



October 2023

Resource Guide

Child Development Resources for Families and Providers

Congratulations! You are about to begin a journey of close observation and learning by getting to know more about the development of infants and young children. This could be the first—or even the fiftieth—time you’ve engaged with a young child’s development. As you seek to understand what you see, remember we all have something to learn, and children have something to teach us.

You are not alone in your curiosity about children’s healthy development from before birth to later childhood. So much happens during this process. Some of the behaviors and changes you will see are predictable, but some are not. After all, every human’s developmental journey is unique. The experiences infants and children have throughout their lives continue to shape their developmental journey.

Whether you are a parent, grandparent, teacher, caregiver, or other caring adult, *you* are part of the experiences that shape children. This resource guide can help you prepare to support the infants and children in your care by doing the following:

- ♦ Anticipating and recognizing development across a range of domains and behaviors
- ♦ Learning about similarities and differences in patterns of growth and change during the first years of life
- ♦ Feeling supported if you’re worried about a child’s development or experiences

According to [ChildCare.gov](https://www.childcare.gov/), “Child development describes the changes children experience as they grow older.” You can separate child development into five domains: (1) cognitive, (2) language, (3) physical, (4) social, and (5) emotional.

1. **Cognitive** development is the process where children think, learn, understand, problem-solve, reason, and remember.
2. **Language** development is the process where children learn to make sounds and speak words and sentences to communicate with others and use or understand body language, gestures, and what others say.
3. **Physical** development includes motor and sensory skills:
 - a. **Motor** development is the process where children learn to use their muscles to move. You can separate this process into two categories:
 - i. **Large**—or *gross*—motor development occurs when children learn to use their large group muscles to sit, stand, walk, run, keep balance, and change positions.
 - ii. **Small**—or *fine*—motor development occurs when children learn to use small muscles in their hands to eat, draw, dress, play, and write.
 - b. **Sensory** development is the process where children hear, see, taste, touch, smell, and feel.
4. **Social** development is the process where children learn to relate to others—such as by having relationships with family, friends, and teachers—and develop control over their emotions and cooperate with and respond to the feelings of others.
- ♦ **Emotional** development is the process of self-expression, understanding, and regulation of emotions through experience.

Providing stable, socially and emotionally nurturing relationships and safe, age-appropriate environments are essential to healthy child development. Families and other adults—such as grandparents and child care providers—play an important role in a child’s development. The environment is also an important factor in development because it stimulates learning.

Families and providers may have questions about how to support children’s development and establish developmentally appropriate environments. This resource guide can help families, child care providers, and other caregiving adults find information about the following topics (click on the links below to navigate to that section of the guide):

- ♦ [Before Conception](#)
- ♦ [Prenatal](#)
- ♦ [The First Few Weeks](#)
- ♦ [The First 4 Months](#)
- ♦ [Infancy \(6 weeks–12 months\)](#)
- ♦ [Toddler Years \(12–36 months\)](#)
- ♦ [Prekindergarten \(3–5 years\)](#)
- ♦ [Transition to Kindergarten \(4–6 years\)](#)
- ♦ [School Age \(5+ years\)](#)

Note: The Child Care State Capacity Building Center does not endorse any nonfederal organization, publication, or resource.

Before Conception

Families often view child care providers and early childhood educators as trusted messengers before they decide to have another child, and as a provider, you may be well positioned to help families identify quality resources if they're experiencing information overload.

With this in mind, you might be wondering which supports can provide all children with the best beginning. Below, you will find some resources and information about the foundations of healthy child development. These resources can help every family prepare for a healthy pregnancy before it begins and support them in adapting to this big change. In this section of the resource guide, you can find helpful resources for families who are having another child.

