

No Reason to Wait!

The first years of a child's life are a time of rapid growth and development. Every day they are learning new skills and doing things that you have not seen them do before. Parents are so proud of their child's accomplishments and often share them with each other: "Johnny started walking at 9 months old!" Another parent might become concerned if their child is not doing the same. It is important to remember that children develop at different rates.

However, there are timeframes within which children are expected to meet specific milestones and developmental skills. While we want to encourage children's development and give them time to learn skills, we also need to be aware when red flags are warning us that the child may need some help and cannot do it on his/her own. As such, parents and caregivers need support to recognize the areas of concern and to act timely, because the earlier the better! The hope is that when a child receives assistance during the early years, he/she may not need such help in later years as he/she enters kindergarten. However waiting to address a concerns, may take that much longer for the child to "catch up," if possible. Parents rely on professionals to answer questions about their child's development. The Mid-State ECDC is a resource to assist parents with such questions and concerns regarding their child's development.

What's Inside...

- ◆ What is a Developmental Delay?
- ◆ Red Flags
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- ◆ How Can We Support Children?



We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today.

—Stacia Tauscher



Development vs. Developmental Delay, *When should I wait vs. when should I act?*

The timetable that we generally expect that skills will emerge is commonly called developmental milestones. These are described rather broadly because all children do not learn skills at the same pace. Children can be born on the same day, from the same family, share the same experiences and still achieve skills at different times, sometimes months apart. It is when skills do not emerge within these timetables that parents and caregivers may become concerned. While it is certainly appropriate for a parent to give the child some time to see if they will achieve the skill on her own, there is a limit to how long one should wait and a reason why help should be sought sooner rather than later.

The early years between birth and 5 are critical to the child's development. Brain research has shown that this is the optimal window for learning and making the connections in the brain to retain information and skills.

While the pediatrician may say "just wait," there is often *no reason to wait.* Any child can benefit from extra support and stimulation for their learning. And parents often benefit from the reassurance that comes from talking with child development professionals who confirm their concerns and can provide assistance or who can set their mind at rest that their child is simply learning at his own pace within the typical range for development.

New York State's Definition of Developmental Delay:

Developmental delay means that a child has not attained developmental milestones expected for the child's age in one or more of the following areas of development: cognitive, physical (including motor, vision and hearing), communication, adaptive or social-emotional development; other developmental delays or problems which adversely affect the student's ability to learn.

Red Flags

Most young children with developmental delays will benefit from early intervention or preschool special education services. Therefore, it is important to recognize some of the warning signs that your child's development may be delayed. Here is a list of some early warning signs. This is not all inclusive but gives an idea of some common indicators. One skill does not in itself indicate that a parent should be concerned. However, if you are checking off several items within this list, please consult with your pediatrician.

For a more comprehensive checklist of developmental milestones, please visit the ECDC website to download a copy of our *Developmental Checklist Birth to Five*: <http://tinyurl.com/9698h4o>.

Birth-3 years

- Does not smile at people by 3 months
- Cannot support head well at 3 months
- Does not bring objects to mouth by 4 months
- Does not turn head to locate sounds by 4 months
- Does not roll over (stomach to back) by 6 months
- Cannot sit with help by 6 months (not by themselves)
- Does not sit steadily by 10 months
- Does not search for objects that are hidden by 12 months
- Says no single words ("mama" or "dada") by 12 months
- Does not learn to use gestures (waving or shaking head)
- Does not react to new environments and people
- By 15 months does not seem to know the function of common household objects (brush, telephone, cup, spoon)
- Cannot walk by 18 months
- Does not speak at least 15 words by 18 months
- Does not follow simple one-step instructions by 24 months
- Cannot hold and use a spoon or cup for eating and drinking by 24 months
- Does not display a wide array of emotions (anger, fear, happy, excited, frustrated)
- Frequent falling and difficulty with stairs after 24 months
- Inability to communicate in short phrases by 3 years

3-5 years

- Little interest in other children
- Cannot grasp a crayon between thumb and fingers
- Has difficulty scribbling
- Extreme difficulty separating from primary caregiver
- Shows no interest in interactive games
- Ignores other children
- Resists dressing, sleeping, using the toilet
- Lashes out without any self-control when angry or upset
- Does not use sentences of more than three words
- Does not use "me" or "you" appropriately
- Exhibits extremely aggressive, fearful or timid behavior
- Is easily distracted and unable to concentrate on any single activity for more than 5 minutes
- Shows little interest in playing with other children
- Refuses to respond to people in general
- Rarely uses fantasy or imitation in play
- Seems unhappy or sad much of the time
- Cannot understand prepositions ("put the cup on the table"; "get the ball under the couch")
- Cannot follow 2-part commands ("pick up the toy and put it on the shelf")
- Cannot give his first and last name

Who do you call?

If you suspect that your child has a delay or want to know more about your child's development, there are many resources in your community to help.

The **Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center** is here to answer your questions and point parents in the right direction to those who can help to evaluate and provide services to young children. Our services are free and confidential. 315-443-4444

Your community resources:

- For children 0-3 years old, **the Early Intervention Program (EIP)** at the local **County Health Department**.
- For children 3-5 years old, **the Committee on Preschool Special Education (CPSE)** at your local **school district**.

All evaluations and services are of no cost to families!

