



First Steps

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Why is Developmental Screening Important for My Child?

Our children do not come with instructions. Parents Reaching Out provides resources that help families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. We thank the families who have asked questions and found successful ways to advocate for their child for providing the inspiration for these fact sheets.

Your child's growth is more than just physical. Children grow, develop and learn throughout their lives. They learn how to talk, how to do more with their bodies like sit up, walk and run. They learn how to behave. There are developmental milestones or signs to watch for as children grow and learn.



Developmental screening is a way to look at all areas of your child's growth. It will show if your child is developing like most other children of the same age. It will tell you if there are problems that need attention. Learning about these problems early—while your child is still very young—will help you support the best ways for your child to grow and learn!

WHAT is the purpose of a Developmental Screening?

- Screening is the first step in finding out if your child's development is slower (delayed) or different in serious ways from other children
- Screening is a way to find and receive help early when there is a problem or delay in your child's development. Screening can help keep problems from becoming bigger and provide opportunities to keep the effects of these problems from becoming more serious.
- If a problem or delay is found, you can work with your child's doctor and early intervention providers to make a plan that will help your child develop well and do well when she or he enters school.
- Part of the plan may be a full evaluation by trained specialists (multi-disciplinary team) that will be used to design supports and services that may be available for your child and family. Sharing information about your child will help the team with their evaluation.

WHY is developmental screening so important?

- A child who needs help and doesn't get it loses precious possibilities for a healthy future. Most children with a developmental difference or delay can be helped with a screening.
- Too many children enter school with developmental problems that could have been found and helped earlier if they had had a developmental screening.

WHO do I contact to get Developmental Screening for my child?

The best place to begin is to talk to your child's doctor or nurse. Developmental screening should be included as a part of regular well-child visits to your child's doctor. The screening form can be completed in the doctor's waiting room, at home before a well visit, or with the assistance of the medical staff in the examination room in less than 10 minutes.

Call your local early intervention agency (for children under 3) or Children's Medical Services (CMS) at your County Health Department. You may call BABYNET at 1-800-552-8195 or *Parents Reaching Out* at 1-800-524-5176 to find early intervention providers in your area. Your local school district Child Find services offer screening for children ages 3 to 21.

HOW can I participate in the success of my child's development?

1. Provide a healthy diet for your child. If you need assistance, apply for food stamps, WIC, or access other resources in your community.
2. Make sure that your child gets plenty of rest. Set a regular bedtime.
3. Plan activities to help your child have opportunities to use their big & small muscles by running, climbing stairs, using crayons, cutting with scissors, etc. *First Step* and *Did You Know* fact sheets from *Parents Reaching Out* are filled with ideas for these activities.
4. Make sure to take your child to all the Well-Child checks. *Ask for a Developmental Screening for your child.* The results can help you work with your health care provider to find solutions that will help your child grow and learn.
5. Make your child's health care a priority in your life. **New Mexikids** (1-888-992-2583) provides no cost or low cost health coverage for children. Your child may be eligible for Medicaid assistance, contact the Income Support Division in your community.
6. Develop a trusting relationship with your child's health care and other providers. Ask questions so that you understand what you are being told. In return, when you are asked questions, be clear with the provider and provide full information. *Parents Reaching Out* has developed *Family Health Care Tips* to help you work with providers.



Informed parents make a positive difference in their child's life every day!

Learning about your child's development helps you ask questions with confidence and get answers that make sense for your family. To learn more about how children grow and develop, call *Parents Reaching Out* at 1-800-524-5176 or the NM Department of Health Family Infant Toddler Program at 1-877-696-1472 or 505-827-2578.

For more information call *Parents Reaching Out*. We offer phone consultations and provide workshops in English or Spanish to communities throughout New Mexico. This publication was developed under a grant from the New Mexico Department of Health Family Infant Toddler program. However, the views here expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Health and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the New Mexico Department of Health.