Online Resources

- ♦ [*What Is Prenatal Care Before Pregnancy?*](#) (2018), Nemours Children's Health.
- ♦ [*How to Prepare Your Older Children for a New Baby*](#) (2019), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [*Family Planning: Get the Facts About Pregnancy Spacing*](#) (2022), Mayo Clinic.
- ♦ [*Resources for Families Coping with Mental and Substance Use Disorders*](#) (2023), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- ♦ [*Coping with Stress and Violence at Home*](#) (2023), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [*Trauma*](#) (n.d.), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [*Supporting Social and Emotional Well-Being*](#) (2022), Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.

Prenatal

During the prenatal phase, families can prepare for a child's healthy development. Did you know the experiences of all caregiving adults in an infant's life, not just the pregnant person, affect child development? From the start, child development takes place in the context of all relationships and supports accessible to the family and infant. The family, neighborhood, and community are part of preparing for healthy birth outcomes and healthy child development.

Whether you are supporting a family or becoming a family, you play a role in preparing for the bonding and engagement all children expect from birth onward. The following online resources provide information to support a healthy pregnancy.

Online Resources

- ♦ [*Staying Healthy during Pregnancy*](#) (2023), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [*Staying Healthy During Pregnancy is available in Spanish.*](#)

- ♦ [*Neonatal Opioid Withdrawal Syndrome \(NOWS\): What Families Need to Know*](#) (2021), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [*Birth Plans*](#) (2018), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [*Birth Plans* is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [*Depression during and after Pregnancy: You Are Not Alone*](#) (2022), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [*Promoting Staff Well-Being*](#) (2022), Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.
- ♦ [*How to Implement Trauma-Informed Care to Build Resilience to Childhood Trauma*](#) (2019), Child Trends.
- ♦ [*Safe Sleep for Your Baby: Reduce the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\) and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths*](#) (2023), Eunice Kennedy Shriver National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.
 - [*Safe Sleep for Your Baby: Reduce the Risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\) and Other Sleep-Related Infant Deaths* is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [*Feeding Your Newborn*](#) (2021), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [*Feeding Your Newborn* is available in Spanish.](#)

The First Few Weeks

Congratulations! An infant is here! With an infant in your care, you can anticipate recognizable patterns in child development while still experiencing surprises. The first few weeks after birth are a whirlwind of firsts. From the moment a family brings home their infant, the infant has experiences that shape their development as an individual and the development of their family. Observing and responding to the patterns, behaviors, and preferences of the infant can help you and other caregivers get to know each other.

In this section of the resource guide, you as a family member or child care provider can find resources for topics of high importance during this phase of child development.

Note: If you don't find the topic you're looking for in this section, please check the remaining sections. Child development is uneven, and each child is unique. The infant you are thinking about may have needs and require supports that fit anywhere in the next few sections.

Online Resources

- ♦ [*Family and Medical Leave Act Employee Guide*](#) (n.d.), U.S. Department of Labor.
- ♦ [*Depression during and after Pregnancy: You Are Not Alone*](#) (2022), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [*Maternal Diet*](#) (2022), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ♦ [*Breastfeeding vs. Formula Feeding*](#) (2018), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [*Breastfeeding vs. Formula Feeding* is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [*Postpartum Depression and Breastfeeding*](#) (2018), American Academy of Pediatrics.

- ♦ [Safe Sleep](#) (2022), Child Care Technical Assistance Network
- ♦ [AAP Schedule of Well-Child Care Visits](#) (2023), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [Complete Guide to Developmental Milestones](#) (n.d.), Child Mind Institute.
- ♦ [Surviving the Sudden Death of a Baby](#) (n.d.), First Candle.

The First 4 Months

The first smile. The first long sleep. The first day in child care. The first 4 months are a unique period in child development and are typically filled with firsts for families and their infant. Caregiving adults, an infant's family, and a small number of additional caregivers almost entirely meet the infant's needs during the first 4 months. This can be a difficult time when it seems like all the adults in an infant's life do is give and give and give.

During this period, every infant is also working hard learning, growing, building brain connections, and adapting to life in their family and community through relationships with these caregiving adults. In this section, you will find resources to answer questions you may have during this period of firsts.