RESOURCES

Available for download from the **Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center's** website: <http://tinyurl.com/9htnoy6>

- *A Guide to Preschool Special Education for Children Transitioning from Early Intervention (2012)*
- *A Guide to Preschool Special Education (2012)*
- *A Guide to Special Education for Children Transitioning from Preschool Special Education (2012)*



What is an Evaluation?

An **evaluation** is a careful examination of a child’s skills, strengths and weaknesses to determine current levels of functioning and how best to plan for your child. What can he do? What does he like to do? What kinds of things should he be encouraged to do next? The evaluation process consists of gathering information from parents and play-based assessments with the child facilitated by trained and certified professionals, such as special education teachers, speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, physical therapists and psychologists.

The evaluation looks at all areas of development:

- motor—moving, including gross motor (walking and climbing) and fine motor (coloring and cutting)
- cognitive—thinking, figuring things out, problem solving
- speech/language—talking, understanding, communicating
- adaptive—self-help in areas, like dressing and eating
- social/emotional—getting along with others, coping
- physical—general health overview
- adaptive development (self-care skills)

You can participate in the evaluation process by...

- ⇒ Talking about your concerns about your child’s development
- ⇒ Filling in paperwork and answering questions
- ⇒ Describing how your child is at home
- ⇒ Identifying how your child’s development has changed over time
- ⇒ Sharing what your child does well

The results of the evaluation are used to determine whether or not your child needs early intervention services or preschool special education services, depending on their age.

Services are tailored to meet a child’s individual needs, which may include:

- speech-language pathology
- audiology services
- psychological services
- physical therapy
- occupational therapy
- counseling services
- parent counseling and training
- assistive technology services



Will there be a label?

When children demonstrate a significant delay in one or more areas, they are determined eligible to receive services through the EIP (0-3) or the CPSE (3-5). Unless the child has a specific medical or developmental need, the child does not receive a diagnosis. Under CPSE, the child will receive the label *Preschool Student with a Disability*.

Children receive services for as long as they are eligible to receive services. For some this may be very short-term (a matter of months). For others, services may continue when they enter elementary school. When students no longer require services to assist with their delay or disability, their records are sealed. The “label” or knowledge that they received services under EI or CPSE does not “follow” them forever.

How Can We Support Children in Play?

Children are hardwired to need:	Parents can teach children by:
✓ Repetition to try out and master new skills	✓ Joining in play
✓ Novelty to learn what can happen as a result of their action	✓ Watching to see what they are trying to do ✓ Providing support so they can accomplish what they are trying to do
✓ Expansion and integration to explore their imagination and creativity	✓ Presenting new challenges when they are ready ✓ Being spontaneous and having fun!

Brain Development: Quick Facts

What do brain cells try to do?

Make connections

What makes the strongest connections?

Things that are repeated

What excites the brain?

Things that are new and different

Which connections get to stay?

Those that are repeated will stay and those that are used infrequently will go



Did You Know?

- The speech a child hears by the time he is three sets up his vocabulary for life
- Babies come into the world “hard wired” to learn all of the languages of the world
- Language, reading, and writing skills develop at the same time
- Early literacy skills develop in real life settings

Which Early Experiences Make the Best Difference?

- Those that respond positively to a child’s cues
- Those that feed the brain by providing novelty, repetition, and connections
- Those that are provided in a stimulating and safe environment
- Those that are based on positive, consistent relationships

Parents As First Teachers

- * Playing with your child in the first three years of life helps the two of you build a warm and loving relationship
- * Playing together also supports the development of essential social skills (like sharing and turn taking), language skills (like labeling objects, making requests, commenting), and thinking skills (like problem-solving)

Looking for more copies of this bulletin? You can download it from our ECDC website or contact us.

Mid-State Early Childhood Direction Center

Syracuse University
805 S. Crouse Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13244-2280

Phone:

315-443-4444

1-800-962-5488

Fax:

315-443-4338

E-mail: ecdc@syr.edu

<http://ecdc.syr.edu>

**WHILE WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN,
THEY TEACH US.**



30 Years
Caring for All Children

Workshops of Interest

The ECDC can provide information and workshops on a variety of topics tailored to the interests and needs of parents and early childhood professionals. Resources are available on such topics as general child development, developmental issues for children with special needs, coping strategies, and specific disabilities.

Workshops include:

- Including All Kids
- Parent Partnerships
- Developmentally Appropriate Practices
- Early Childhood Development: The Meaning of Red Flags
- Supporting Social Emotional Development
- Positive Guidance and Behavior Strategies
- Moving On: Transitioning Families (EI-CPSE) & (CPSE-CSE)
- What Are Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education?
- What is an Individualized Education Program (IEP)?
- Writing IEP Goals
- Getting Ready for Kindergarten

Who We Are

The Early Childhood Direction Center (ECDC) is a regional technical assistance center for the State Education Department providing information, referral and support to families, professionals, and community agencies concerned with young children birth to five. We are located at Syracuse University’s Center on Human Policy.

ECDC services to families are free and confidential.

ECDC Staff

Tracey Menapace, Director
Maria Gill, Education Coordinator
Glenda Criss, Community Outreach Educator
Cyndy Colavita, Office Coordinator
Rachael Zubal-Ruggieri, Coordinator of Computer and Technical Applications