

Developmental Screenings Guidebook

Contents	Page
Introduction	2
Healthy Development	2
STEP 1: Learn About Important Developmental Milestones	2
Step 2: Utilize Information About Developmental Milestones During Daily Routines and Activities	5
Monitoring Development and Developmental Screenings	5
Step 1: Program Staff Should Be knowledgeable About Their Role in Monitoring Children’s Development	5
Step 2: Program Staff Should Be Knowledgeable About Developmental Screenings	6
How to Talk With Families About A Child’s Developmental Progress and Their Areas of Need	7
Step 1: Programs Should Develop Strategies for Communicating Children’s Developmental Progress With Families on a Routine Basis	8
Step 2: Programs Should Develop Strategies for Communicating Concerns About a Child’s Development	9
Where to Go for Help When There are Concerns About a Child’s Development	10
Step 1: Programs are Knowledgeable About Steps to Take When There are Concerns About a Child’s Development	10
Step 2: Programs are Knowledgeable About Resources Available to Families	11

Introduction

This Developmental Screenings Guidebook is designed as a simple reference guide on how to best support growth and development of children in your care and as a resource for working with their families.

This guidebook will provide practitioners with detailed information and access to resources for families, center directors, and teachers related to:

- Healthy development;
- Monitoring Development and Developmental Screening;
- How to talk with families about a child’s developmental progress and their areas of need; and
- Where to go for help when there are concerns about a child’s development.

All children are different and grow/mature at varying rates. This resource is designed as a “guide” with simple steps to help providers and families make the important decisions on how to help children grow and develop and achieve the fundamental building blocks preparing them for entry into kindergarten.

Healthy Development

Healthy development in children is supported when children are exposed to opportunities and experiences where their physical, social/emotional and educational needs are met. In young children, there is a wide range of normally developing behaviors or skills known as developmental “milestones”. These milestones include such things as a baby’s first smile, rolling over, crawling, taking first steps, learning to talk and waving “bye-bye”. These milestones serve as markers for when parents and caregivers should expect certain behaviors or skills to emerge. Although development proceeds in a predictable sequence, there are many factors that may influence when a child reaches these milestones. health and nutrition, early experiences with adults, exposure to enriching learning experiences and environmental factors such as unstable housing, parental stress and other adverse events can all have a positive or negative influence on a child’s developmental progress.

STEP 1: LEARN ABOUT IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

Programs should ensure that all staff understand the critical milestones that children achieve at the various age levels. [Louisiana’s Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards](#) (ELDS) provide a continuum of these developmental milestones for each age level. The standards support children’s readiness for kindergarten and are designed to be used as a daily reference and resource for those responsible for the care and education of our youngest learners as well as for their families. They are intended to help early childhood professionals and families deepen their understanding of how children develop, how to respond to their readiness for new interactions and experiences, activities and challenges, and how to support their growth and development at this critical stage of life.

The ELDS contain user-friendly resources (e.g. Appendix C: The Importance of Engaging Families and Appendix F: Strategies to Support Children with Disabilities and English Language Learners) designed to support children’s

achievement of the important developmental milestones. Program staff can also take advantage of several training courses on the ELDS including: [Louisiana's Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards](#) and [FOUNDATIONS-CONNECT-Standards, Instruction and Assessment](#).

Armed with this knowledge, caregivers can be prepared to monitor children's growth and learning and recognize when development may not be progressing as expected. In addition to the ELDS, there are numerous resources available to programs free of charge that highlight those milestones. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) through its [Learn the Signs, Act Early](#) initiative provides access to [Developmental Milestones](#) flyers that spotlight what skills children should reach by the age of five. These free-of-charge resources are available for ages of children at 2, 4, 6, 9 and 18 months as well as 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5 years of age. The Milestones resources (along with many other user-friendly resources) can be ordered from the CDC website by logging onto: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>) or they can be downloaded and printed as needed. They are available in English and Spanish and are customizable so that providers can embed their contact information. A sample of the Developmental Milestones for 2-month-olds follows:

Your Baby at 2 Months



_____ **Child's Name** _____ **Child's Age** _____ **Today's Date**

How your child plays, learns, speaks, and acts offers important clues about your child's development. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age.