Online Resources

- ♦ [Formula Feeding](#) (n.d.), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [Infant Formula Preparation and Storage](#) (2023), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
 - [Infant Formula Preparation and Storage is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [How to Keep Your Sleeping Baby Safe: AAP Policy Explained](#) (2023), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [Sleep and Your Newborn](#) (2022), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [Sleep and Your Newborn is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [Milestones](#) (n.d.), Pathways.org.
- ♦ [Brain-Building Tips for Parents](#) (n.d.), Better Brains for Babies.
- ♦ [Early Development](#) (n.d.), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [Nervous System](#) (2019), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [Nervous System is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [Hazardous Materials](#) (2022), Child Care Technical Assistance Network.

Providers

Infancy (6 weeks–12 months)

It can be difficult to frame a whole year as a single period of a child's development. Infancy is a period of rapid and amazing changes. The infant in your care began by needing everything from you to thrive, but they typically end this period being able and ready to self-feed, move around on their own, and begin to communicate with sounds and words.

You and the infant in your care deserve a medal for all the developmental steps that happened this year. It can be easy to miss the developmental steps in this year because they happen and change so quickly, but the infant in your care is learning from and building a relationship with you with every interaction.

Online Resources

- ♦ [*Your Baby's First 1,000 Days: AAP Policy Explained*](#) (2018), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [*Infant and Toddler Health*](#) (2021), Mayo Clinic.
- ♦ [*Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\)*](#) (2017), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [*Sudden Infant Death Syndrome \(SIDS\) is available in Spanish.*](#)
- ♦ [*Assure the Best: Baby's Physical Development*](#) (n.d.), Pathways.org.
 - [*Assure the Best: Baby's Physical Development is available in more than 20 languages.*](#)
- ♦ [*Social-Emotional Development*](#) (2021), Child Care Technical Assistance Network.
- ♦ [*Learning to Read and Write Begins at Birth*](#) (2019), Child Care Aware.
- ♦ [*Math Is Everywhere: Supporting Math Skills in Infants and Toddlers*](#) (2020), Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.
- ♦ [*Why Tummy Time Is Important for Baby's Head and Neck Strength*](#) (n.d.), Pathways.org.
- ♦ [*Safe Infant Sleep and Breastfeeding Support: What to Consider When Looking for Child Care*](#) (2017), National Action Partnership to Promote Safe Sleep.
- ♦ [*Selecting the Right Child Care Setting for Your Infant or Toddler*](#) (2019), Child Care Aware.
 - [*Selecting the Right Child Care Setting for Your Infant or Toddler is available in Spanish.*](#)
- ♦ [*Separation Anxiety*](#) (2023), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [*Separation Anxiety is available in Spanish.*](#)
- ♦ [*Planning for Individual Infants and Toddlers in Group Care*](#) (n.d.), Child Care State Capacity Building Center.

Infant/Toddler Resource Guide

The [*Infant/Toddler Resource Guide*](#) can help child care professionals develop policies and practices for high-quality infant/toddler care. This guide contains articles, videos, links, and learning materials for state-level professionals, infant/toddler care providers, as well as professional development and technical assistance professionals to develop their skills and knowledge.

[*The Infant/Toddler Resource Guide is available in Spanish.*](#)

Toddler Years (12–36 months)

Observing and responding to the toddler in your care is just as important as it was earlier in their development. As children enter the second year of life, their bodies start to catch up to the rapid brain development in the first year of life. Their heads and bodies become more and more proportional to one another throughout the toddler years.

While the rapid pace of change slows down a little, toddlers continue to learn and accomplish quite a lot. Some of their most exciting accomplishments include becoming increasingly able to use words to talk about their curiosity and gaining control of their bowels and bladder. The relationship you have built with the toddler in your care continues to be the context for their healthy development. The resources below can help you increase your understanding of what toddlers are doing, thinking, and learning and how they are growing.

