

Grow Along with Me Project

Parent Satisfaction: Telephone Interviews Regarding the Developmental Checkup.

(Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) Second Edition

Children not referred for follow-up, Time 1, Summer 2008

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Prepared for the Grow Along with Me Steering Committee, May 2009

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Executive Summary

- 63 parents (whose children received developmental screening using the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) and who had nothing untoward discovered[e.g. a “normal” checkup]) (60% participation rate) consented to be interviewed via the telephone about their experiences
- Parents were randomly selected and resided in the following communities: Lethbridge (60.32%); Cardston (17.46%); Raymond (9.52%); Coaldale (6.35%); Coalhurst (4.76%); Picture Butte (4.76%); Taber (3.17%); Grassy Lake (3.17%); with the following at 1.59% of all parents interviewed—Barnwell, Bellevue, Carmangay, Lundbreck, and Vauxhall.
- More than 55.56% (n=35/63) of the parents were familiar with the ASQ and had previously encountered it.
- The clear majority of parents (80.95%; 51/63) indicated the ASQ was a positive experience. Parents valued knowing that their children were developing within the normal ranged of expected milestones. The ASQ provided reassurance that all was “well” with their children.
- A minority of parents spoke negatively about their ASQ experience (17.46%; 11/63). Their concerns included: the person administering the ASQ did not listen to them [parents]; it was difficult to answer some of the questions and having the questions in advance would have been helpful to the parents; the ASQ was not really optional; and there was a real burden associated with completing the ASQ (i.e., managing the other children without assistance, trying to focus on the child’s immunization while having to concurrently complete the ASQ, and not having the ASQ available on-line).
- Most parents (74.6%; 47/63) reported that the ASQ helped them to learn more about their children’s development. In particular, parents learned about the following: developmental milestones or benchmarks; and, children’s abilities to complete certain activities or tasks.
- The clear majority of parents (80.95%; 51/63) observed that the ASQ check-up gave them ideas, suggestions, and activities to further support their children’s development at home. These activities addressed: language and communication development; motor and fine motor skill development, and; development of comprehension and listening skills.
- Parents who were interviewed overwhelmingly endorsed the ASQ to other parents who might be hesitant about the screening tool. A few parents did approach the ASQ child developmental check-ups with caution. These parents also framed the ASQ as simply a guide to the growth and development of children.
- Most parents (71.43%; 45/63) indicated that they did not learn anything new about available community resources as a consequence of completing the ASQ.
- Parents felt that the ASQ enabled them to be better parents by refocusing their attention to developmental areas that would benefit their children. Sometimes the setting in which the ASQ was conducted was “chaotic” and the appointments were rushed. Some parents identified that obtaining ASQ results would be helpful to them.

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Introduction and Methodology

During the summer of 2008 (June, July, and August), telephone surveys were conducted with a random sample of parents of children aged 18 to 24 months. Their children had undergone developmental check-ups and nothing of concern appeared in relation to the check-up.

Parents had signed a written consent form to participate in the *Grow Along With Me* (G.A.W.M) project. Verbal consent was also obtained at the time of the telephone interview.

Interviews lasted from 15 to 20 minutes. Parents' responses were noted by the interviewer. Of the parents who were contacted, 60% agreed to be interviewed (63/105).

The telephone interviews were organized around seven questions:

1. Is this the first experience you have had with the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ)?
2. Can you recall how you felt about the developmental check-up?
3. As a parent, did you learn anything new about your child's development by completing the ASQ?
4. Did the developmental check-up provide you with an opportunity to learn more about activities you may use to support your child's development at home?
5. Based on your experience with a developmental check-up, what advice or comments would you offer to parents who might be hesitant about completing an ASQ?
6. Did you learn anything new about community resources available to you and your child as a result of completing the ASQ?
7. Is there anything else you would like to share with me about your experience completing the ASQ?

Results

Parents from Lethbridge comprised the greatest number interviewed (38/63; 60.32%). The breakdown of interviews by location is presented in Table 1

Table 1: Parental Residence and Percentage of Interviews Conducted

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Location	Number of Interviews/Percentage (N=63)
Lethbridge	38 (60.32%)
Cardston	11 (17.46%)
Raymond	6 (9.52%)
Coaldale	4 (6.35%)
Coalhurst	3 (4.76%)
Picture Butte	3 (4.76%)
Taber	2 (3.17%)
Grassy Lake	2 (3.17%)
Barnwell, Bellevue, Carmangay, Lundbreck, Vauxhall	1 (1.59%) each Total = 5 (7.94%)

The research questions will serve as the organizing “framework” for the findings.

