

How can you increase the reach of your ASQ screening program?

Three successful programs share what worked for them

Establishing a screening program for Ages & Stages Questionnaires® (ASQ®) requires dedicated thought and coordination. And a critical key to success lies in reaching your communities and communicating the benefits of screening.

So, what are the best ways to get the word out about your screening initiative? We talked to a few program leaders who have expanded their reach using a range of promotional tactics. What methods have been most effective? What challenges have they faced? What has been their greatest success?



To increase your impact, focus on how you're promoting your program

What works for you will depend on your program's unique size, scope, location, and budget, but hopefully these Q&As and accompanying tips will inspire some new ideas that will help you meet your screening goals.

Cindy Muhar, Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership



Cindy Muhar has been an ASQ trainer and coach for five years. She currently provides ASQ training and coaching for home visitors, Birth-to-Three providers, and early childhood educators through her work with the [Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership](http://bit.ly/UWM-MCWP) (<http://bit.ly/UWM-MCWP>) and Milwaukee Succeeds. Cindy also serves as a co-facilitator of the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating partners ASQ Community of Practice (Southeast region) and coaches ASQ trainers across the state who recently completed the ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2 Training of Trainers Institute, with her colleague, Carrie Holden.

What is your role in promoting ASQ screening?

I'd worked with ASQ in the past, but hadn't used it in several years when I was asked to be an ASQ trainer and coach for Project LAUNCH (Linking Actions for Unmet Needs in Children's Health), which targeted Milwaukee's 12 zip codes with the poorest health outcomes for children. While the program has since ended, I've continued to be involved with ASQ at the local, regional, and state levels.

What are some of the methods you've used to get the word out about ASQ?

While working as a Family Living Educator at UW Extension, I had a small pot of money that I wanted to use to promote the use of the ASQ in our community. While home visiting programs had been using the ASQ for over a decade in Wisconsin, a local coalition (Project LAUNCH) I worked with had targeted childcare providers as

essential partners in developmental screening. I thought a short video could engage these providers and get them interested in the ASQ.

I connected with a bilingual videographer, Anna Aragon, who specializes in working with non-profit organizations, and who our office had worked with before. Some of my great partners also agreed to be part of the production. I never imagined it would get as many 'hits' as it has on YouTube. However, what really excites me is that Elizabeth Twombly, M.S. from the ASQ development team called me and asked me if she could use the video in a statewide webinar she was facilitating. At that point, I understood the true star quality of my community partners and Anna's video production expertise. Very cool! ([Watch the video at http://bit.ly/ScreenASQVid](http://bit.ly/ScreenASQVid).)

Another time, we put together a press release about the ASQ training I provided and sent it to local media. This little press release inspired our local NPR station to interview me and a doctor who was instrumental in training physicians how to do the ASQ. This helped spread the word in the community.

I use Microsoft Publisher to create lots of marketing flyers for ASQ trainings. I also share new information with our southeast region ASQ Community of Practice members via email and during our meetings and professional development events. Additionally, I've presented breakout sessions at conferences and led facilitated discussions during community events about ASQ and developmental screening.

In my current role with UW Milwaukee Child Welfare Partnership, we've added links to our website and Facebook pages that provide readers with access to resources related to developmental screening. Our website hosts the [Resource Toolkit for Home Visiting and other Early Childhood Professionals](http://bit.ly/MCWP-Toolkit) (<http://bit.ly/MCWP-Toolkit>). Our Child Health and Development topic has lots of great information for professionals and parents related to early development and screening.

What challenges did you face while promoting your program, and how did you overcome them?

When I started ASQ training in Project LAUNCH, our state had just implemented quality assurance standards for childcare centers, which included a star rating and point system. Centers felt a bit overwhelmed by these new criteria and many weren't interested in taking on something 'extra' or new that (at the time) would not help them meet the star-rating criteria. We found that even though many providers were attending ASQ training to receive the professional development credit, they had no power to implement the tool in their centers, or the cost of the kit was a barrier. Not one center had implemented the tool after the first year of training!