Online Resources

- ♦ [Early Development](#) (n.d.), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [Developmental Monitoring and Screening](#) (2023), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ♦ [Delayed Speech or Language Development](#) (2019), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [Delayed Speech or Language Development is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [12 Ways to Support Language Development for Infants and Toddlers](#) (n.d.), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [Math4Littles | Early Math Activities for Two- and Three-Year-Olds](#) (2019), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [Let's Play: How Your Child Learns and Grows through Play from Birth to Three](#) (2018), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [Taking Two Languages to Preschool: Supporting Children Who Are Dual Language Learners](#) (2018), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [Selecting the Right Child Care Setting for Your Infant or Toddler](#) (2019), Child Care Aware.
 - [Selecting the Right Child Care Setting for Your Infant or Toddler is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [Individualizing Care for Infants and Toddlers](#) (2020), Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.
- ♦ [Creating Inclusive Environments and Learning Experiences for Infants and Toddlers](#) (2022), Child Care Technical Assistance Network.
- ♦ [Toddler Biting: Finding the Right Response](#) (2016), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [Culturally Appropriate Positive Guidance with Young Children](#) (2017), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [The Discipline Dilemma: Guiding Principles for Finding an Approach That Works for Your Individual Child and Family](#) (2016), Zero to Three.
- ♦ [Trauma-Responsive Care for Infants and Toddlers](#) (2022), Child Care Technical Assistance Network.
 - [Trauma-Responsive Care for Infants and Toddlers is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [Toilet Learning: Steps to Success](#) (2021), Zero to Three.

[¡Colorín Colorado!](#) is a web-based, bilingual service providing information, activities, and advice for educators of English-language learners, librarians, school administrators, and families. [Information is also available in Spanish.](#) Parents can find bilingual resources offering tips on helping the child in your care learn to read, succeed in school, and learn a new language on [Colorín Colorado's page for families.](#)

Providers

- ♦ [Toilet Training](#) (2019), Nemours Children's Health.
- ♦ [Healthy, Fit Families](#) (n.d.), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [Building Balanced Snacks to Feed to Toddlers](#) (2023), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [Reduce Your Child's Chances of Pesticide Poisoning](#) (2022), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Prekindergarten (3–5 years)

Prekindergarten is another period of development marked by big changes and big steps! During the prekindergarten years, children become more alike—and more unique—as they develop friendships and individual interests. Infants and toddlers can vary widely in the timing of their developmental milestones, but preschoolers start to become similar to one another in motor development; regularity of eating, sleeping, and toileting; and their ability to communicate.

You are their mirror, showing them what it looks like to be a member of your neighborhood and community. You are also their window into the wider world, providing opportunities to learn, grow, and connect. Your close observation can help you continue to shape the joy and sense of safety the child in your care experiences.

Online Resources

- ♦ [Social Development in Preschoolers](#) (2021), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [Typical Reading Development](#) (n.d.), Reading Rockets.
- ♦ [Let's Talk, Read and Sing About STEM!](#) (2016.), Office of Early Childhood Development.
- ♦ [Hands-On STEM for Your Classroom](#) (n.d.), Science Buddies.
- ♦ [10 Tips to Support Children's Science Learning](#) (n.d.), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [Finding the Math](#) (2018), Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center.
- ♦ [Literacy](#) (n.d.), PBS.
- ♦ [10 Things Every Parent Should Know About Play](#) (n.d.), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [Many Languages, One Classroom: Supporting Children in Superdiverse Settings](#) (2019), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [Valuing Diversity: Developing a Deeper Understanding of All Young Children's Behavior](#) (2019), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [Instead of Discipline, Use Guidance](#) (2020), National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- ♦ [How Can Parents Discipline without Spanking?](#) (2022), Nemours Children's Health.
- ♦ [Resources: What Works Briefs](#) (n.d.), Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.
- ♦ [Potty Training](#) (n.d.), American Academy of Pediatrics.

ProvidersProviders

- ♦ [Sleep and Your Preschooler](#) (2020), Nemours Children's Health.
- ♦ [Nightmares](#) (2023), Nemours Children's Health.
 - [Nightmares resource is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [Is Your Preschooler Ready for Kindergarten?](#) (2019), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ♦ [Protecting Children from Pesticides: Information for Parents](#) (2020), American Academy of Pediatrics.