1. Did parents have previous experience with the ASQ?

More than half (55.56%; 35/63) of the parents were familiar with the ASQ and had previously encountered it (through experiences with their other children and/or previously with their 18-24 month old child (e.g., at 6 months). Most often, the location and/or occasion for administration of the ASQ was the Public Health Well Child (Immunization) visit.

2. How did parents feel about completing the ASQ?

The clear majority of parents (80.95%; 51/63) indicated the ASQ was a positive experience. Parents valued knowing that their children were developing within the normal range of expectations. The ASQ provided reassurance that all was “well” with their children. A foster parent spoke highly of the ASQ—as it helped to identify any developmental concerns. Comments included:

Very positive feelings. It helped to make sure my kid was growing along with the rest of them.

All positive feelings; they were good questions that made me think back to the different stages of my son's development.

It was good; very informative. It was my first child and so everything was new—and it was nice to know the information.

I liked it. I thought it was a good guideline and gave a good idea of what to focus on at a certain age.

I take in a lot of foster kids where I don't know the history. It helps me see if there may be deficits that I can help fill in.

Fewer than 20% of the parents (17.46%; 11/63) voiced that the ASQ was a negative experience for them. One parent indicated a “neutral” stance in relation to the ASQ. Parents concerns included the following:

- (i). The ASQ administrator did not listen to them [parents].

The only thing that bothered me was that my daughter was one point away and was in the grey area—and the public health nurses insisted that they submit her score for being a delayed child. I disagreed. Sure enough, a few months later the flip switched and now she won't stop talking. I'm just annoyed because it is my third child. Why would they know if they don't even have kids?

- (ii). It was difficult to answer some of the questions, and having the questions in advance would have been helpful.

I thought most of the questions were relevant, but there were a few that I thought were impossible for any parent to answer. For example, the question that asked if you understand everything your child says. I don't think anyone can understand everything a child says at that age.

Previously, we used to fill it out at home—after they would send it out to us. I thought that was a lot better, because some of the questions require experimenting with your child—like drawing lines on a page to see if they can copy you or stacking blocks. They [questions] should be rewritten if they don't want to send it out anymore so that it's more applicable to fill out the five-minutes beforehand.

- (iii). Completion of the ASQ was not presented as optional for parents.

I felt a bit annoyed because they say the questionnaire is optional, but you are asked to come in early specifically to fill it out. Since they ask you to come in early, the questionnaire is not really optional. It should really be

more at the parent's discretion as to whether or not they want to complete it.

- (iv). For one parent, there was a real “burden” associated with completing the ASQ. This included managing other children without assistance; trying to focus on the child’s immunization, while having to concurrently complete the ASQ; and the ASQ was lengthy to complete. This parent also suggested that an on-line version of the ASQ would ease the burden associated with completing it, as well as provide “think time” to answer the questions.

I think it's a bit silly because you're trying to prepare your baby for his shot, and there's no other parent around with you to watch over them [other children]. At the same time, they are asking you to fill out this questionnaire—and the questions are too long. So I think (a) the ASQ is too long; (b) it is the wrong time, and (c) I would have liked it if they told me to come in early—with another parent—or if they provided an on-line version of the form to fill out beforehand.

3. Did parents learn anything new about their child’s development as a consequence of completing the ASQ?

The majority of parents (74.6%; 47/63) indicated that the ASQ helped them to learn more about their children’s development. Just over ¼ of the parents (25.40%; 16/63) observed that the ASQ did not offer them anything “new” regarding child development knowledge. However, most of these parents had other children and felt informed them about the growth and development of children. Other parents accessed child development resources (e.g., websites). They indicated that they were well informed about the growth and development of their children.

For the first child, yes, because I did not know what to expect. By the third child, however, I was more aware and I knew more.

I had read lots of books on it already, so I had a pretty good idea of where my daughter should be.

Parents learned about their children’s growth and development as a consequence of completing the ASQ. In particular, they learned about the following:

- (i). Developmental milestones or benchmarks.

Yes, I learned how to test for different benchmarks of the age groups. I also learned different things to benchmark in my child's growth.

I could see where my children were, what their strengths were and what they needed to improve in.

I learned about the different types of things to look for in her development, especially in fine motor skills.

- (ii). Children's abilities to complete certain activities and/or tasks.

Yes, I learned that he could kick a ball and stuff like that. I think it highlights things that I wasn't necessarily looking for before.

I was quite surprised at the different activities my daughter could do.

This last one had a question of if I could draw a straight line, could my child replicate it. It was something we had never done before, so now we're spending more time together drawing.

4. Did the ASQ provide parents with the opportunity to learn about activities that supported their children's development at home?

