

Health and Safety E-News for Caregivers and Teachers

June 2010



Developmental Screenings in Early Childhood Settings

Based on online summary report
“Developmental Screening in Early
Childhood Systems”
www.heathychildcare.org/dsecsreport.pdf

How Is Developmental Screening Used In Early Childhood Settings?

Developmental screenings help caregivers, teachers, and parents find out if children need further testing for possible developmental delays or disorders. Screening results can help a teacher/caregiver with planning activities appropriate for the children in their care.

What’s Required?

To put developmental screening into use in your program, you need

- Preparation
- Communication
- Follow through

Getting Started

Follow these 5 objectives before screening begins:

1. Explain why developmental screening is important.

An estimated 10% of children have developmental delays. However, only 2.3% of children under the age of 3 years and only 20% to 30% of children with disabilities are identified before entering school.

Early intervention programs can help children with developmental delays gain skills and help parents, caregivers and teachers learn what children need to help them develop to

their potential.

Caregivers and teachers have a great opportunity to help identify the children who need help.

2. Define common terms

Communication with parents and primary care providers should be clear. It is important that everyone knows what is different about screening, surveillance, and diagnosis. Using the same words helps us communicate clearly.

For example, screening “tests” are not designed to diagnose developmental disabilities. Developing a guide of terms related to developmental screening may be useful.

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The terms that need to be defined may include the following:

Developmental delay: The condition in which a child is not developing and/or achieving skills according to the expected time frame

Developmental disorder: A childhood mental or physical impairment (or combination thereof) that results in substantial functional limitations in major life activities

Surveillance: The process of recognizing children who may be at risk of developmental delays

Screening: The use of standardized tools to identify a child at risk of a developmental delay or disorder

Evaluation: The identification of specific developmental disorders that are affecting a child

3. Evaluate screening tools

Before choosing a screening tool, keep in mind the age of the child, how

much time the screening will take, who will be involved in the screening, and characteristics of the child.

4. Plan the implementation process

- a. Create a timeline
- b. Inform and involve parents
- c. Train staff on using a developmental screening tool and review developmental milestones
- d. Identify community resources
- e. Identify and address potential barriers such as—
 - Staff resistance
 - Parent resistance
 - Legal concerns
 - Limited time
 - Lack of or limited services
- f. Communicate results—With the parent's permission, help make sure the screening results will be shared with the child's primary care provider.

5. Assess effectiveness

On-going review of your developmental screening process is a must. A useful way to check your process is the PDSA process.

Step 1: Plan—Plan out the process.

Step 2: Do—Implement the plan.

Step 3: Study—Take time to see if the process is effective or needs changing.

Step 4: Act—Correct or improve the process and then repeat Steps 1-4.

Partnering with Parents

All children benefit when parents know what's expected of their children at school, especially if there are any areas of concern that should be addressed. Caregivers and teachers can suggest ways to promote each child's healthy development, particularly social-emotional development.

Implementing and discussing developmental screening in the child care setting is a chance to truly partner with parents and promote their parenting skills.

Resources



Websites

Healthy Child Care America
www.healthychildcare.org

Learn the Signs, Act Early (Child Care Provider Screening Toolkit)
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/ccp/index.html>

National Association for the Education of Young Children
www.naeyc.org

Publications (These are not endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics):
Developmental Screening and Assessment Instruments with an Emphasis on Social and Emotional Development for Young Children Ages Birth through Five
 Ringwalt, S.

The screening instruments include a focus on the social-emotional developmental domain as well as those that address multiple developmental domains. The screening instruments are further sub-divided into those which must be administered by professionals and those that may be completed by family members or other caregivers. The information for each instrument includes a description, the age range for which the instrument was validated, the time to administer, the scoring procedure, psychometric properties, and requirements for administrators, and a link to, or address for, the publisher or source of more information.

NECTAC, (2008), 20 pp.

Available from: Online at www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf  (PDF: 950kb)

Meisels S, Atkins-Burnett S. *Developmental Screening in Early Childhood: A Guide, (5th Edition)*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children; 2005.