



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

**“Learn the Signs. Act Early”:  
Statewide Expansion of the  
WIC Developmental Milestones Program**

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# A Partnership Between Missouri WIC and University of Missouri (2010-2018)

- Project developed innovative ways to enhance parental awareness of developmental milestones using the CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early. (LTSAE) messages and materials
- Focused on families in WIC agencies whose children may be at risk for delays in early identification and intervention
- WIC staff helped shape the program so that it is easy to implement
- Program evaluations show a positive impact on children and WIC staff



# Presentation Objectives

- To present an overview of the Missouri WIC Developmental Milestones Program
- To describe how the program expanded across Missouri
- To share statewide evaluation data and staff response to the program
- To help you consider how this program might be adapted for your state



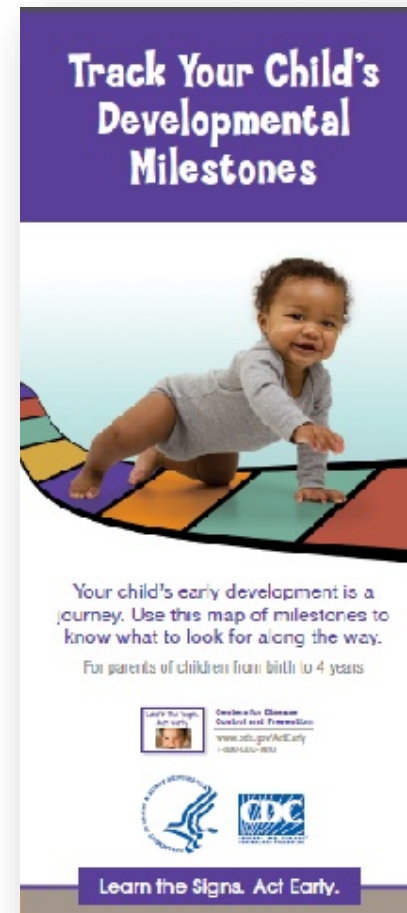
# Why “Learn the Signs. Act Early.”?

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- 1 in 4 children (ages 0-5) is at moderate or high risk for developmental, behavioral, or social delay
- 1 in 6 children (ages 3-17) has developmental delays or disabilities
- About 1 in 68 children has autism spectrum disorder
- Many children are not identified until school entry, particularly those from low-income groups
- Too many children miss the opportunity for early intervention
- Early intervention services make a difference!

# Learn the Signs. Act Early. Messages for Parents

- Learn and track the signs of healthy development during early childhood
- Act early if there is a concern
- Talk to your child's doctor



# Why WIC and Learn the Signs?

- Ongoing relationship with traditionally underserved families and children ages 0 to 5 years who are at risk for delays in early identification
- Young children from low-income families and those with nutritional risk factors may also be at increased risk for developmental delays
- Trusted source of information for parents
- LTSAE is closely aligned with WIC's mission
  - Healthy development of young children
  - Provision of referrals for services



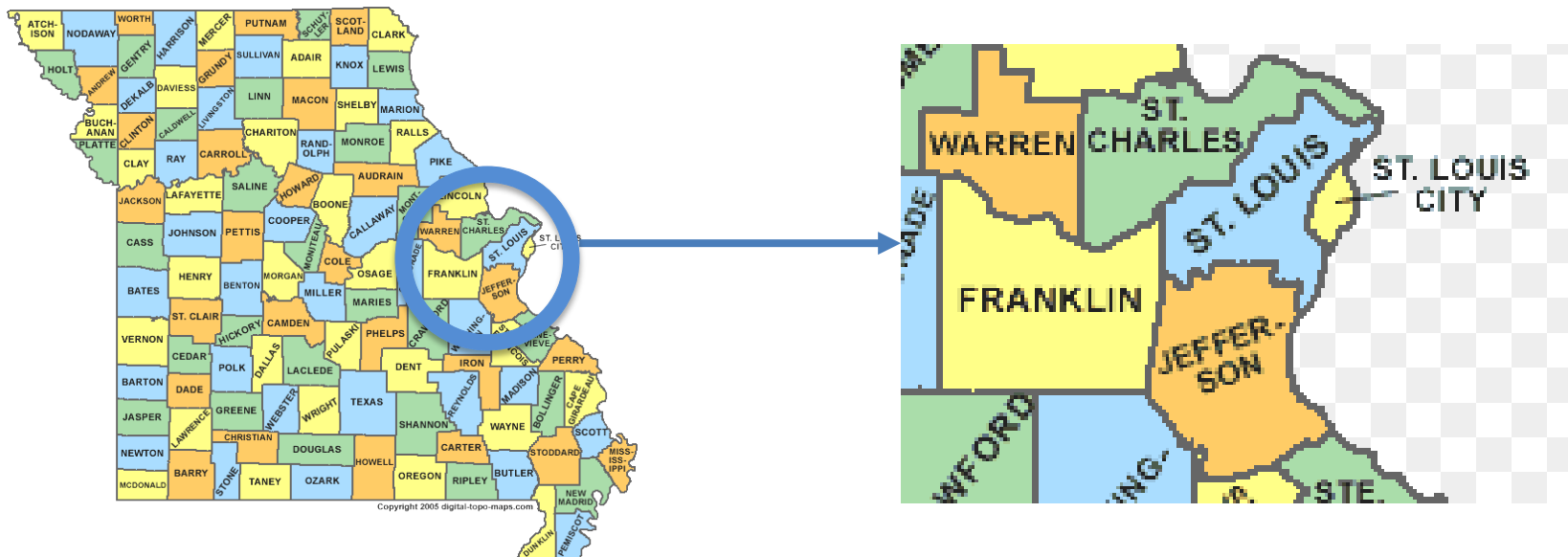
# WIC Developmental Milestones Program Goals

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- To develop materials and methods that
  - Educate parents from low-income groups about healthy child development
  - Help WIC staff know when and how to refer children with potential developmental delays
- To develop procedures that fit into WIC clinic flow, ensuring acceptance and ease of use by staff
- To evaluate the program's impact on parents, children, and WIC staff

# WIC Developmental Milestones Program Timeline

- Phase I—program developed with WIC staff in 11 clinics in St. Louis City
- Phase II—Refined and replicated in 9 WIC clinics in four counties surrounding St. Louis City
- Phase III—Statewide expansion





# Core Program Elements

- Individualized parent education using LTSAE checklists
- Environmental graphics

## Your Child at 1 Year

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

How your child plays, learns, speaks, and acts offers important clues about your child's development. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. Check the milestones your child has reached by his or her 1st birthday. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

What most children do at this age:

**Social/Emotional**

- Is shy or nervous with strangers
- Cries when mom or dad leaves
- Has favorite things and people
- Shows fear in some situations
- Hands you a book when he wants to hear a story
- Requests sounds or actions to get attention
- Puts out arm or leg to help with dressing
- Plays games such as "peek-a-boo" and "pat-a-cake"

