

Early Identification: Key Components

The California Learn the Signs Act Early Grant Partners* encourages families and service providers to understand the importance of and become familiar with early identification and developmental screening. The graphic below illustrates the key components of early identification. The components are color-coded to match the more detailed explanations on the flow chart on the following pages. "Developmental Education and Observation" refers to the

need for families and service providers to understand and observe developmental milestones. "Developmental Screening" identifies potential "developmental concerns" through validated screening tools. Referrals to "Community Resources and Support for Families" helps families connect to the services their children need when "Developmental Concerns" are identified through screening.



Early Identification & Developmental Screening for California's Children

Early identification of developmental disorders and referral to services is critical to the well-being of children and their families. The Center for Disease Control reports that many developmental delays are not recognized early, delaying when children get the help they need. In fact, less than half of the children with a developmental delay receive treatment before starting school.

Early identification includes developmental observation, screening using validated tools, and referral to further evaluation and services. Developmental observation and screening leads to parent education about developmental milestones and further evaluation, when concerns are identified.

To ensure that children are connected to services, families need ongoing support through the evaluation and referral to services process.

Developmental Education & Observation

Early educators and home visitors provide an important role in education about and observation of developmental milestones. The "Learn the Signs. Act Early." campaign has created a series of resources to help you educate parents on the full range of child development. It is important to observe developmental milestones overtime.

- Observe child's development with parents during play and daily routines
- Discuss observations with parents. Provide guidance on developmental milestones and play activities.
- Discuss all parent concerns.
- If a concern is observed, complete a validated screening tool.

Resource:

"Learn the Signs. Act Early." <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/ccp/index.html>

Developmental Screening

Developmental screening tools are standardized on national samples, and have proven reliability and validity. Screening tools may be completed by parent, parental interview, or directly administered. Results from screening do not identify which children have delays and which ones do not. Rather, the results suggest which children should be referred for further evaluation and which ones appear to be developing typically. The ASQ (Ages and Stages Questionnaire) is a widely used and validated developmental screening tool. Scoring results in one three outcomes: 1) No concerns 2) Borderline concerns or 3) Developmental concerns.

Resources:

CDC Recommended Screening Tools <http://www.medicalhomeinfo.org/downloads/pdfs/DPIPScreeningtoolgrid.pdf>
Information on developmental screening <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/screening.html>

Community Resources & Support for Families

Early identification doesn't end with developmental screening. To ensure that families get the support they need after a referral for further evaluation, follow-up is necessary. It's important to find out the results of the evaluation. Some children with identified concerns may not qualify for mandated services. Ongoing monitoring of development and rescreening for these children is essential. Infants and toddlers may qualify for Prevention Resource and Referral Services through the Family Resource Center. All families of children with concerns should be referred to parent-to-parent support with California Early Start Family Resource Centers (infants and toddlers) or California Family Empowerment Centers (children over 3 years of age). It is important for all early educators and home visitors to be familiar with and help the family to find other community services to support and promote the child's development.

Resources:

- Family Resource Network of CA <http://www.frcnca.org>
- CA Department of Developmental Services/Regional Center eligibility <http://www.dds.ca.gov/>
- California Early Start Family Resource Centers <http://www.frcnca.org>
- California Family Empowerment Centers (children over 3 years of age). <http://www.cafec.org/>
- MAP to Inclusion and Belonging: County Specific Resources <http://cainclusion.org/camap/counties.html>
- California Early Start <http://www.dds.ca.gov/earlystart/>

Developmental Screening Results and Next Steps

No Concerns/Typical Development

Scores fall within the expected age range and the caregiver and early educator do not have developmental concerns.

- Review scores with caregivers
- Provide developmental information and guidance
- Provide ongoing developmental monitoring

Borderline Concerns

Caregiver has concern and/or scores are in the "borderline range"

- Review questions with the caregiver; clarify as necessary. Change responses if needed and rescore.
- Review scores with caregivers, highlighting strengths and potential areas of need.
- Provide developmental information and guidance.
- Provide activities, observe and re-screen in 2-3 months.

Consider underlying health concerns; refer as necessary. (i.e. Does the child have a hearing test? Frequent ear infections? Weight concerns?)

Developmental Concerns

Scores are in the concern range and are confirmed with professional expertise and judgment. Developmental concerns must be followed-up.

- Review questions with the caregiver; clarify as necessary. Change responses if needed and rescore.
- Review scores with caregivers, highlighting strengths and potential areas of need.
- Provide developmental information and guidance.
- Actions:
 - Refer caregiver to the local Family Resource Center for information and parent-to-parent support.
 - Share results with primary health provider
 - Refer for further medical assessment (hearing, vision, behavioral)
 - If child is Birth - 3 years of age, refer to Regional Center for evaluation for California Early Start
 - If child is 3 years of age or older, refer to local school district for special education evaluation. Refer children with developmental disabilities to regional center for evaluation.

Follow-up with the parent/caregiver to make sure referrals have been responded to.