

# Reaching Children Before Problems Escalate

Over 70 percent of the 3- and 4-year-olds coming to The Village's Early Learning Center had been expelled 3 or more times from other preschools.

Their parents were scared and frustrated with the lack of answers and help for their child. Precious time was being lost because so much development happens to a child in the early years.

So, the early childhood team at The Village, with guidance from area experts, designed a brief, timely assessment process for children with mild to moderate developmental and behavioral concerns. The goal: help children, and their families, receive services quickly and early, before they get left behind.

The **Mid-Level Developmental Assessment (MLDA)** was created in partnership with Dr. Paul Dworkin of Connecticut Children's Medical Center, Yale child psychiatrist Dr. Kyle Pruett, early childhood clinical consultant Susan Vater, and pediatricians, parents and community partners.

The assessment covers all areas of development, including psychological, social and behavioral health, and provides recommendations that can be addressed by the child's parents, teachers and pediatricians to promote the child's healthy development.

Early results were encouraging. With funding from the Children's Fund of Connecticut, 80 children birth through age 5 were assessed and 86 percent received individual or group therapy and/or were enrolled in family resource center or preschool programs within a few weeks.

Now, thanks to funding from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, more children will be assessed. United Way's Child Development Infoline (2-1-1) will be the one-point of contact for families, as part of the Help Me Grow system - a one-stop resource for parents.

***"What happens in the first three years of a child's life has a direct and enduring impact on a child's future learning, behavior and health."***

—Lisa Honigfeld, Ph.D., Child Health and Development Institute (CHDI)



Selenia, of Hartford, and her husband were at their wits end. Their two-year-old was biting and hitting other children at preschool, and often needed to be picked up immediately.

Their pediatrician recommended he see a psychiatrist but they couldn't get an appointment. His behavior at school kept getting worse, and then he began acted aggressively and impulsively at home, including with his baby brother.

***"It was one of the most heart-breaking things you can go through as a mother."***

I was scared of him – I just didn't know what was going on. And no one had answers. We just felt hopeless," she said.

Selenia heard about The Village and sought our help. Her son was evaluated by a clinician, using the MLDA, received therapy and enrolled in our preschool program, where staff worked with him and his family on his developmental and behavior issues.

Her son is now in second grade at a magnet school and "doing amazing," Selenia says proudly.

***Of the 80 children assessed, 86 percent were found to have mild to moderate delays. They received services within a few weeks.***

For more information about the Mid-level Developmental Assessment, contact us at [earlychildhood@villageforchildren.org](mailto:earlychildhood@villageforchildren.org).

Parents looking for services should contact 2-1-1.

