

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Issues Draft Recommendation Statement on Screening for Speech and Language Delay and Disorders in Young Children

Task Force concludes evidence on screening insufficient

WASHINGTON, D.C. – November 18, 2014 – The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (Task Force) today posted a draft recommendation on screening for speech and language delay and disorders in children age 5 years or younger, stating that the current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of routine screening for speech and language delay and disorders in young children. This is an I statement.

The Task Force is providing an opportunity for public comment on this draft recommendation statement and the companion draft evidence review until December 15. All comments will be considered as the Task Force develops its final recommendation and final evidence review.

“Learning to speak and use language correctly is a critical part of a young child’s development,” said Task Force member William Phillips, M.D., M.P.H.

The Task Force looked at evidence on whether routinely screening all children under age 5 for speech and language delays and disorders leads to improvements in speech, language, or other outcomes, such as academic achievement. It determined that more evidence is needed on whether formal screening in primary care settings accurately identifies children who need interventions and whether identification ultimately results in important benefits.

“Ultimately, we need more research on whether screening with formal tools in primary care helps identify speech or language problems in young children who weren’t previously thought to have problems,” said Task Force member Alex Kemper, M.D., M.P.H., M.S.

These evidence gaps, among many other important research needs that can improve the lives and health of children, are discussed in the Task Force’s 4th annual Report to Congress, which was recently released.

The Task Force’s draft recommendation statement has been posted for public comment on the Task Force Web site at www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org. Comments can be submitted from November 18 to December 15 at <http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/Page/Name/us-preventive-services-task-force-opportunities-for-public-comment>.

The Task Force is an independent, volunteer panel of national experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine that works to improve the health of all Americans by making

evidence-based recommendations about clinical preventive services such as screenings, counseling services, and preventive medications.

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