The clear majority of parents (80.95%; 51/63) stated that the ASQ "check up" and the information offered to them at the time of the check up (pamphlets; handouts), gave them ideas, suggestions, and activities to further support their children's development at home. Parents appeared committed to practicing these activities with their children—and they incorporated them into "play time." Two major developmental areas were addressed by these at-home activities; language and communication development, and; motor and fine motor skill development.

- (i). Language and communication development.

It helped me to learn how to teach her to pronounce words, and how to speak sooner.

Definitely, such as being repetitive with different words; using different methods to teach him words, just to raise communication between me and my son.

Yes, it gave me certain things to practice at home. For example, one of the last questions was asking your child about two words simultaneously that are not related. Now, I've been probing my son to speak in sentences, to use more than one word to describe something, and to use two unrelated words.

I learned different speech games to encourage my son to talk. We now practice those together.

- (ii). Motor and fine motor skill development.

Absolutely! One example of a developmental check I learned was to test for putting items in a bottle to see if my son would turn them upside down to get them out. We had never spent time before using all the little things to be aware of. Another example is pouring sand from bucket to bucket. I guess it just changes the way we play now—it moves the focus onto developmental growth.

Yes, I learned things that weren't in the Head Start Program such as activities I could do to strengthen motor and fine motor skills. For example, breaking crayons or beading. I did those and they worked really well.

With my first child, I didn't realize he struggled with fine motor skills and couldn't use scissors. It never occurred to me to let him use them, but then I got him a child's pair to work on his skills. It was a huge eye opener! I never considered it before.

For sure, we do a lot more activities that help her with motor skills like inserting coins into slots and stacking blocks.

- (iii). Development of comprehension and listening skills.

Yes, I learned activities to help her listening skills—like left-right directing.

Parents commented on the pamphlets and information sheets offered to them at the time of the developmental check-up. These were particularly helpful to them and their children.

There were lots of pamphlets on activities that we could do.

They gave us a little booklet that offered me tons of ideas from things like playing outside to recipes to make our own play-dough.

There was a page of guidelines of things to do—which I kept.

5. What advice would parents offer to other parents who might be hesitant to complete a child developmental check-up?

With only a couple of exceptions, parents were overwhelmingly positive in encouraging other parents to have their children undergo developmental check-

ups. It was clear they saw the value of early assessment and intervention for their own children—and other children in their communities.

Go through with it; it helps. Especially with the first child. Do it if you are not sure how they should be developing.

It's better than ignorance to be able to know the skills of that age group. It helps rather than hinders.

No parent should be hesitant. All children develop naturally at different paces. It's nice to know the spectrum and where your child falls on it. For example, I now know that my son is slightly behind in communication, but is ahead in his motor coordination skills.

Parents felt empowered that they could “do something” to support their children’s growth and development.

It's a great opportunity to see strengths and weaknesses and catch it when they are really little, because sometimes it can slip by when they're older. It's definitely helpful.

I think a lot of parents are scared of what the results may be, but it's better to know if your child is behind or delayed so that you can help them.

This way it might be helpful to find out if they're behind and the different resources you can use to aid them.

It helps everyone's learning and helps you find ways to give good care. It didn't tell you what you were doing or not doing; it just helped you find ways to augment your child's development.

It's a nice way for you to learn activities to do with your child and it together. It gives you ideas and tools to assist their development.

Some parents did approach the ASQ and child developmental check-ups with a sense of caution. They spoke to the limitations of the ASQ tool and its “findings.” These parents also framed the ASQ as a guideline to the growth and development of children.

Take it with a grain of salt. It's a good tool to evaluate what needs to be worked on, but I don't think these developmental stages should be set in stone. I don't think parents who take it should be discouraged if their kids aren't bang on, because everyone takes their own time. Especially premature babies like mine; sometimes it takes a few steps forward and a few steps back.

Don't be worried about it [completing the ASQ]. It's just a guideline on where most children are, but there's no need to be concerned if your child's not perfect in a certain area.

6. Did parents learn anything new about community resources as a consequence of completing the ASQ?

Most parents (71.43%; 45/63) reported that they did not learn anything new about community resources as a consequence of completing the ASQ. Parents mentioned the following resources as “new” to them:

- Family Centre (x5)
- Stay and Play (x3)
- Speech language pathologist (x3)
- Library (x2)
- Occupational therapist (x2)
- Children's Community Assessment, Rehabilitation and Evaluation (C.A.R.E.) Services (Provincial Building)
- Mom's and Tots
- Pre-school programs (name not identified)

One parent observed that obtaining an outline or roster of community-based resources would have been helpful.

I think it would be helpful to get an outline of more of the community resources—like give a list of phone numbers to use. I didn't see any, so if they did include it, then I think they should make it more prominent.

