

## Autism

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as a year and a half earlier than black and other minority children, says University of Pennsylvania autism expert David Mandell, who led much of that work. Socioeconomics can play a role, if minority families have less access to health care or less education.

But Mandell says the full story is more

months behind the white autistic kids, Landa reported in the Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders.

It was a small study, with 84 participants, just 19 of whom were black, Asian or Hispanic. But the enrolled families all were middle class, Landa said, meaning socioeconomics couldn't explain the difference.

One of the study's participants, Marlo Lemon, ignored family and friends who told her not to worry that her son Matthew, then 14 months, wasn't babbling. Boys are slower to talk than girls, they said.

"I just knew something was wrong," recalls Lemon.

Her pediatrician listened and knew to send the family to a gov-

ernment "early intervention" program that, like in most states, provides free testing and treatment for young children's developmental delays. Matthew was enrolled in developmental therapy by age 18 months, and was formally diagnosed with autism when

he turned 2 and Lemon enrolled him in Kennedy Krieger's toddler program as well. In many of his therapy classes, Lemon says, Matthew was the only African-American.

Now 7, Matthew still doesn't speak but Lemon says he is making huge strides, learning letters by tracing them in shaving cream to tap his sensory side, for example, and using a computer-like tablet that "speaks" when he pushes the right buttons. But Lemon quit working full-time so she could shuttle Matthew from therapy to therapy every day.

"I want other minority families to get

Cultural differences in how parents view developmental milestones, and how they interact with doctors, may play a role

complex. One of his own studies, for example, found that black children with autism were more likely than whites to get the wrong diagnosis during their first visit with a specialist.

At Kennedy Krieger, Landa leads a well-

'I want other minority families to get involved early, be relentless'  
— Marlo Lemon, mom of an autistic child

known toddler treatment program and decided to look more closely at those youngsters to begin examining the racial and ethnic disparity. She found something startling: Even when autism was detected early, minority children had more severe symptoms than their white counterparts.

By one measure of language development, the minority patients lagged four

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tle & King County.

In a letter, the Chief of the Special Litigation Section in the DOJ's Civil Rights Division, Jonathan M. Smith, said he was "pleased to report that the County has now fulfilled all outstanding obligations under the MOA," and that accordingly, "the Department of Justice now considers this matter closed."

Under the terms of the MOA, independent monitors selected jointly by the Department of Justice and King County visited the jail every four months. At each visit during three-year monitoring period, they noted the County made steady progress, culminating with a grade of 100 percent in meeting the standards set forth in the MOA in the areas of protection from harm, suicide prevention, medical care, environmental health, and quality improvement.

Among the reforms and improvements to services provided by the jail that King County made or more fully implemented

during the three-year monitoring period were:

- Updating the jail's use of force policies, and extensive internal review of use-of-force incidents and how they are reported,
- Discontinued use of the "hair hold" as a

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- routine use-of-force defensive tactic,
- Annual training for officers in defensive tactics, and annual training for all jail and jail health staff in suicide prevention,
- More frequent and standardized clinical assessments of inmates deemed current-

ly or recently at risk for suicide,

- Replacement of plumbing and fixtures with more suicide-resistant models,
- Replacement of over 3500 mattresses to improve infection control,
- Updates to jail health clinical guidelines, and

- Implementation of the quality improvement program in the Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention.
- Federal monitors in their final report has specific praise for the jail improvements. Among the findings:

- Performance in all of the categories under

review was rated as "Exemplary."

- The County's program for improving clinical performance was said to be the best that particular monitor had ever observed.
- Jail Health's quality improvement program was described as one of the most comprehensive in the country.
- A good working relationship and effective communication were observed between Adult Detention and Public Health staff.

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The DOJ monitors concluded that they are "confident the same attributes possessed by both the King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention and Jail Health Services that resulted in the successful completion of this agreement will propel both agencies to sustained exemplary practices" in the areas they examined.

## Orphans' Choir



PHOTO BY SUSAN FRIED

A member of the Ugandan Orphans Choir invites members of the audience to dance with her Saturday, Feb. 25 at the Northwest African American Museum. The Ugandan Orphans Choir brings a message of hope to American audiences through the traditional rhythmic dances and songs of Africa.

involved early, be relentless," says Lemon, who now works part-time counseling families about how to find services early.

For a campaign called "Why wait and see?" Landa is developing videos that show typical and atypical behaviors and plans to ask Maryland pediatricians to show them to parents. Among early warning signs:

— Not responding to their name by 12 months, or pointing to show interest by 14 months.

— Avoiding eye contact, wanting to play

alone, not smiling when smiled at.

— Saying few words. Landa says between 18 and 26 months, kids should make short phrases like "my shoe" or "where's mommy," and should be adding to their vocabulary weekly.

— Not following simple multi-step commands.

— Not playing pretend.

— Behavioral problems such as flapping their hands or spinning in circles.

## Metro

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across the board last year in King County with bus, rail and water taxi ridership up a combined 3.7 percent compared to 2010.

Service expansion is also helping to boost ridership. Additional transit service across the SR 520 Bridge in late 2010 and early 2011 resulted in a 15 percent ridership increase. Preliminary data indicates transit ridership is up another 10 percent just since tolling began.

And RapidRide continues to be popular with riders. Metro estimates ridership on the A Line between Federal Way and Tukwila

Ridership on the A Line between Federal Way and Tukwila has grown about 40 percent since it was launched in Oct. 2010

has grown about 40 percent since it was launched in Oct. 2010. It's estimated the B Line, serving Bellevue and Redmond, saw a 10 percent jump in ridership during the first three months of operation.

The arrival of the C and D lines serving

West Seattle, Ballard and downtown Seattle will likely have similar success in attracting riders with their all-day frequent service and other amenities. Those lines will begin operating this fall.

Commuters also teamed up to use alterna-

tive transit options in 2011. There were more than 1,200 Metro commuter vans on the roads last year — an increase of 14 percent. In all, more than 3 million commuters left their cars at home and shared a ride to work, which helped keep congestion in check.

And finally, use of transit park-and-rides was again on the rise in 2011 with demand strongest among east King County commuters. More than half of all permanent park-and-ride lots in the county are now running at least 80 percent full.