



# RTW PROJECT UPDATE MAY 2024

RTW is a federally funded research study that will provide autism evaluations to over 1,000 children enrolled in the Illinois Early Intervention (EI) program.

**The problem:** Long waitlists for autism evaluations for children enrolled in EI

**Our goal:** To find new and quicker ways to diagnose autism in young children. We want to make the autism diagnostic process efficient, accurate, and supportive for families of children enrolled in EI.

**Our approach:** Increase the number of people qualified to provide an autism diagnosis (for example, early intervention clinicians, like speech and developmental therapists).

This quarterly report provides an update on our progress.

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Primary Investigator  
The Reduce The Wait Project



Northwestern University



early intervention research group



**RTW IN THE NEWS:** Dr. Megan Roberts, staff member Alana Glickman, and a family who completed RTW made an appearance on Chicago's PBS station in a story on autism diagnosis produced by Northwestern students.

# 86% DIAGNOSTIC AGREEMENT

EI providers (SLPs & DTs) complete 20-hours of autism diagnostic training. Their diagnosis for each family is then compared to the expert research team (clinical psychologist, SLP, & DT) with years of autism diagnostic experience. We see that EI providers are in agreement with the expert team 86% of the time.

## RTW PROVIDERS

PROVIDER FEEDBACK

98%

Agree that the RTW approach is a good way to diagnose autism

98%

Agree that the RTW assessments are effective for diagnosing autism

100%

Agree that the use of these assessments is consistent with the Illinois EI mission

Providers to date were **97% Female**, **17% Black**, **8% Asian**, and **15% Latinx**.

**65%** of providers had **no previous experience with autism screening tools**.

AVERAGE YEARS WORKING IN EI

14

AVERAGE EI CASELOAD SIZE

14

## RTW FAMILIES

### CAREGIVER FEEDBACK

**99%** would recommend participating in RTW to a friend in need of similar help.

**97%** agree with the diagnosis that was given for their child.

**96%** felt comfortable talking with the RTW EI providers.

**77%** would be willing to use telehealth to complete a diagnostic assessment even if in-person assessments were available, based on the RTW experience.

**88%** OF CFCs PARTICIPATING

**336** TOTAL CHILDREN EVALUATED

### WHAT RTW CAREGIVERS ARE SAYING...

*"I loved that the time frames were very convenient for us. My husband and I both work 8-5 in the home, so it was convenient that we did not have to take off of work."*

*"I would recommend the RTW program to any parent suspecting autism. I like how the assessment was done at home while watching the child in their own environment where they can be themselves."*

## AVERAGE EVALUATION WAIT TIMES

NON-RTW EVALUATIONS

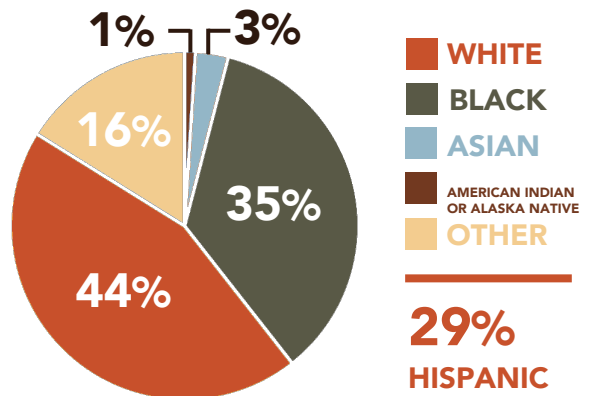
**16**  
MONTHS

FOR RTW APPOINTMENTS

**1**  
MONTH

### FAMILIES AT A GLANCE

To date, RTW children are **30% Female**. Ages range from **16 to 37 months old**.



**51% of RTW families receive government assistance.**

### PARTICIPATE IN RTW

RTW is actively recruiting providers and families! For more information:

**Families: Text Enroll to 847-750-3440**

**Providers: Text Change to 847-750-3440**

[ei.northwestern.edu/rtw](http://ei.northwestern.edu/rtw)