

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
January 16, 2018



New Report Highlights A Better Way to Assess the Developmental Needs of Children in Early Childhood Systems

Mid-Level Developmental Assessment Efficiently Identifies Children with Mild to Moderate Delays Who Otherwise Fall through System Cracks

Farmington, CT – Mid-level Development Assessment (MLDA) helps identify children (younger than 6) with mild to moderate behavioral and developmental concerns who will likely not qualify for publicly funded intervention services and offers early childhood systems a cost-effective alternative to a full evaluation. When MLDA is embedded in a comprehensive early childhood system, children with mild to moderate delays can be linked to the community-based developmental services they need in order to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn. **A [new report](#) released by the Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI) examines how Connecticut and communities in four other states are using MLDA to efficiently assess and address the needs of these children.** It is estimated that while approximately 13% of young children have severe delays warranting intensive intervention, a far greater proportion of children (approximately 30%) have delays that are mild to moderate, and could benefit from MLDA and linkage to services that address their needs.

“Too many kids go through expensive and unnecessary evaluations and their parents learn that their children’s needs don’t meet the threshold for publicly funded intervention services and they are turned away,” said Lisa Honigfeld, Vice President for Health at CHDI and co-author of the report. “We set out to show that a new assessment process could more efficiently ensure that children with mild to moderate delays receive community-based early interventions through Help Me Grow.”

The **IMPACT** report, [A Better Way to Assess Developmental Needs in Early Childhood Systems: Mid-Level Developmental Assessment](#) reviews results from the dissemination of MLDA in Connecticut and Help Me Grow communities in four other states. It enumerates core components of MLDA, highlights successes and challenges in implementing the MLDA model, and provides recommendations to inform further expansion in communities and states committed to addressing the needs of young children at risk for delays. Erin Cornell, lead author of the report, serves as Program Manager for Research, Innovation and Evaluation for the [Help Me Grow National Center](#), a program of Connecticut Children’s Medical Center’s Office for Community Child Health.

[The Village for Families and Children](#) was the original developer of Connecticut’s MLDA model, which relies on parent input and validated assessment tools and culminates in a service plan to meet children’s needs. Their success, along with support from the LEGO Children’s Fund and W.K. Kellogg Foundation, resulted in diffusion across Connecticut and to five communities in other states that are part of the Help Me Grow national affiliate network. In Connecticut, the Help Me Grow National Center collaborated

with [United Way 211 Child Development Infoline](#), The Village for Children and Families, and the Office of Early Childhood's [Birth to Three](#) program to diffuse MLDA in regional developmental services agencies. A review of 139 MLDA's over an eighteen-month period in Connecticut found:

- The majority (82%) of children assessed exhibited mild to moderate developmental concerns as opposed to more intensive diagnoses such as autism and could be connected directly to community services. The remaining 18% were referred for further evaluation.
- Most MLDA recommendations were for more than one service including clinical care (behavioral/mental health, medical, and dental) and non-clinical services (parenting education, play groups, and family supports).
- Of the families that used MLDA and completed a feedback survey, 95% reported high satisfaction with the service.

[Read](#) the Executive Summary or full report for more detailed information. For media questions, contact Julie Tacinelli at tacinelli@uchc.edu or 860-679-1534.

[The Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut \(CHDI\)](#), a subsidiary of the [Children's Fund of Connecticut](#), is a not-for-profit organization working to ensure all children have a strong start in life with ongoing supports to ensure their optimal health and well-being. CHDI promotes healthy outcomes for all children in Connecticut by advancing effective policies, stronger systems, and innovative practices.

###