**Language/Communication**

- Responds to simple spoken requests
- Uses simple gestures, like shaking head "no" or waving "bye-bye"
- Makes sounds with changes in tone (sounds more like speech)
- Says "mama" and "dada" and exclamations like "uh-oh!"
- Tries to say words you say

**Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)**

- Expresses things in different ways, like shaking, banging, throwing
- Finds hidden things easily
- Looks at the right picture or thing when it's named
- Copies gestures
- Starts to use things correctly; for example, drinks from a cup, brushes hair
- Bangs two things together
- Puts things in a container, takes things out of a container
- Lets things go without help
- Points with index (pointer) finger
- Follows simple directions like "pick up the toy"

**Movement/Physical Development**

- Gets to a sitting position without help
- Pulls up to stand, walks holding on to furniture ("cruising")
- May take a few steps without holding on
- May stand alone

**Act early by talking to your child's doctor if your child:**

- Doesn't crawl
- Can't stand when supported
- Doesn't search for things that also sees you hide
- Doesn't say single words like "mama" or "dada"
- Doesn't learn gestures like waving or shaking head
- Doesn't point to things
- Doesn't hold on once had

Talk your child's doctor if you notice these signs of possible developmental delay for this age. If you or the doctor is still concerned, contact Parents as Teachers at 866-728-4968 or [www.parentsasteachers.org](http://www.parentsasteachers.org) or First Steps at 866-583-2362 or <http://dhsa.mn.gov/divisions/FirstSteps>.

Adapted from **CARING FOR YOUR BABY AND YOUNG CHILD: BIRTH TO AGE 5**, 19th Edition, edited by Sharon Steiner and Tracy Berger Steiner © 1991, 1993, 1995, 2004, 2008 by the American Academy of Pediatrics and **FIRST STEPS: EARLY SIGNS FOR HEALTH PROBLEMS IN INFANTS, CHILDREN AND ADULTS**, Third Edition, edited by Joseph Higgins, Jr., Judith S. Stone, and Paul H. Swanson, 2004, 6th Street Village, St. American Academy of Pediatrics.

What concerns do you have about your child's development? \_\_\_\_\_

For more information on early childhood development, visit [www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly) or call 800-CDC-INFO. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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### MILESTONES AT 4 MONTHS

- ✓ Begins to babble
- ✓ Responds to affection



### MILESTONES AT 9 MONTHS

- ✓ Has favorite toys
- ✓ Understands "no"



### MILESTONES AT 4 YEARS

- ✓ Likes playing "make-believe"
- ✓ Names some colors and numbers



# Referral Supports Parents

Children who show signs of potential developmental delay are referred to their doctor for follow-up

## Tracking the milestones in your child's early development

- Call your child's doctor as soon as possible for a follow-up visit. Tell the doctor you want to talk about your child's development. Take the enclosed checklist with you.

Doctor's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Resources for parents and healthcare providers are available at no cost at [www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly) or by calling 800-CDC-INFO.

Developed in partnership by the University of Missouri and the US Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A project of the University of Missouri and local WIC agencies with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For more information, contact [milestones@missouri.edu](mailto:milestones@missouri.edu) or 573-884-7050.

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# Checklist Program Provides Parent Education

- Program process centers on set of nine LTSAE checklists (2 months-4 years)
- Parent invited to complete age-appropriate checklist for child
- Nutritionist reviews results with parent and refers to child's doctor if concerns exist
- Process integrated into WIC certification and mid-certification appointments (every 6 months)



# Program Designed to Fit Seamlessly into Clinic Flow

“Initially it was hard to imagine how the checklist program would fit into an appointment, but it flows really well. There is some down time between taking the child’s measurements and entering it in the computer. So the checklist gives the parent something meaningful to do, rather than just waiting for us to finish our data entry.”



*Brittney Stone*  
*WIC Education Supervisor*

# Environment Reinforces Messages

- Colorful, family-friendly wall and floor block graphics
- Quick useful information for parents



## MILESTONES AT 12 MONTHS

- ✓ Pulls up to stand
- ✓ Copies gestures



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## MILESTONES AT 6 MONTHS

- ✓ Copies sounds
- ✓ Responds to own name

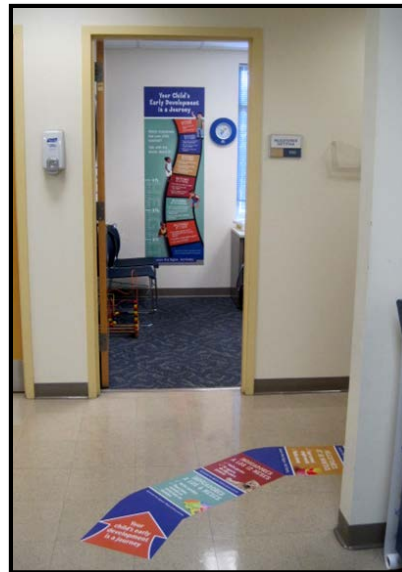


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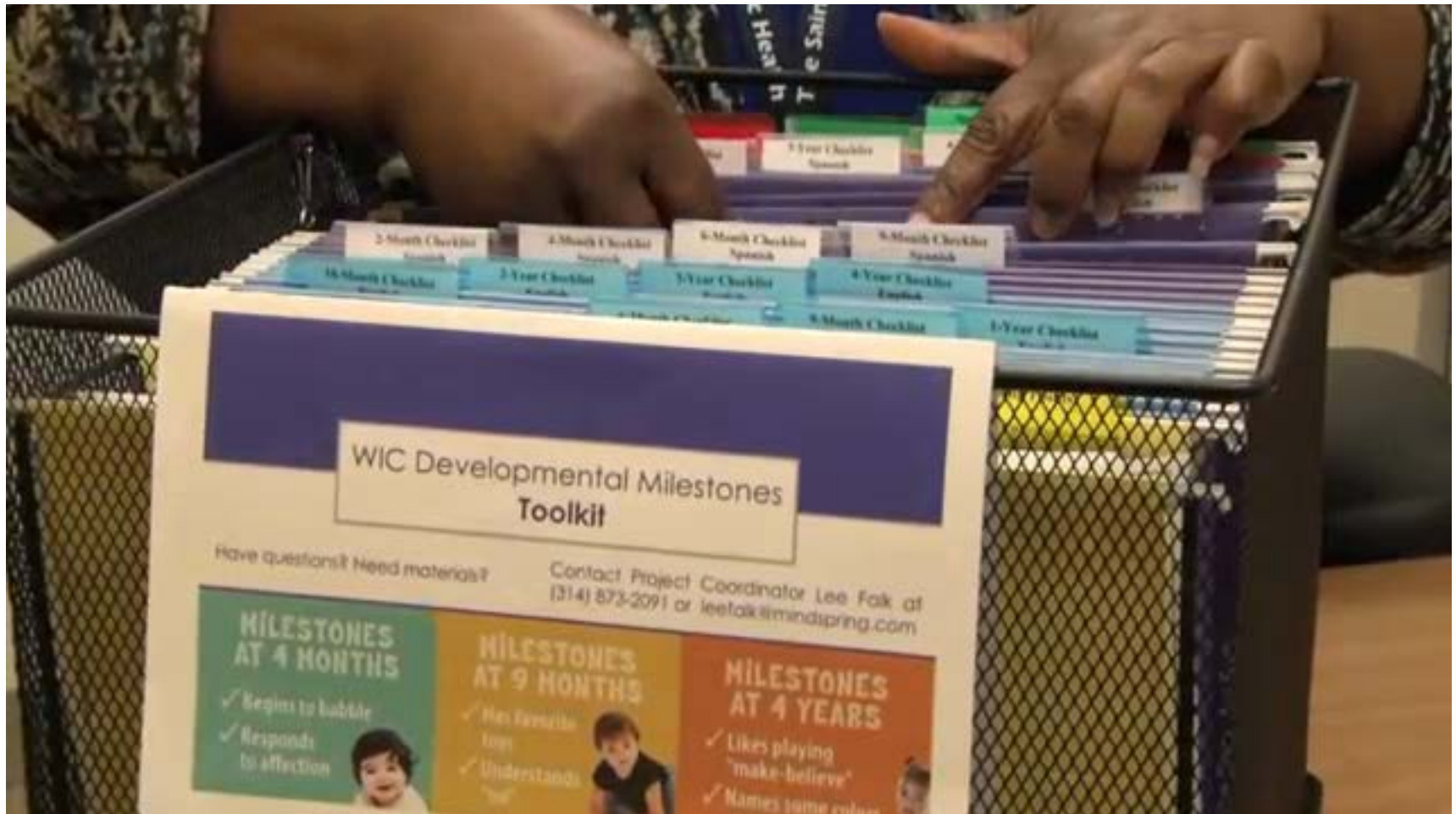
# Graphics Support Staff & Reinforce Messages

