awareness Campaign Urges Early Detection and Developmental Screenings

The Center for Disabilities Studies received funding in 2010 from the Delaware Developmental Disabilities Council to develop a statewide public awareness campaign about the benefits of early screening for developmental disabilities. This campaign supports Delaware's Act Early State Team, which focuses on early identification, assessment, provision of services and coordination. **Karen Zalewski, part of the Center's Health and Wellness unit**, is implementing the campaign, which is primarily aimed at at-risk mothers and mothers insured through Medicaid.



The campaign is utilizing the [Learn the Signs. Act Early. \(LSAE\)](#) campaign materials that were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to educate parents about child development, including early warning signs of developmental disorders. LSAE expands parental awareness of developmental milestones beyond the physical to social and emotional development, such as

how children speak, learn, act and play.

The key objectives are to:

- Educate parents about key developmental milestones;
- Increase health care and childcare provider awareness of the importance of early intervention in diagnosing and treating developmental disorders;
- Increase parent-provider dialogue on the topic of child development and developmental disorders; and
- Increase early action on childhood developmental disorders, specifically through increased screenings and early intervention.



The campaign also is promoting registration in the [text4baby](#) text messaging system. This free mobile information service, developed by the National Healthy Mothers Healthy Babies Coalition, is designed to promote maternal and child health. It is being carried out through cell phones because research shows that 90% of all Americans use cell phones; mobile phones are especially important in reaching younger women, women with lower income and women of color; and many more of these women have phones than internet access.

Text4baby messages begin during a woman's pregnancy and continue until her baby's first birthday. Users receive three texts per week (in English or Spanish) with content that has been developed by physicians and nurses and organizations such as the National Institutes of Health and CDC. Examples of text topics include immunization, nutrition, mental health, breastfeeding, developmental milestones and family violence.

CDS is distributing LSAE materials, such as growth charts, posters, brochures and fact sheets, and text4baby promotional materials to physicians' offices and to institutions such as Christiana Hospital, which is sending them home with parents of newborn babies. The campaign will be sending public service announcements about LSAE and text4baby to Delaware media to share with their audiences. Karen is working with other Delaware organizations to develop Delaware Screens for Success events in each county that will include free screenings for children. An information day at Legislative Hall is also planned.

For further information about the public awareness campaign, contact Karen at [karenz@udel.edu](mailto:karenz@udel.edu) or 831-6839.

*The Center for Disabilities Studies at the University of Delaware supports the well-being, inclusion and empowerment of people with disabilities and their families. The mission of the Center for Disabilities Studies is to enhance the lives of individuals and families through education, prevention, service, and research related to disabilities. We promote independence and productivity so individuals and families can fully participate in the life of their communities in Delaware and beyond. More information is available at [www.udel.edu/cds](http://www.udel.edu/cds).*