The Project LAUNCH coordinators worked with YoungStar, our state's childcare quality rating and improvement system, to add developmental screening as a way for centers to earn points for their star attainment. I also changed my marketing strategies. I began to require center directors and/or supervisors to accompany their staff to the free training, so they could support implementation of the tool.

We also allocated Project LAUNCH funds to purchase ASQ-3 kits for centers. Kits and laminated "We Use the ASQ" posters were distributed to centers who met the following three criteria:

- Center staff completed training
- The director completed an ASQ Readiness Checklist
- The center director and I sat together to develop an ASQ implementation plan for the center.

Additionally, group and family centers participated in Project LAUNCH's ASQ training and technical assistance program. In the end, more than 1,700 ASQ screenings were completed with families during the project!

What has been your greatest success?

Helping infuse passion for developmental screening and ASQ among providers who support families with young children. I love that individuals, families, programs, and communities are using ASQ to determine if a child is developing on track, to recognize parents as the experts of their own children, to build provider-parent partnerships, and to help ensure children are ready for school. Building partnerships is something we do well. It is the driving force for community work!

What general advice would you give to others who want to begin promoting a screening program?

Join an early childhood community coalition or bring people together in your community who support early childhood development. Identify community leaders who will be champions of developmental screening. Our ASQ Community of Practice brings ASQ trainers and ASQ practitioners together to share ideas, encourage best practices, address challenges, and build capacity for universal screening. Build partnerships—partnerships have collective impact! I've got great partners!

Kimberly Broecker, Metro United Way (Kentucky and Indiana)



Kimberly Broecker is the ASQ Manager for [Metro United Way](http://bit.ly/MetroUW) (<http://bit.ly/MetroUW>), a community organization focused on solving problems and fighting for the education, health, and financial stability of people in seven counties in Kentucky and Southern Indiana.

How did you first begin promoting ASQ screening?

In 2009, Metro United Way offered families throughout our seven-county region in Kentucky and Southern Indiana the opportunity to complete ASQ-3 and ASQ-SE via mail. This was the beginning of a community-wide effort to determine how our youngest children were developing—with the ultimate goal of increasing kindergarten readiness.

Initially, we partnered with a local TV news channel that provided free PSAs and advertising on their station. We also took a shotgun approach and produced brochures and flyers which were provided to pediatricians, faith-based organizations, schools, and community health fairs and events. An Ages & Stages coordinator would attend kindergarten readiness fairs and community events, and provide literature for families on the benefits of

the Ages & Stages Questionnaires.

The impact of these strategies was extremely low and the cost was high. In the first year, only 300 families in a region with over 83,000 children under the age of 6 completed ASQ and none of the families completing ASQ were from the highest need areas. Our promotional strategies have evolved over the years as we analyze data on demographics, sources, and completion/return rates.

In 2010, a grassroots ASQ initiative targeted the highest need, lowest income areas in this region. In 2012, Metro United Way began offering ASQ Online, and in 2016 the ASQ:SE was replaced by the ASQ:SE-2.

We now primarily focus on promoting ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2 through various health and social service agencies, media outlets, Neighborhood Outreach Specialists, and Metro United Way's campaign representatives.

What are some of the methods you've used to get the word out about ASQ?

Partnerships with local social service agencies such as home visitors, our childcare resource and referral agency, childcare centers, our local libraries, outreach specialists (trusted peer advisors from specific neighborhoods), and already established parent groups have been key in getting the word out about the program.

We've produced promotional videos that highlight ASQ efforts in our community, and have created brochures and flyers that promote enrollment for pediatricians, religious organizations, and childcare centers.

Metro United Way has a vast social media following on have utilized these mediums to provide information on the importance of developmental screening and the availability of ASQ.

In addition, we offer families and caregivers the opportunity to complete the ASQ online.

It sounds like your promotional efforts are very involved—what has been most effective?

Our most effective way to get the word out has been a grassroots effort to meet families where they are. We established a network of **neighborhood-based outreach specialists** (<http://bit.ly/SapphiresStory>), known and trusted in their peer groups. They began to host "play and learn" groups, cultural events, and other activities where families from very low-income neighborhoods could come together in a fun, light atmosphere to learn and support each other. During these events, families complete ASQ. To recruit new families, Neighborhood Outreach Specialists stand at bus stops, go door to door, and meet and greet families in places like rent offices.