“The graphics introduce the subject of developmental milestones before the family ever comes to my desk. They are anxious to see how their child matches up with others their age.”

*Liz Wise, WIC Nutritionist*



# Snapshot of Program Materials



# Program Evaluation (Phase II)

- Study 1: Parent Survey
- Study 2: Referral Outcomes Tracking
- Study 3: WIC Staff Survey





# Parent Survey (n = 119)

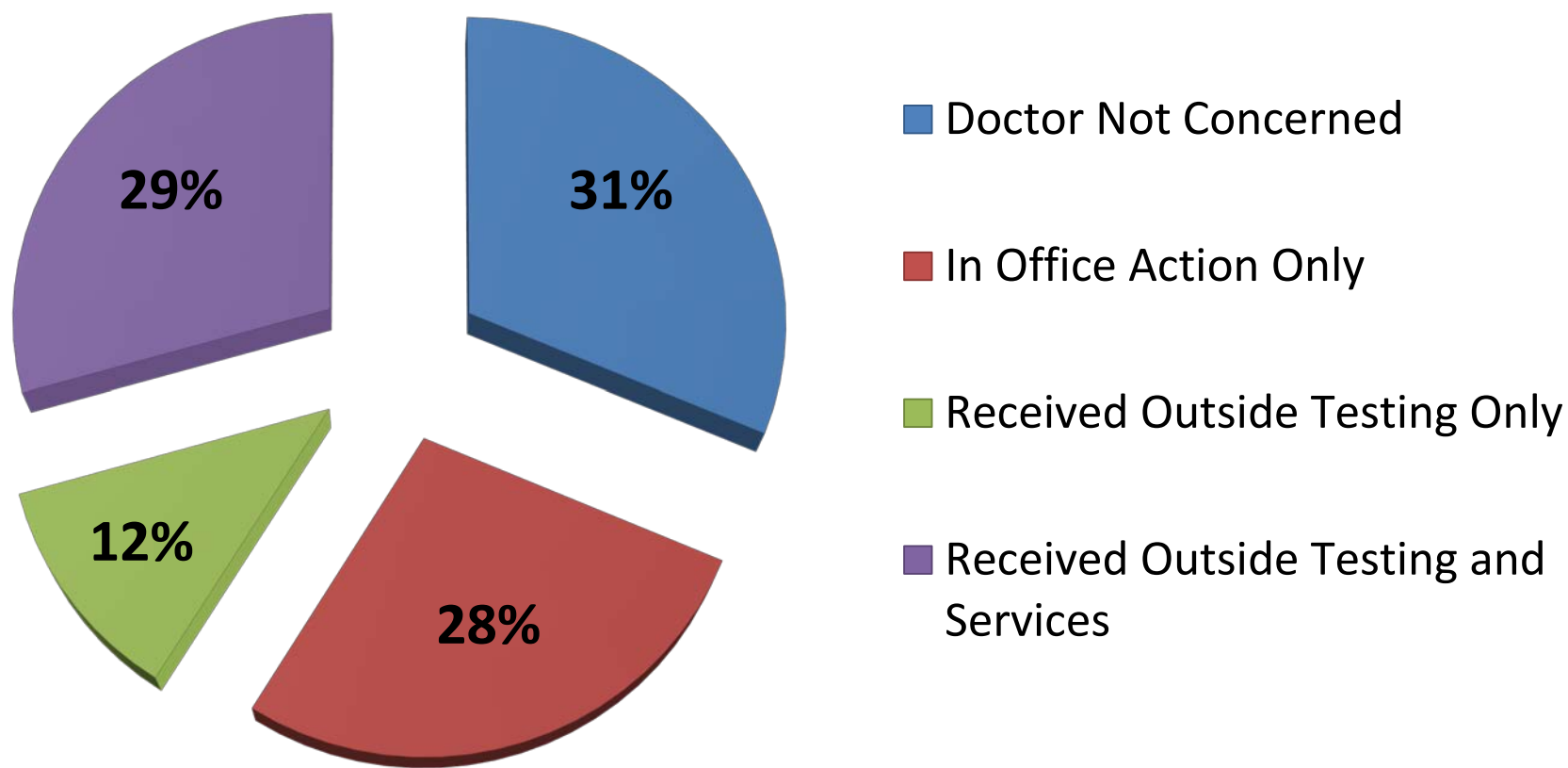
- Parents completed a survey about the WIC Developmental Milestones Program before and after program implementation
- Environmental Graphics
  - 99% said they spent time looking at the graphics
  - 97% said graphics helped them learn about their child's development
- LTSAE Checklists
  - 41% said they filled out a checklist
  - Of those who completed a checklist
    - 98% talked with WIC staff about the checklist
    - 97% learned new information from the checklist

# Referral Outcomes

- 122 children (12 to 48 months) with developmental concerns on LTSAE checklist were referred to the doctor in the first 6 months
- Parents of 84 children completed a Referral Outcome Tracking form during subsequent WIC visits
- 61% of these children saw a doctor because of a WIC referral