Transition to Kindergarten (4–6 years)

You'll notice developmental milestones during these ages overlap, and one pattern of development is change and transition are always happening within and around children as they grow. One of the biggest transitions may occur when a child moves from informal care to formal schooling. Many children participate in early learning settings before transitioning to an early learning setting in a school building around 4, 5, or 6 years of age.

At all ages, your knowledge of a child's interests, skills, and next steps supports their transition to new settings and relationships, whether you are a family member or other caregiver. Despite all the experience children have with the world at this time, the transition to "big school" is still a big change. When you and the child in your care know more about what to expect, everyone can manage the big and small transitions throughout the day.

Online Resources

- ♦ [Transition to Kindergarten: A Brief: Why It Matters and How to Promote Success](#) (2020), National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning.
- ♦ [Working Together for Kindergarten Success: Making the Transition from Child Care to Kindergarten](#) (2019), Child Care Aware.
- ♦ [Transition to Kindergarten and OST Programs: Tips for Parents and Caregivers](#) (2020), Child Care Technical Assistance Network.
 - [Transition to Kindergarten and OST Programs: Tips for Parents and Caregivers is available in Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [Learning and Teaching with Learning Trajectories](#) (n.d.), [LT]2.
- ♦ [Using Words to Discipline Children](#) (2015), Illinois Early Learning Project.
 - [Using Words to Discipline Children is available in Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, Polish, and Spanish.](#)
- ♦ [Resources: Practical Strategies for Teachers/Caregivers](#) (n.d.), Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning.
- ♦ [How to Implement Trauma-Informed Care to Build Resilience to Childhood Trauma](#) (2019), Child Trends.
- ♦ [Preventing Childhood Obesity: 5 Things Families Can Do](#) (2023), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

School Age (5+ years)

Early childhood includes ages 0 through 8 years and beyond. While the changes in development slow down and become more subtle and smooth compared with the rapid change taking place in the first 3 years, the school-age years still include big changes. The child in your care is becoming more independent—sometimes! Other times, they still need their consistent adult caregivers just as much as they did when they were an infant. Now they may need you to set boundaries and support them through new challenges as they build their skills and begin to shape their own development.

Online Resources

- ◆ [Between the Lions Early Reading](#) (n.d.), PBS.
- ◆ [Summer Learning and Enrichment: Tips for School-Age Care Providers](#) (2019), Child Care Technical Assistance Network.
 - [Summer Learning and Enrichment: Tips for School-Age Care Providers is available in Spanish.](#)
- ◆ [Bullying: It's Not OK](#) (2015), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ◆ [What If Your Child Is the One Showing Bullying Behavior?](#) (2020), PACER Center.
- ◆ [7 Tips for Helping Your Child Deal with Bullying](#) (2018), Johns Hopkins Medicine.
- ◆ [Help Your Child Recognize the Signs of Bullying](#) (2016), PACER's National Bullying Prevention Center.
- ◆ [School Refusal: When a Child Won't Go to School](#) (2018), Harvard Health Publishing.
- ◆ [Obesity Prevention: AAP Policy Explained](#) (2019), American Academy of Pediatrics.
- ◆ [COVID-19 Parental Resources Kit – Early Childhood](#) (2021), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.
- ◆ [Mental Health and Wellness Resources](#) (2022), Administration for Children and Families.

This document was developed with funds from contract/task order GS-00F-010CA/75ACF122F80021 for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care, by the Child Care State Capacity Building Center. This resource may be duplicated for noncommercial uses without permission.

The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with state and territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

State Capacity Building Center, A Service of the Office of Child Care

1902 Reston Metro Plaza
Reston, VA 20190

Phone: 877-296-2401

Email: CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info

Subscribe to Updates

http://www.occ-cmc.org/occannouncements_sign-up/



ADMINISTRATION FOR

CHILDREN & FAMILIES