We have partnered with other agencies, especially home visitation programs, who already complete ASQ. This partnership has allowed us to enroll their clients in our program when they graduate from their program. We are also able to collect all data into one centralized database.

Most recently we have taken a more comprehensive approach and are working with several coalitions on the larger strategy of kindergarten readiness. We are working with the Ready for K Alliance—which is comprised of business leaders, school officials, religious organizations, health service agencies and pediatricians, social service agencies, and many more—to promote the importance of developmental screening and family engage-

ment. This top-down method has been effective in engaging and educating the community on the need for developmental screeners.

During Metro United Way's campaign, representatives from Metro United Way highlighted ASQ during their presentations with numerous companies around the community.

We also train what we like to call, "ASQ Champions." These are individuals from other local agencies and groups who are passionate about early care, education, and the importance of developmental screenings. For example, these could be individuals from libraries and parent groups who can speak to their already established groups and enroll their families into the program.

What challenges did you face while promoting your program, and how did you overcome them?

Our major challenge has been balancing the success of our promotions and recruitment with the capacity of those who process the ASQ questionnaires. At times it has been necessary to limit the number of events and outreach to ensure all could be appropriately and accurately screened.

What has been your greatest success?

Our greatest successes are our partnerships with other organizations. Over the last eight years our partnerships and targeted outreach have allowed us to screen over 2,800 children in the seven zip codes identified as having the highest needs, and over 7,200 children throughout the seven county Metro United Way region.

What general advice would you give to others who want to begin promoting a screening program?

Consider a community health worker model in very low-income areas where workers deliver services through one-on-one interactions or in group sessions that take place in homes or community settings. By providing culturally appropriate outreach and services, they can play an important role in underserved communities.

Partnerships. Partner with your childcare resource and referral agencies, home visitation, housing authorities, etc. Partner with organizations who already use the ASQ, and provide them with support as well.

Start with where the parents are: mom's clubs, libraries, pediatricians. Enlist the help of champions, people who believe in the program and in developmental screeners. Have them post on social media, talk to their friends, and promote within their own established groups. Never underestimate the power of social media.

Katie Naman Prince, Alabama Partnership for Children / Help Me Grow Alabama



Katie Naman Prince works with the [Alabama Partnership for Children \(APC\) \(Smart Start®\)](http://bit.ly/ALPartnershipChildren) (<http://bit.ly/ALPartnershipChildren>) as the director of [Help Me Grow Alabama](http://bit.ly/HMG-AL) (<http://bit.ly/HMG-AL>). APC became an affiliate of the [Help Me Grow \(HMG\) National Network](#) in 2011. HMG is a free information and referral line that connects families of children birth to age eight to health and developmental resources in their community.

How did you first begin promoting ASQ screening?

In 2008, a statewide planning group made standardized developmental screening a best practice in Alabama and selected ASQ as its screener of choice. Pediatric practices and early childhood programs soon adopted the tool, paving the way for Help Me Grow (HMG) Alabama to begin promoting the use of developmental screening with both families and providers. The appeal of having aggregate data statewide, the incentives and technical support provided, and the collaboration across multiple early childhood systems moved us toward widespread use of the tool.

A major initiative of ours launched in 2014, when the Alabama Partnership for Children (APC) began working with community partners to host statewide events called “Books, Balls, and Blocks.” These events, which support the core components of the HMG model, are a free, fun, family event for children ages 0–5 in which children can engage in developmentally appropriate play at 16 activity stations while their parents complete an ASQ-3 questionnaire. The concept and application of Books, Balls, and Blocks events were created by our partner affiliate, Help Me Grow Utah. We borrowed and adapted the events for use in Alabama.

In 2015, we really began promoting developmental monitoring as a benefit of enrolling in HMG Alabama. Through the purchase of both a family tracking database system as well as the [ASQ Enterprise](#) (<http://bit.ly/ASQOnline>), we were able to ensure that we would not only send parents one screening to complete for their child, but we would continue to send the next developmental screening to parents within the appropriate timeline to help track their child’s development. Through the annual Project LAUNCH Professional Development Institute and other statewide conferences and training events, we have promoted ASQ, provided kits for partners to implement, and offered free access to the ASQ Enterprise across all early childhood systems.