Check the milestones your child has reached by the end of 2 months. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

What Most Babies Do at this Age:

Social/Emotional

- Begins to smile at people
- Can briefly calm himself (may bring hands to mouth and suck on hand)
- Tries to look at parent

Language/Communication

- Coos, makes gurgling sounds
- Turns head toward sounds

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Pays attention to faces
- Begins to follow things with eyes and recognize people at a distance
- Begins to act bored (cries, fussy) if activity doesn't change

Movement/Physical Development

- Can hold head up and begins to push up when lying on tummy
- Makes smoother movements with arms and legs

Act Early by Talking to Your Child's Doctor if Your Child:

- Doesn't respond to loud sounds
- Doesn't watch things as they move
- Doesn't smile at people
- Doesn't bring hands to mouth
- Can't hold head up when pushing up when on tummy

Tell your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for this age, and talk with someone in your community who is familiar with services for young children in your area, such as your state's public early intervention program. For more information, go to www.cdc.gov/concerned or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

Adapted from CARING FOR YOUR BABY AND YOUNG CHILD: BIRTH TO AGE 5, Fifth Edition, edited by Steven Shelov and Tanya Remer Altmann © 1991, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2009 by the American Academy of Pediatrics and BRIGHT FUTURES: GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH SUPERVISION OF INFANTS, CHILDREN, AND ADOLESCENTS, Third Edition, edited by Joseph Hagan, Jr., Judith S. Shaw, and Paula M. Duncan, 2008, Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics. This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool.

www.cdc.gov/actearly | 1-800-CDC-INFO



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

The Public Broadcasting System [ABC's of Child Development: Developmental Milestones for Your Child's First Five Years](#) are additional resources that are downloadable free of charge to providers and families.

STEP 2: UTILIZE INFORMATION ON DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES IN PLANNING FOR DAILY ROUTINES AND ACTIVITIES

When teachers and caregivers understand the expectations, or the standards, for development, they can use that information in planning for routines and activities. A high-quality curriculum aligned to the state's [Early Learning and Development Standards is an essential resource for supporting teachers in planning lessons designed to help children meet the state's Early Learning and Development Standards and enable them to modify instruction, activities and experiences to meet the varying needs of every child.](#) By understanding these expectations, caregivers can make decisions about planned activities based on whether:

- An activity is appropriate for each of the children (for example, would the activity be too difficult or too easy);
- The activity or experience can be adjusted (to higher or lower levels) so that children can participate at their own pace and level of development; and
- The activities support children to move to the next levels of development.

Monitoring Development and Developmental Screenings

All children in Louisiana should receive periodic, developmentally appropriate, and comprehensive screenings:

- a. As part of well-child or preventive visits to their pediatrician;
- b. In response to parental concerns; or
- c. A triggering event such as hospitalization, trauma, or sudden onset of new symptoms.

These comprehensive screenings include screening for physical health, oral health, mental health, and developmental and psychosocial needs. These in addition to ongoing assessment, for example using *GOLD*[®] or another assessment aligned with a high-quality curriculum provide important information to caregivers and families on children's developmental progress.

