

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Act Review Engagement

Project Overview

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) was implemented in Manitoba in 2016. Discovering a baby's hearing loss soon after birth gives families, and their health care professionals, time to decide on the best way to help these children learn language, so they can avoid delays or difficulties in communication, school and social development.

In order to identify hearing loss, under the UNHS program, health professionals specializing in newborn hearing tests perform screening on infants. This screening is fast and safe.

The UNHS Act was implemented along with the launch of the UNHS program to ensure that all Manitoba parents/legal guardians of Manitoba newborns be offered hearing screening for their newborns.

The UNHS Act requires a legislative review with public engagement to be conducted every 5 years. The purpose of the project was to conduct public and stakeholder engagements to assist government in assessing whether changes to the Act are wanted or needed. The Act would be determined to be functioning as intended as long as the services were being offered to newborns in Manitoba according to the Act.

Engagement Overview

In order to undertake the review of the Act, Manitoba launched two surveys.

The first survey was developed to reach parents or legal guardians of infants born on or after September 1, 2016 to get feedback about their experiences with being offered and accessing screening for their infants.

The second survey was developed to provide a forum for clinicians, including midwives, nurses, audiologists, doctors and other pediatric care providers, to express concerns regarding programmatic functions relative to the Act.

Both surveys were launched at the end of November 2021 and were live until January 14, 2022.

In addition to the feedback we received from the surveys, the government will be reviewing the Act itself and seeking input directly from audiologists, hearing screeners, audiology assistants and clinicians in related fields to provide feedback on whether the information we have gained

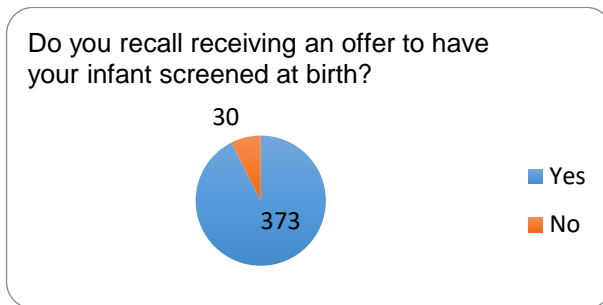
warrants alterations to the Act or would be more appropriately used to guide the program going forward.

What We Heard

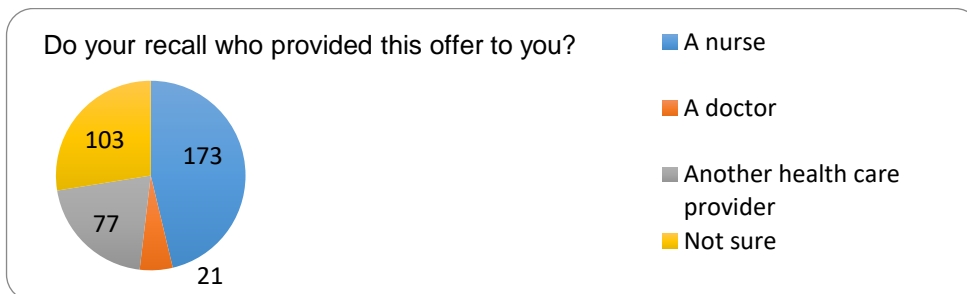
1. Public/Parent/Guardian Survey

The questions that we asked parents and guardians centred around their experiences with being offered newborn hearing screening, as well as their experiences with receiving those services if they accepted the offer for screening.

- A total of 435 parents / guardians of newborns born on or after September 1, 2016 responded to the public survey.
- 92.5% of respondents recalled receiving an offer of newborn hearing screening at birth.

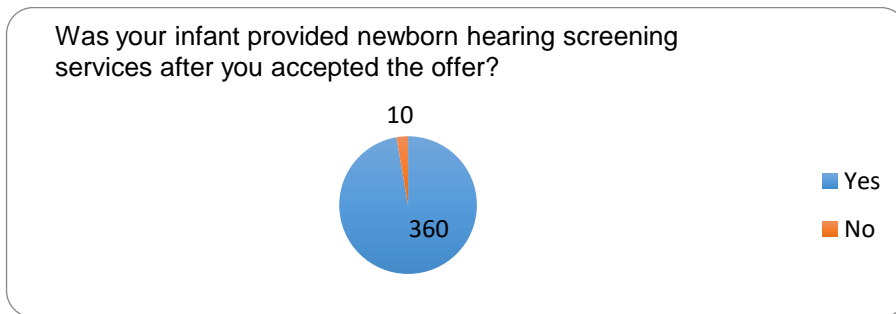


- 46% of offers were provided by nurses, 5.6% were offered by a doctor, 20.6% were provided by another health care provider such as an audiologist or midwife, and 27.6% were not sure who provided them with an offer for screening.



