School Medical Autism Review Team (SMART)  
A Virtual Interdisciplinary Process for Autism Assessment in Washington State

The Need 
- Early identification of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is essential to ensure that children can access specialized, evidence-based interventions that can help optimize long-term outcomes. 
- Early identification is critical to ensure that children have access to timely intervention services to children with autism and related developmental disabilities.

The SMART Solution 
School Medical Autism Review Team (SMART) is a:
- Process where primary care providers, schools, Early Intervention agencies, and families come together and share records in order to facilitate a virtual, comprehensive assessment of a child.
- Process that provides a close link between a child’s primary care provider (PCP) and school team, who sees the child on a daily basis.
- Model that builds community capacity in rural and underserved communities who don’t have access to a local multidisciplinary diagnostic center.
- Mechanism that allows children to qualify for ABA therapy that is covered by Medicaid.

This process reaches families who would be unable to get access to a timely assessment for autism and connected to services because of:
- Distance to available diagnostic centers
- Lack of transportation
- Language barriers

The SMART tool
Using a shared document, the SMART tool, families are able to collect records of evaluations from their school, Early Intervention agency, local providers, and pediatrician to inform an interdisciplinary diagnosis of autism.

The SMART tool is available in English and Spanish and is a fillable online form.

Care Coordination for the SMART Process
Four communities in Washington State are using the School Medical Autism Review Team (SMART) process to provide a comprehensive assessment for ASD for children in their local community.

Families are tasked with collecting all of the records from the primary care providers, the school, and other places where they receive services. The success of SMART is dependent on the ability of families to gather all of these records. This is often a barrier for families to get a timely evaluation. The mitigate this problem, communities have supported a care coordination locally to support families in understanding the SMART process and collecting the necessary records. These local coordinators are registered nurses or community health workers.

The Need
- Not enough time for care coordination.
- Lack of needed specialty providers and services for families.
- Getting accurate and timely information needed from families and community provider partners.

Results
- The SMART process has strengthened community collaborations and partnerships.
- Most referrals come from primary care providers with a smaller number coming from parents/legal guardians and schools.
- Funding for the local coordinators comes from a variety of sources ranging from in-kind (island) to multiple federal and community level funding sources (Whatcom).
- Whatcom County's CAM community has a much higher number of referrals, evaluations, and other indicators compared to the other three CAM communities. This is because they have a full-time care coordinator (37.5 hours/week), while the other communities each have 5 or fewer hours/week available for care coordination.

Next Steps
- Plans are underway to pilot the SMART process in Chelan-Douglas Counties using HIPAA compliant ZOOM video conferencing to support virtual meetings.
- This will support the SMART team in doing community assessments via telemedicine.