STEP 1: PROGRAM STAFF SHOULD BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT THEIR ROLE IN MONITORING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Effective monitoring of a child's development is accomplished through a combined and collaborative partnership involving families, the child's health professionals, teachers and others who provide care, education and other services. Teachers and caregivers should be aware of the periodic screenings that children should undergo. The majority of the screenings will take place when a child goes to the family pediatrician or health care provider for routine well-child visits. These visits are a time for discussions about any concerns and to make decisions about follow-up through developmental screening. The following table outlines various types of monitoring screenings and the periods in a young child's life in which they should occur:

Type of Screening	Ages															
	Birth	1 WK	1 MO	2 MO	4 MO	6 MO	9 MO	12 MO	15 MO	18 MO	24 MO	30 MO	3 YR	4 YR	5 YR	
Developmental Screening							X			X		X				
Autism-specific screening										X	X					
Vision screening	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Visual acuity using an age-appropriate visual acuity measurements														X	X	X
Hearing screening at birth or within 1 month	X		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Hearing screening using audiometry															X	X
Oral health screening							X	X		X	X	X	X	X		

Though not a screening tool, teachers can monitor children’s development as they conduct assessments of children using *GOLD*® or an assessment embedded within a quality curriculum. These tools are beneficial in helping teachers identify learning and developmental lags and gaps in order to provide appropriate interventions and to make decisions on whether or not a child may be in need of additional evaluation.

STEP 2: PROGRAM STAFF SHOULD BE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENINGS

In addition to other screenings such as those for vision and hearing, caregivers should also be knowledgeable about Developmental Screenings and the periods at which those should occur. Screening tools, such as the [Ages and Stages Questionnaires](#) are often used to detect delays in development and are typically conducted by the family pediatrician or health care provider, school nurse or audiologist. . Although not a screening tool, the *GOLD*® assessment information teachers collect can be beneficial in alerting a caregiver or family about a concern in development.

Developmental Screenings are:

- A short test to tell if a child's learning and development is on track or if there appears to be some delay and the child may benefit from additional evaluation and help;
- Conducted through a research-based questionnaire regarding children's development including language, motor, cognitive, social and emotional development;
- Recommended for all young children and may be administered by a doctor, teacher, child care provider, home visitor or other professional in any type of setting; and
- May help indicate whether a child needs a closer look by a trained specialist.

Results of Developmental Screenings can be used to help teachers plan how to best support children's development by understanding a child's strengths and challenges. Those results can also inform those closest to the child as to whether or not there is a need for additional evaluation and/or services necessary to support that child's optimal growth and development.

The [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) recommends that all children receive a developmental screening for developmental delays and disabilities during regular well-child doctor visits at the following intervals:

- 9 months
- 18 months
- 24 or 30 months
- Although these represent specific ages, screening should be done at any age if a concern about a child's development arises.

How do developmental screenings differ from other assessments?

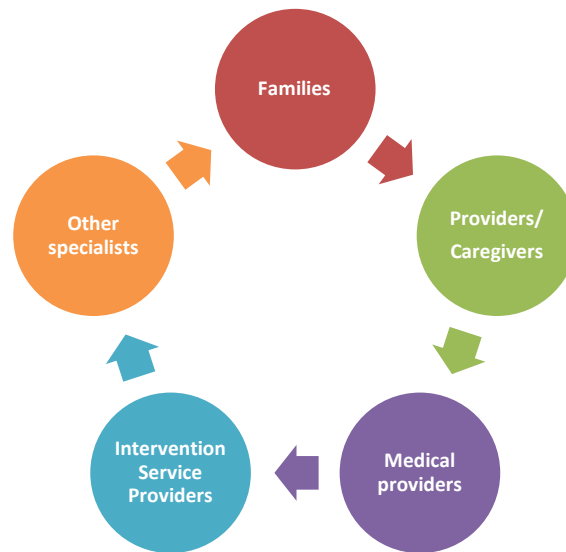
Developmental screening: is a process to quickly identify a child's progress in meeting early childhood developmental milestones. The results of the screening do not confirm a developmental delay or allow for diagnosis, but may indicate a deviation from the expected norms of typical development.

Assessment: is usually a more in-depth process to determine if a child or groups of children are meeting specified outcomes/goals. Assessment, such as *GOLD*[®], typically occurs over time within the child's natural environment or setting and may most typically be done by a child's teacher or caregiver; assessment results can be helpful in determining whether a child may need a referral for further diagnostic evaluation.