What are some of the methods you’ve used to get the word out about ASQ?

In 2016, HMG expanded statewide to begin serving all 67 counties through a partnership with 2-1-1 Connects Alabama call centers. Any time Help Me Grow is promoted, the message of the importance of using a valid, reliable screening tool to identify concerns and connect children to services as early as possible is part of that message.

We deliver this message through [Facebook](#) (<http://bit.ly/HMG-AL-FB>), [HMG Alabama’s website](#) (<http://bit.ly/HMG-AL>), conference presentations and exhibit tables, and other outreach events. In addition, one of HMG’s main goals is to educate providers and early care and education professionals on the importance of using a reliable, valid screening tool. At the end of 2016, HMG received funding from the Alabama Department of Human Resources to target child care providers about the importance of early detection and how ASQ can be a helpful tool to not only identify those concerns, but to also communicate those concerns with parents.

HMG partners with Regional Quality Contractors to train child care providers on these tools—including how to utilize and interpret ASQ-3 and ASQ:SE-2, as well as discuss results and next steps with families. Program staff also receives training on how to access and utilize HMG services when concerns are identified on the parent-completed questionnaires.

In addition, HMG Alabama has adopted the ASQ Enterprise system to better coordinate and track statewide

developmental screening efforts and to aid or enhance early care and education programs that have incorporated the ASQ into their programs. We support these programs by offering access to the system, and by providing program setup, staff training, and technical assistance.

Help Me Grow Alabama uses ASQ Online, specifically Family Access. How has this service helped advance your screening initiative throughout the state?

Family Access (<http://bit.ly/ASQFamilyAccess>) has been very helpful to our care coordinators by not only decreasing time for data entry and preparing mail-outs to send the ASQ to families, but it has also decreased paper and mailing costs for families who have Internet and/or a smart phone. It also is very helpful in cases where screenings must be resent electronically—for example, if parents did not receive it by mail, or if we need to resend the link after a delay leads to the age interval no longer being valid.

Family Access has also helped increase outside providers' and programs' interest in becoming users in the ASQ Enterprise system. For example, we have three pediatric practices utilizing our ASQ Enterprise system and the Family Access component by having parents complete ASQ using iPads in the waiting room before their child's well checkup. Pediatricians and office staff have expressed that this has helped workflow immensely, and one practice has even begun facilitating an additional screening interval because of the time savings.

What challenges did you face while promoting your program, and how did you overcome them?

It was and still is very important to make sure the messaging is very clear when discussing and training on ASQ that this is not a "test" or something that children will pass or fail, but instead a parent-completed tool to help both providers and families identify concerns, communicate those concerns, and begin building the relationship to ensure professionals and parents are working together for what's best for their child.

In addition, we have had to review staff capacity along the way to ensure we were not only screening but connecting families to supports when concerns were identified. For example, before expanding statewide with full care coordination implemented, we made sure to always invite community partners to set up resource tables at Books, Balls, and Blocks events to help facilitate connections on site with Early Intervention, Special Education, and other local programs. As we continue to grow, we have also begun to explore the increase use of volunteers and other ideas learned from other HMG state affiliates and partners.

What has been your greatest success?

In 2016, HMG helped facilitate 14,600 screens, a 4,365% increase from the previous year! This was in large part due to the participation of all First Class Pre-K classrooms, Alabama's state pre-K program, which used ASQ Enterprise to screen all children at program entry.

What general advice would you give to others who want to begin promoting a screening program?

What has contributed to our success—and I'd advise other programs to consider this—is that we try to be very strategic and find ways to embed HMG and developmental screening in existing opportunities—to enhance systems instead of duplicating efforts. This is an especially vital strategy in a low resourced state. For example, Alabama received the Project LAUNCH grant through Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration, and

HMG was written into that grant to help fulfill one of the project's core objectives focused on screening and assessment.

Tips for Promoting Your Program

Looking for more tips for your ASQ program? Download the **10 Tips for Promoting Your ASQ Screening Program** tip sheet at <http://bit.ly/10TipsPromote>.

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