

Identify

SHARED RESPONSIBILITIES

Tools for Improving Quality of Care for
Children with Special Health Care Needs

The Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Screener[®]

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The CSHCN Screener[®] is a five item, parent survey-based tool that responds to the need for an efficient and flexible standardized method for identifying CSHCN. The screener is specifically designed to reflect the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau definition of children with special health care needs:

“Children who have special health care needs are those who have a chronic physical, developmental, behavioral or emotional condition and who also require health and related services of a type or amount beyond that required by children generally.”



BACKGROUND

The Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Screener[®] was developed through the efforts of the Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative (CAHMI), a national collaboration coordinated by FACCT—The Foundation for Accountability. Beginning in June 1998, the CAHMI brought together federal and state policymakers, health care providers, researchers and consumer organizations into a task force for the purpose of specifying a method to identify a measure for children with special health care needs. During the course of this project, the task force met in person six times and by teleconference more than a dozen times.

The CSHCN Screener[®] uses non-condition specific, consequences-based criteria to identify children with special health care needs for purposes of quality assessment or other population-based applications. That is, the CSHCN Screener[®] does not rely upon specifically named or recorded diagnoses. Instead, children are identified on the basis of experiencing one or more current functional limitations or service use needs that are the direct result of an on-going physical, emotional, behavioral, developmental or other health condition.

By identifying children across the range and diversity of childhood chronic conditions and special needs, a non-condition specific approach allows for a more comprehensive assessment of health care system performance than is attainable by focusing on a single diagnosis or type of special need. In addition, the relatively low prevalence of most childhood chronic conditions often makes identifying adequate numbers of children with a specific diagnosis or type of special need problematic. A non-condition specific approach makes it possible in many cases to identify sufficient numbers of children to allow for statistically robust quality comparisons across health care systems and/or providers.

The CSHCN Screener[®] is currently being used in the National Survey of Children with Special Health Care Needs, the National Medical Expenditure Panel Survey (MEPS) and has been formally integrated into the CAHPS 2.0H Child Survey, a component of the National Committee for Quality Assurance's Health Plan Employer Data and Information Set (HEDIS).

For more information on the development, testing & application of the CSHCN Screener and the Maternal and Child Health Bureau definition of children with special health care needs:

Bethell CD, Read D, Stein REK, Blumberg SJ, Wells N, Newacheck PW. Identifying children with special health care needs: development and evaluation of a short screening instrument. *Ambulatory Pediatrics*. 2002;2:38-47.

Bethell CD, Read D, Neff J, Blumberg SJ, Stein REK, Sharp V, Newacheck P. Comparison of the children with special health care needs screener to the questionnaire for identifying children with chronic conditions—revised. *Ambulatory Pediatrics*. 2002;2:49-57.

McPherson M, Arango P, Fox H, et al. A new definition of children with special health care needs. *Pediatrics*. 1998; 102:137-140.

Van Dyck P, McPherson M, Strickland B, Nesseler K, Blumberg SJ, Cynamon M, Newacheck, PW. The national survey of children with special health care needs. *Ambulatory Pediatrics*. 2002;2:29-37.

For scoring programs or other technical support:

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Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Screener[®]

(mail or telephone)

1. Does your child currently need or use **medicine prescribed by a doctor** (other than vitamins)?
 - Yes → Go to Question 1a
 - No → Go to Question 2
 - 1a. Is this because of ANY medical, behavioral or other health condition?
 - Yes → Go to Question 1b
 - No → Go to Question 2
 - 1b. Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?
 - Yes
 - No

2. Does your child need or use more **medical care , mental health or educational services** than is usual for most children of the same age?
 - Yes → Go to Question 2a
 - No → Go to Question 3
 - 2a. Is this because of ANY medical, behavioral or other health condition?
 - Yes → Go to Question 2b
 - No → Go to Question 3
 - 2b. Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?
 - Yes
 - No

3. Is your child **limited or prevented** in any way in his or her ability to do the things most children of the same age can do?
 - Yes → Go to Question 3a
 - No → Go to Question 4
 - 3a. Is this because of ANY medical, behavioral or other health condition?
 - Yes → Go to Question 3b
 - No → Go to Question 4
 - 3b. Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?
 - Yes
 - No

4. Does your child need or get **special therapy**, such as physical, occupational or speech therapy?
 - Yes → Go to Question 4a
 - No → Go to Question 5
 - 4a. Is this because of ANY medical, behavioral or other health condition?
 - Yes → Go to Question 4b
 - No → Go to Question 5
 - 4b. Is this a condition that has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months?
 - Yes
 - No

5. Does your child have any kind of emotional, developmental or behavioral problem for which he or she needs or gets **treatment or counseling**?
 - Yes → Go to Question 5a
 - No
 - 5a. Has this problem lasted or is it expected to last for at least 12 months?
 - Yes
 - No

Applying the Children with Special Health Care Needs (CSHCN) Screener[®]

The CSHCN Screener[®] uses consequences-based criteria to screen for children with chronic or special health needs. To qualify as having chronic or special health needs, the following set of conditions must be met:

- a) The child currently experiences a specific consequence.
- b) The consequence is due to a medical or other health condition.
- c) The duration or expected duration of the condition is 12 months or longer.

The first part of each screener question asks whether a child experiences one of five different health consequences:

- 1) Use or need of prescription medication
- 2) Above average use or need of medical, mental health or educational services
- 3) Functional limitations compared with others of same age
- 4) Use or need of specialized therapies (OT, PT, speech, etc.)
- 5) Treatment or counseling for emotional or developmental problems

The second and third parts* of each screener question ask those responding “yes” to the first part of the question whether the consequence is due to any kind of health condition and if so, whether that condition has lasted or is expected to last for at least 12 months.

**NOTE: CSHCN screener question 5 is a two-part question. Both parts must be answered “yes” to qualify.*

All three parts of at least one screener question (or in the case of question 5, the two parts) must be answered “yes” in order for a child to meet CSHCN Screener[®] criteria for having a chronic condition or special health care need.

The CSHCN Screener[®] has three “definitional domains:” 1) Dependency on prescription medications, 2) Service use above that considered usual or routine, 3) Functional limitations. The definitional domains are not mutually exclusive categories. A child identified by the CSHCN Screener[®] can qualify on one or more definitional domains (*see diagram*).