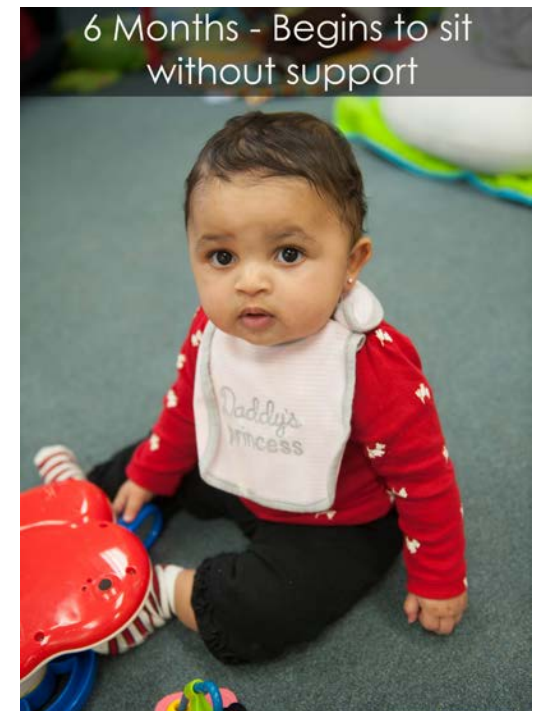


# Referral Outcomes When Seen By Doctor (n = 51)



# WIC Staff Survey (n = 20)

- 95% Families willing to complete checklist
- 80% Program takes 5 minutes or less
- 90% Helps staff learn when to refer and how to support parents
- 95% Referred one or more children
- 95% Promotes healthy development



# WIC Staff Focus Group Themes

- Checklist program is easy to implement
- Parents are empowered
- Doctor referrals are strengthened
- Staff members are empowered
- Parent literacy and concentration issues can be barriers



All seven WIC agencies (20 clinics) continue to use the checklists

# Statewide Expansion (Phase III)

- 1-year WIC Developmental Milestones Program expansion beginning October 2016
- Aimed to develop, implement and evaluate a statewide model for the expansion of the WIC Developmental Milestones Program in Missouri that can be shared nationally
- Funding provided by the CDC and the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services

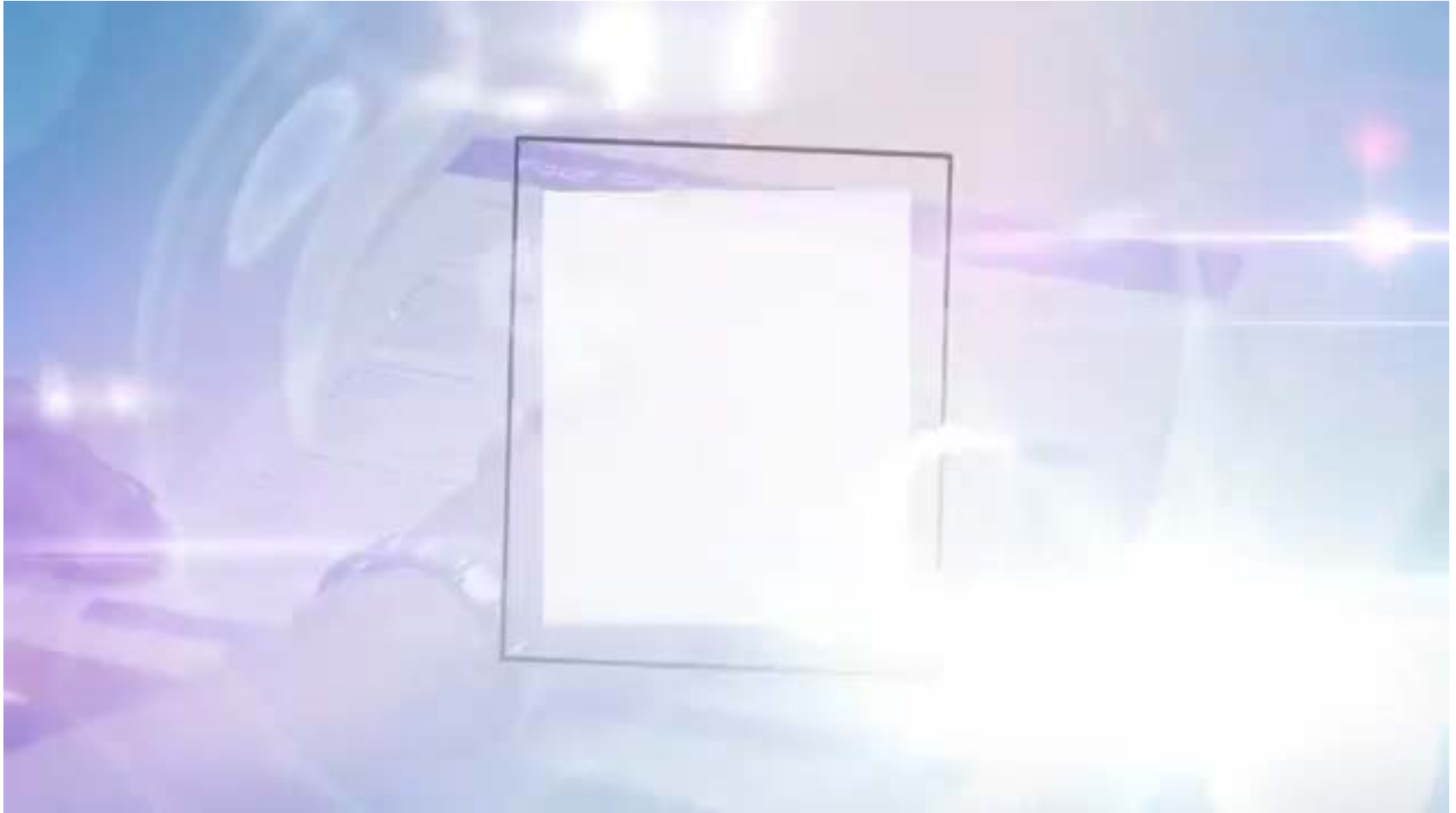


# Statewide Expansion: Resource Materials

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- Introductory and training videos
- Program implementation manual
- Printed LTSAE checklists and environmental graphics
- Missouri WIC Milestones webpage
  - Enrollment form and materials order form
  - Links to videos and Implementation Manual
  - <http://health.mo.gov/living/families/wic/wiclwp/wicdevelopmentalmilestonesprogram/>

# Snapshot of Training Video





# Talking Points Created with WIC Staff Input

## WIC Developmental Milestones Checklist Program Talking Points

### WIC NUTRITIONIST/COMPETENT PROFESSIONAL AUTHORITY'S ROLE:

- At each certification and MCA appointment, give parents the opportunity to complete the age-appropriate checklist. The checklist may also be used any time the parent or the WIC staff has a concern about the child's development. If the parent does not have other topics they would like addressed, the checklist review can count as a nutrition education contact when appropriate education on growth and development is included. Have the parent complete a checklist for each child being certified that day; if the child is between checklist ages, use the younger checklist.
- Refer the parent to their child's doctor for follow-up as indicated. The referral can be noted in MOWINS and can be used to set a goal, if appropriate. See details in purple box below.

### KEY WORDS:

Developmental Milestones.