- 98.9% of respondents accepted the offer of newborn hearing screening at birth. Those who did not accept screening, cited that they didn't feel it was necessary, that they could observe that their infant was able to hear, that services were too far away or cited concerns related to COVID-19.

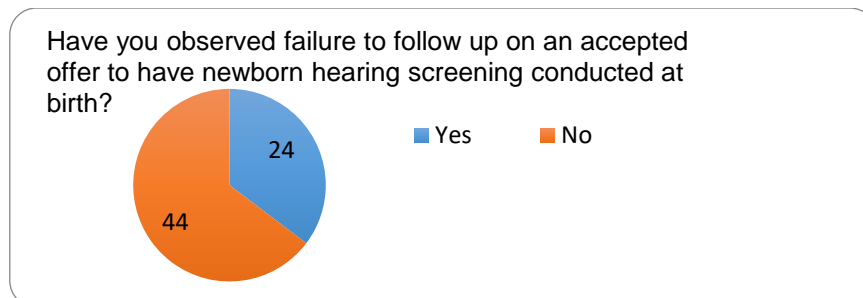
- Of the respondents who accepted the offer, 97.3% received screening, and 2.7% did not receive screening, which constituted under five respondents, who chose to decline screening after initially accepting.



2. Health Care Provider Survey

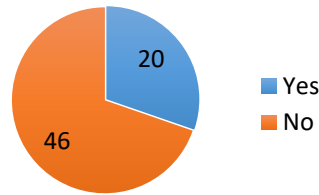
The questions that we asked health care providers were centred around challenges among clinicians in making offers for and providing screening to families, and whether they were enabled to adhere to the UNHS Act in their daily work related to making offers for screening and providing screening.

- A total of 65 health care providers who participate in obstetric, infant or pediatric care, or deliver offers of screening or provide screening completed the health care provider survey.
- When asked whether they had observed any failure to follow up on an accepted offer for hearing screening, either at birth, or within one month of the offer, 35.3% of health care providers responded yes.



- The reasons for this failure provided by health care providers included patients not attending screening appointments, parents changing their mind, impacts of the pandemic on ability to travel, and challenges around rural access. Health care providers did not identify any clinician-driven failure to follow up.
- When asked whether they had observed or experienced any challenges in delivering services that resulted in a lack of adherence to the UNHS Act, 30.3% of health care providers responded yes.

Have you observed or experienced challenges in delivering UNHS services to patient populations which has resulted in a lack of adherence to the Act?



- When identifying challenges, many health care providers cited pandemic protocols hindering access to infants by clinicians, and many again cited remoteness and geographical barriers as a challenge.
- Specifically service in the northern health region of Manitoba was cited as a concern; with limited staff coverage and fewer operating hours, patients in this community had greater challenges to access.

Next Steps

Our government appreciates the time that parents/guardians and clinicians took to complete these surveys. Your input is integral to us being able to plan the health care system and ensure it is serving Manitoba families.

The results of these two surveys will inform the review of the UNHS Act that Manitoba is now undertaking in response to the legislative requirement that the Act must be reviewed every five years. A review of the Act to determine if any changes should be made will occur, and will inform a report to be tabled in the Legislature by the Minister of Health.

The results of the surveys will also be shared with UNHS program leadership, for their awareness, to enable improvements to occur where the need has been identified.

It should be noted that our government feels that Universal Newborn Hearing Screening is an important program for Manitoba families, and the feedback received from this engagement will be used to identify any areas where the Act may be strengthened, and that any information around the program delivery received through this engagement will be provided to the program as a basis for improvement.

Active Offer Statement

This information is available in an alternate format on request. Please contact policy.standards@gov.mb.ca

Questions?

Please contact:
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