Diagnostic Evaluation: is more complex than a screening and is aimed at identifying or describing specific disorders or delays and, locating a cause. The evaluation must be administered by a qualified professional.

How to Talk with Families About a Child's Developmental Progress and Their Areas of Need

Children's development is best supported when adults who care for them work as a team. It is important that lines of communication among all members of the team are open and on-going in order to share information on how a child is progressing whether or not there are concerns and how those concerns should be addressed



STEP 1: PROGRAMS SHOULD DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENTAL PROGRESS WITH FAMILIES ON A ROUTINE BASIS

Children benefit when programs are committed to partnering with families to support a child's development and when they have systematic and routine opportunities for communicating information about that development.

Steps for creating such a communication system might include:

1. Incorporating opportunities for discussions about children's development into the program's policies and procedures through activities such as:
 - a. During the initial interview with families, prior to entry into a program, let them know that the center is committed to supporting children's development and to partnering with them to ensure that children receive all of the necessary supports and services that allow them to thrive and grow; let them know that the program is committed to informing them when their child's development is on track and also when there might be concerns.
 - b. Develop a schedule of routine opportunities to share children's developmental progress (for example: regular conferences, family nights, etc.); let families know that as part of the commitment to children that if there are concerns, the program will schedule additional times to discuss a child's progress and growth
 - c. Routinely share activities that can support children's learning and development such as those family engagement activities in the *GOLD*[®] system.
 - d. Include information on developmental milestones, important screenings and screening dates in the program's Parent Handbook or Guide.

- e. When families are scheduled to take a child to their pediatrician or other health provider, remind them to ask their provider about screenings their child may need; ask them if they would be willing to share information on any concerns or findings that their providers indicate so that the program can provide the highest level of support for the child's continued development.
 - f. Suggest activities that can help families support their child's development such as [Positive Parenting Tips](#), [Daily Vroom](#) (with free downloadable app).
2. Communicating to staff the importance of understanding children's development and ensuring they understand important developmental milestones for the age group that they are working with.
 - a. Offer training on developmental milestones or on the state's [Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards](#), through the Child Care Resource & Referral Agency or through free online modules such as those from the Centers for Disease Control ([Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns](#)).
 - b. During staff meetings, talk with staff about what they are noticing about each child's development; discuss concerns and possible actions that need to be taken.
 3. Routinely celebrate with families when a child meets important milestones which will help them be more aware of how their child is progressing; encourage them to share what they are seeing at home with the program staff

STEP 2: PROGRAMS SHOULD DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR COMMUNICATING CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT

Quality programs invest time in building solid collaborative relationships with families where two-way communication on children's progress is considered part of the program routines. They have strategies for communicating with families when there is a concern about a child's development. Programs should consider:

1. Before approaching a family with a concern, talk with the staff about the concerns they have about a child's development.
 - a. What evidence or documentation (for example: *GOLD*[®] or curriculum assessments) do they have that shows that a child's development is in question? Is the concern based on appropriate expectations for development for the age of the child?
 - b. Determine who will discuss concerns with the family
2. Schedule a time to talk with families that is convenient and least likely to be stressful; choose a time and place where you can talk with families without being interrupted and have enough time to allow for an informative conversation followed by questions from the family.
3. Start with the positive – what the child is doing well and what accomplishments he/she has achieved; be prepared for strong emotions since families may or may not sense there is a problem.
4. Remind the family that the staff care for their child and have their best interest in mind so choose words carefully and avoid using labels or technical terms that a family might not understand.

5. Share concerns based on objective evidence or documentation that has been collected during the daily routines and activities of the program; share concerns based on the developmental milestones of what is expected for a child of that age.
6. Ask the family if they are noticing the same thing at home or if their pediatrician or health provider has indicated some concern.
7. Stress the importance of following through on concerns and that there are resources and supports that they can access; programs can offer to make a referral to the EarlySteps program on behalf of families if they are unsure about what next steps they might want to take.
8. Remind the family that the concerns are not based on a diagnosis or evaluation and that they may want to schedule an appointment with their pediatrician or family physician for further screening.
9. Help the family develop a list of questions and information that they may want to share with the pediatrician; provide them with a copy of [How to Talk With the Doctor](#).