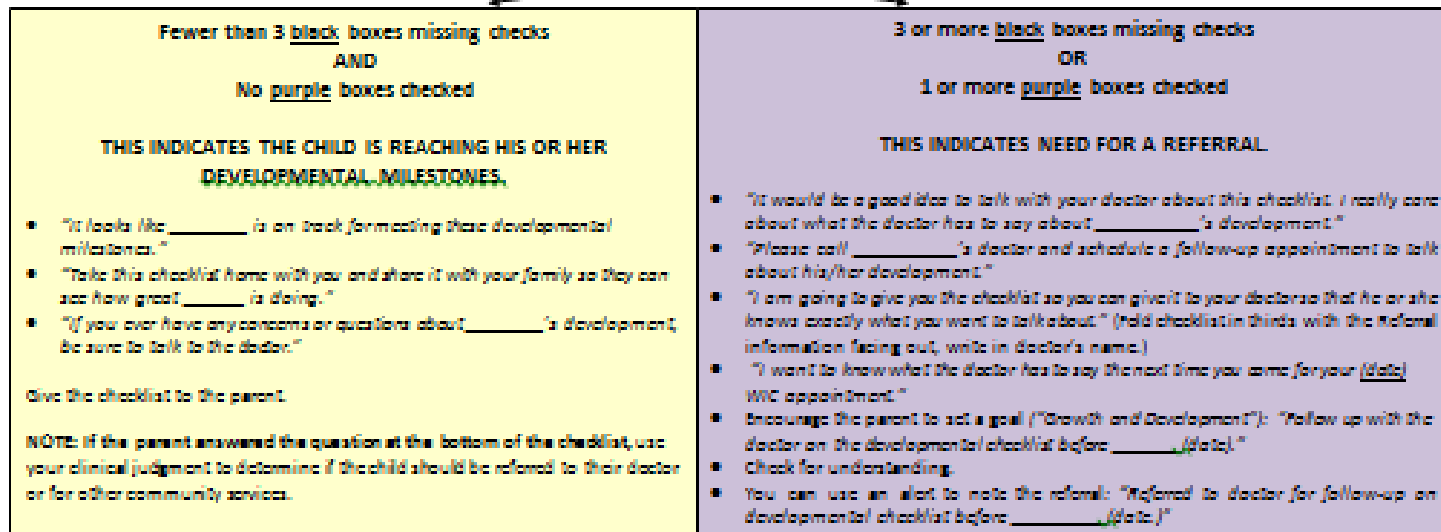
Talk to the doctor.

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

### TALKING POINTS:

- "We are using this checklist to help track your child's development. Thinking about how \_\_\_\_\_ plays, speaks, learns, moves and acts is just as important as measuring his/her height and weight."
- "So let's go through this checklist of Developmental Milestones and see how \_\_\_\_\_ is progressing for his/her age. Let's answer these first two questions together about what most children do at this age. Does \_\_\_\_\_ (read first item)? Does \_\_\_\_\_ (read second item)?"

Be sure the parent writes the child's name, age and the date on the checklist and completes both columns of the checklist. Provide assistance if needed. Then review the checked boxes to determine next steps:



# Statewide Expansion: Program Dissemination

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## Program Dissemination

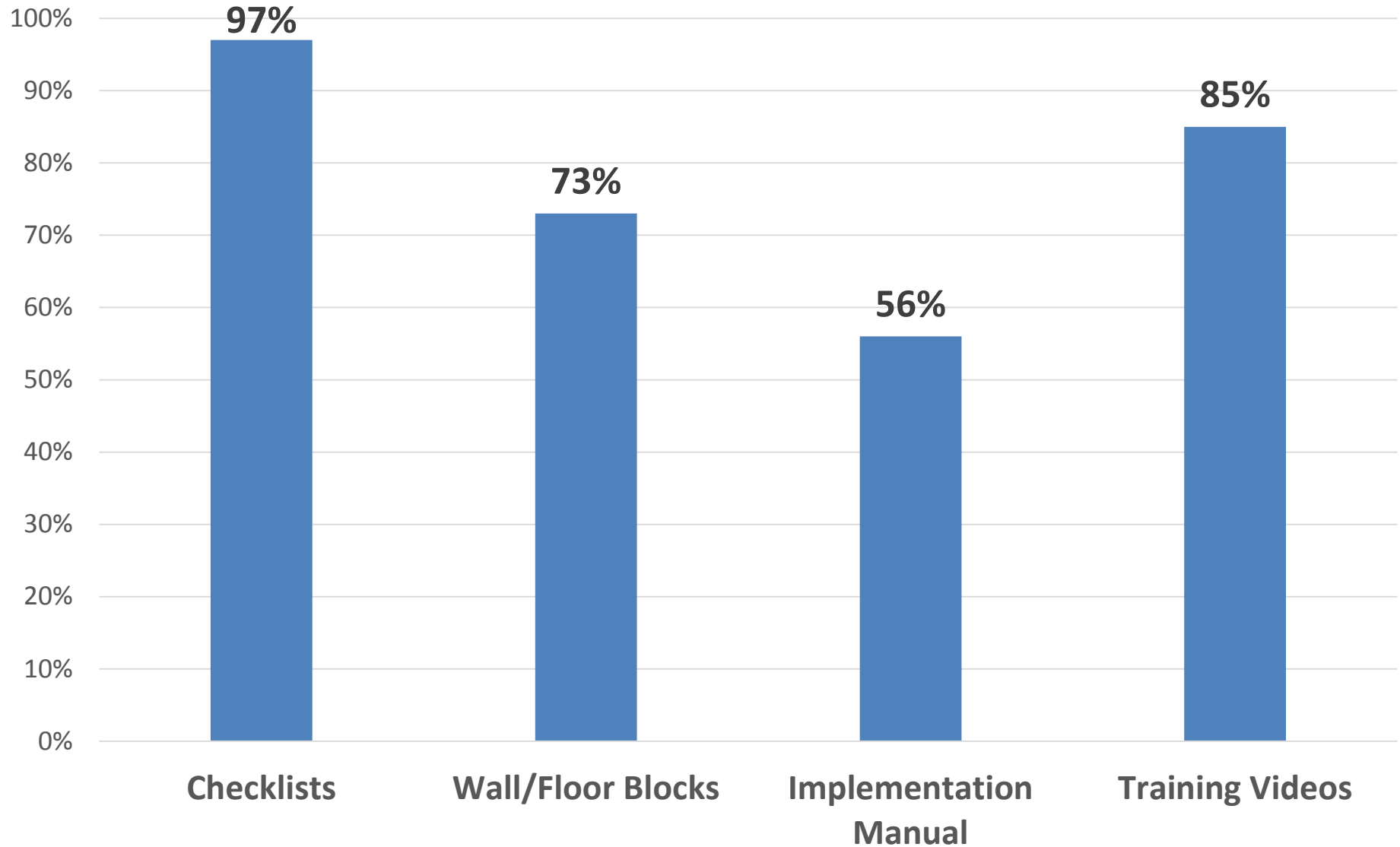
- Presentations at six WIC district meetings and statewide meetings (30-60 minutes)
- Monthly articles in Missouri WIC e-newsletter
- Technical assistance from designated WIC state nutritionist and project staff, as needed