7. What other information did parents want to share regarding their experiences with the ASQ?

Overall, parents were pleased with the administration of the ASQ. However, some parents identified strengths and limitations associated with: the substantive nature of the ASQ, including particular questions or items; the setting in which the ASQ was conducted, and; the need to learn of the ASQ outcome.

- (i). Strengths and limitations of the substantive nature of the ASQ and its questions.

Parents felt that the ASQ enabled them to be “better” parents by refocusing their attention to developmental areas that would benefit their children.

It was good because it gave me an idea of the areas I needed to work harder on. For example, my son had a very high physical score; he can do a lot of things that are past his age. But he had a lower speech score. It helped me to see where there was more focus needed. It made me rethink his schedule. The speech part was the reason why we took him in 12 months ago.

It's a real positive experience, and I'm going to continue to do the questionnaires with my kids in the future. I'm glad the program is out there and someone created it. It's great to be aware of the issues facing our kids and then being able to get help.

One parent was concerned about image of an armless and legless “man” and its emotional impact on the children. Children are supposed to identify the image as a person.

One of the tests, I think for pre-schoolers shows a man missing his arms and his legs and the kids are supposed to identify it as a person. I think they can identify it, but it's really disturbing for the kids. A lot of comments from teachers and educators mentioned the same thing. I think it should be revised.

- (ii) Strengths and limitations associated with the “setting” in which the ASQ was conducted.

One parent commented on the chaotic setting in which the ASQ was administered. The chaos negatively impacted her son.

The last Ages and Stages Questionnaire I completed was at the Family Hub (rural). I found it to be really chaotic; there were at least six kids participating in each activity. For my older son who has a sensory problem, this was really overwhelming and it made it hard to complete activities that I know he can do. My younger son was OK with it, but I think they need to offer options to perform the activities at a different time in smaller groups, or even one-on-one.

Several parents commented that the administration of the ASQ was rushed.

Have more time for the appointment!

Very busy; didn't have enough time to answer the questions.

A bit rushed—but the questions were easy and the pictures were helpful.

Obtaining a hard copy of the ASQ to take home (as a guide to child development) would enable parents to better answer the ASQ questions.

I think it would be a good idea for them to give you one [ASQ Questionnaire] at your first year immunization that you can take home. The next immunization is only six months later, so then you have it at home to refer to and you can go through it on your own—because I found it was rushed at the clinic. It would also be nice just to have an extra copy at home in a booklet form that you can put on your fridge to refer to. The little pamphlet was good, but not the same as the questionnaire.

(iii). Learning of the “outcome” of the ASQ.

Some parents were unsure of the outcome of the ASQ and would have appreciated receiving information in this regard.

It would be neat to see more of the outcome. The questionnaires always say that you'll learn about the outcome, but I've never seen anything in the community newsletters or newspapers, and I think it would be good to see the general results.

As far as the process goes, it was good to see that my son is becoming stronger in certain areas. In regards to the outcome, we still haven't really had any answers. So, I'm still confused.

Conclusion

The clear majority of parents (80.95%; 51/63) indicated the ASQ was a positive experience. Parents valued knowing that their children were developing within the normal range of expected milestones. The ASQ provided reassurance that all was “well” with their children. Most parents (74.6%; 47/63) reported that the ASQ helped them to learn more about their children’s development. In particular, parents learned about the following: developmental milestones or benchmarks; and, children’s abilities to complete certain activities or tasks. The clear majority of parents (80.95%; 51/63) observed that the ASQ check-up gave them ideas, suggestions, and activities to further support their children’s development at home. These activities addressed: language and communication development; motor and fine motor skill development, and; development of comprehension and listening skills.

A minority of parents spoke negatively about their ASQ experience (17.46%; 11/63). Their concerns included: the person administering the ASQ did not listen to them [parents]; it was difficult to answer some of the questions and having the questions in advance would have been helpful to the parents; the ASQ was not really optional; and there was a real burden associated with completing the ASQ (i.e., managing the other children without assistance, trying to focus on the child’s immunization while having to concurrently complete the ASQ, and not having the ASQ available on-line). A few parents did approach the ASQ child developmental check-ups with caution. These parents also framed the ASQ as simply a guide to the growth and development of

children. Sometimes the setting in which the ASQ was conducted was “chaotic” and the appointments were rushed. Some parents identified that obtaining ASQ results would be helpful to them.

While most parents (71.43%; 45/63) indicated that they did not learn anything new about available community resources as a consequence of completing the ASQ, they felt that the ASQ enabled them to be better parents by refocusing their attention to developmental areas that would benefit their children. Parents who were interviewed overwhelmingly endorsed the ASQ to other parents who might be hesitant about the screening tool.