Where to go for Help When There are Concerns About a Child's Development

Programs can play a key role in assisting families if there is a suspicion that a child's development is not progressing as it should. They can support families in taking action on a child's behalf so that care and services can be provided as quickly as possible.

STEP 1: PROGRAMS ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT STEPS TO TAKE WHEN THERE ARE CONCERNS ABOUT A CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT.

Quality programs take responsibility for providing high-quality interactions and instruction to all children, including those whose development may be delayed, have an identified disability, or whose home language is other than English. They are committed to providing inclusive settings where children whose development is a concern are educated and cared for alongside their typically developing peers.

Programs should develop a plan for assisting families with actionable steps if a child's development is of concern. These may include:

1. Encouraging them to first meet with their pediatrician or family health provider. This would be an opportunity for a family to discuss what they have observed as well as what the child's teachers and caregivers have observed. Families can ask that the pediatrician to conduct appropriate developmental screenings. The [Early Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment \(EPSDT\)](#) provides comprehensive and preventative health care services, including screenings, for children enrolled in Medicaid under the age of 21.
2. Helping them get in touch with the community's early intervention program ([EarlySteps](#)) if the child is age birth to three to ask for the child to have an evaluation to see if he/she may have a developmental delay or disability. The EarlySteps site contains links to a [Parent's Corner](#) where families can find information on:

- a. How to contact a [Community Outreach Specialist](#) who can provide information on the program and community resources available to families;
 - b. [What Early Intervention is, what types of services and supports are available and what is the process for determining eligibility for the program](#); and
 - c. How to contact the [System Point of Entry Office \(SPOE\)](#) to set up a referral.
3. Assisting families of children ages 3 to five to get in touch with [Child Find](#) staff from their local community school system. [School districts](#), as required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) must ensure that all children with disabilities who may be in need of special education and related services be identified, located, and evaluated. Families can request that a child be evaluated if they suspect their child may have a disability.

Online Resources for Families – [Center for Parent information and Resources Overview of Early Intervention](#)

STEP 2: PROGRAMS ARE KNOWLEDGEABLE ABOUT RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO FAMILIES

It is not uncommon for families and caregivers to be concerned when a child does not appear to be developing according to the normal schedule of milestones. To support families, programs should consider developing a pool of potential resources that would assist them in providing the best supports and services possible to support their child’s development. To begin this process, programs may want to determine what resources are available to support them in assisting families more effectively.

Resources for Providers:	
Resources Especially for Child Care Providers and Preschools	http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/childcare/
Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive: An Early Care and Education Provider’s Guide for Developmental and Behavioral Screening	https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/ece_providers_guide_march2014.pdf

Resources for Providers and Families	
Learn the Signs. Act Early	http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/
Developmental Monitoring and Screening	http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/screening.html
Early Development	https://www.zerotothree.org/early-development
Overview of Early Intervention	http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/ei-overview/
Birth to Five: Watch Me Thrive!	http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/child-health-development/watch-me-thrive
Ten Things Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities Should Know	https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USODEP/bulletins/10c714f
Benefits for Children with Disabilities	https://www.ssa.gov/pubs/EN-05-10026.pdf
Community Outreach Specialists	http://ldh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/directory/detail/619
Louisiana Department of Health – Developmental Disabilities	http://new.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/138
Families Helping Families Community Support	http://www.laddc.org/Initiatives.cfm?aid=6&id=9
Louisiana Office for Citizens with Developmental Disabilities	http://www.dhh.louisiana.gov/index.cfm/page/136
Louisiana Parent Training and Information Center	http://fhfjefferson.org/laptic