# Statewide Expansion: Evaluation

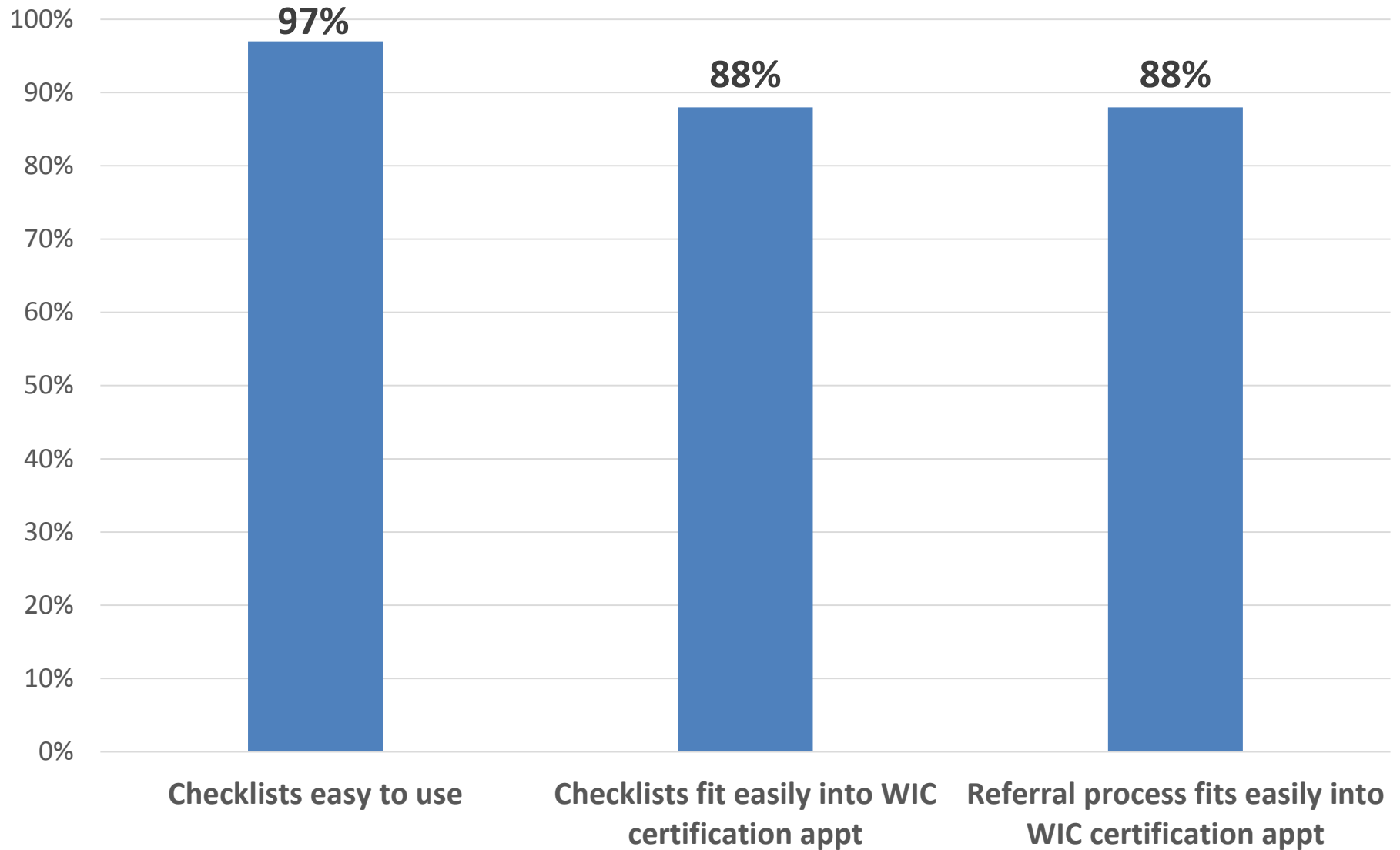
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- 64 WIC agencies enrolled in the program between May 2016 and January 2017
- 59% of Missouri WIC agencies
- Agencies enrolled from all 6 WIC districts in the state
- 59 staff completed a survey about the program at the end of December 2017

# Key Program Materials Used

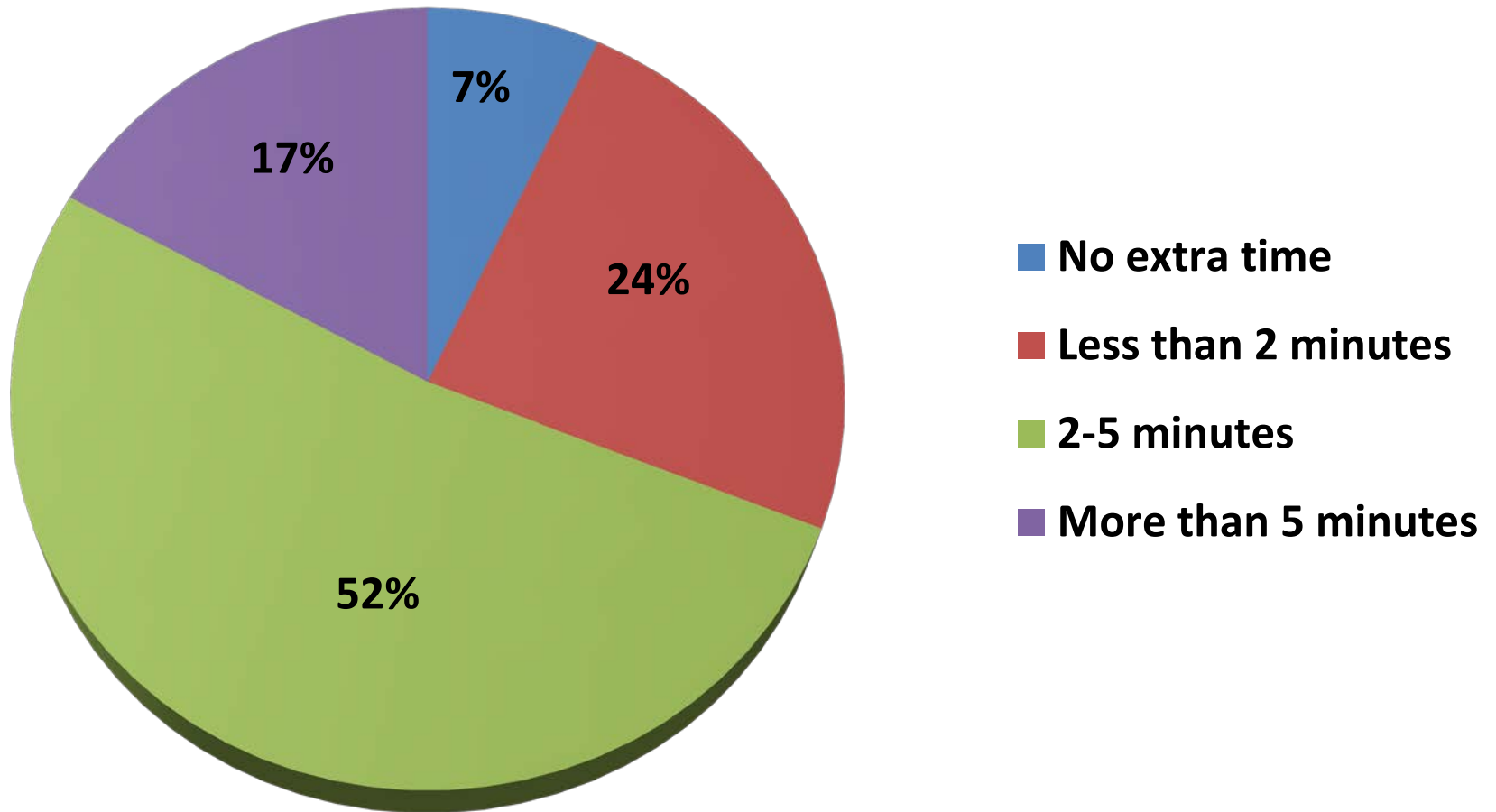


# Staff Response to Program

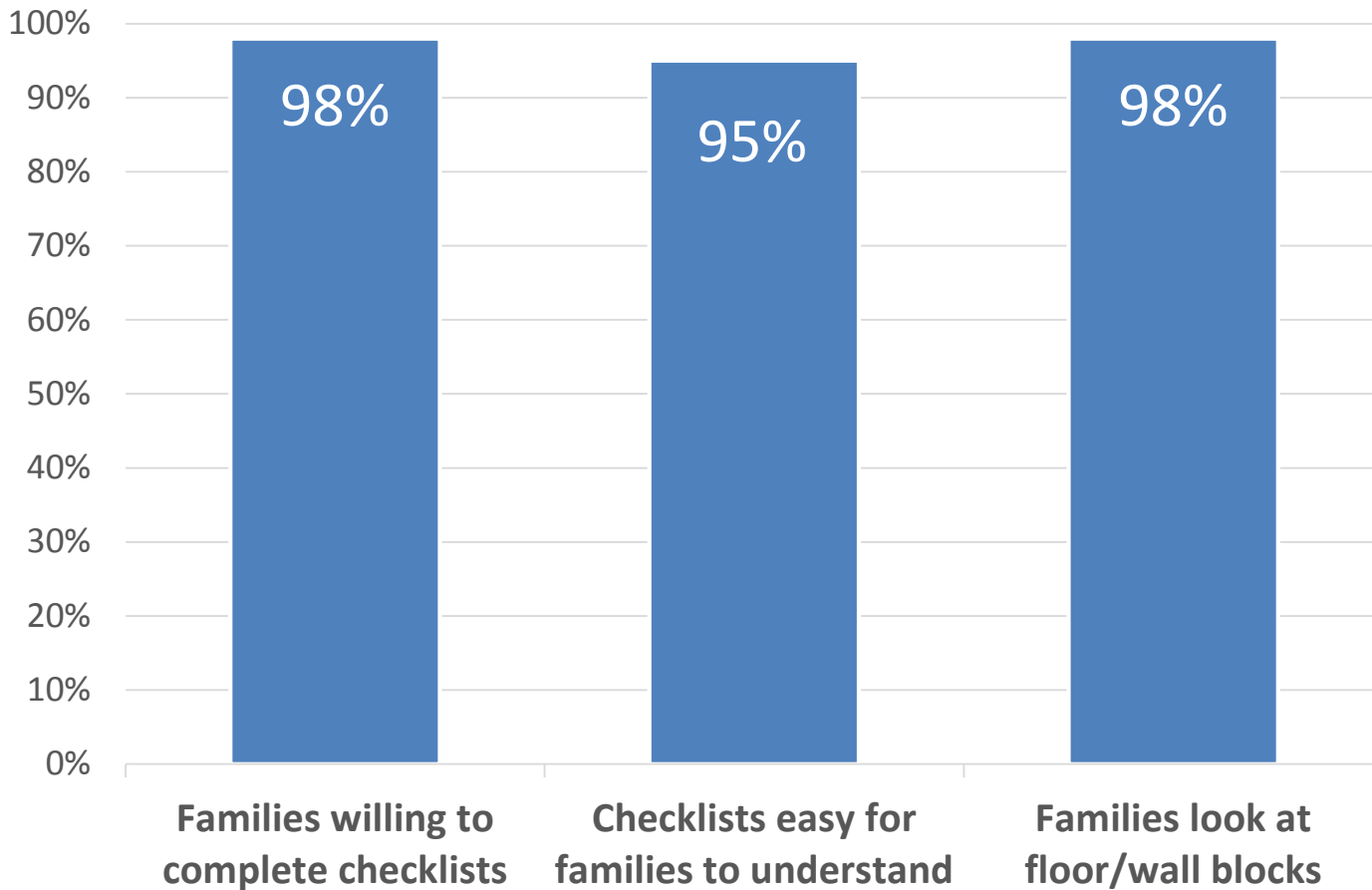


# Time Program Added to Appointments

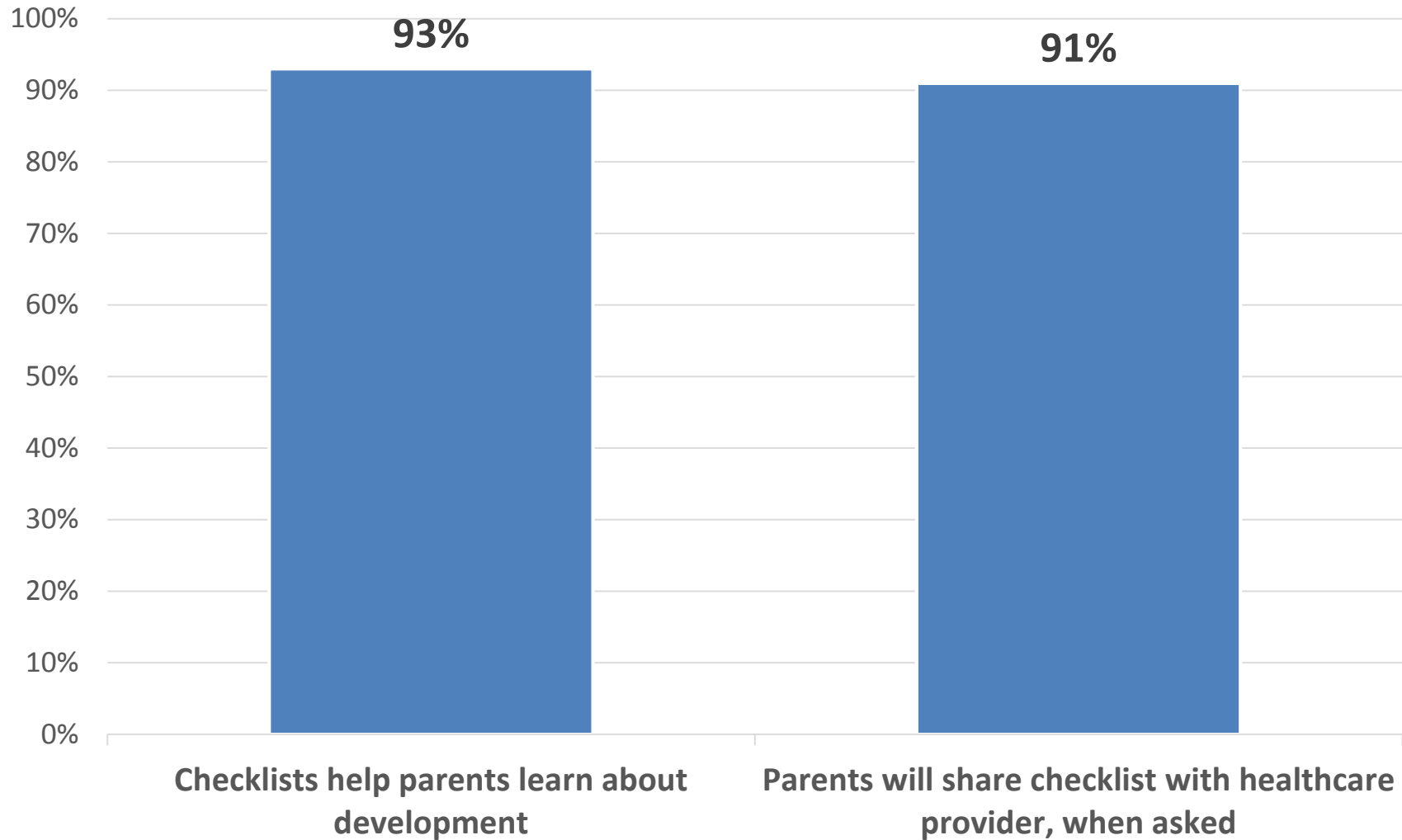
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# Parent Response to Program (Staff Report)

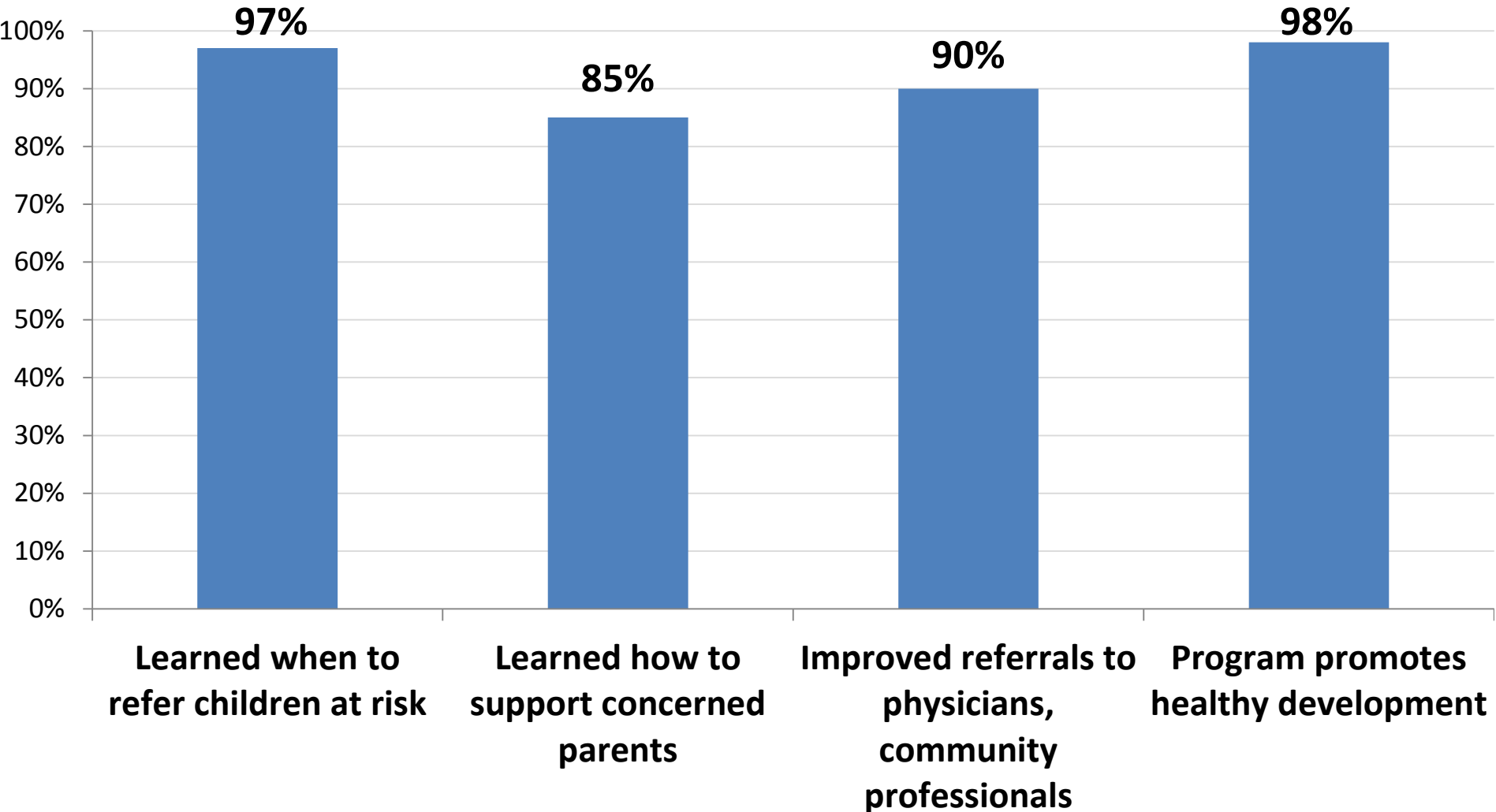


# Impact on Parents (Staff Report)





# Impact on Staff



# Program Impact



# Next Steps

- Incorporate a language nutrition component
  - Talking is Teaching: Talk, Read, Sing
- Public awareness campaign to improve children's early brain and vocabulary development
- Empower parents to use easy activities to improve learning
  - Describing things while walking outside, eating, etc.
  - Singing songs during bath time
  - Reading books or playing games
- <http://talkingisteaching.org>



# How can this program work for you?

- CDC plans to create a “generic” version of program materials for use by other states
- WIC programs across the nation will have the opportunity to voluntarily adapt and customize the program
- If you would like to learn more, contact

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“Learn the Signs. Act Early.” Program

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

[ActEarly@cdc.gov](mailto:ActEarly@cdc.gov) or [KKGreen@cdc.gov](mailto:KKGreen@cdc.gov)

# Acknowledgements

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to families of children served by WIC  
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