



## Developmental Screening as a Key Message

Developmental screening is a critical foundation for high-quality infant and toddler programs because it helps Early Childhood professionals and parents understand and support a child's development and promotes the creation of environments and relationships that are individualized, responsive, nurturing, and supportive for infants and toddlers. Since infant and toddler teachers are regularly nurturing infants and toddlers in their care, supporting their ability to identify children's competencies and potential delays and communicate with parents is of particular importance. Developmental screening is one of many avenues to gather information on children's development and cultural and linguistic influences need to be considered when interpreting the results.

Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) of 2014 and Final Rule support awareness and usage of developmental screening by requiring states, territories, and tribes to provide information to providers, family, and the general public about developmental screenings (45 C.F.R. § 98.33, 2016). States, territories, and tribes are also required to offer information about programs that provide services to children with special needs through Section 619 and Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (45 C.F.R. § 98.33(b)(1)(iii), 2016). This information must include a description of ways in which eligible child care providers or families can use resources for children with potential developmental delays, such as cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and language delays (45 C.F.R. § 98.33(c)(2), 2016). With the support of the requirements from CCDBG Act of 2014 reauthorization and Final Rule, the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) encourages Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agencies to work toward expanding the accessibility of developmental screenings to all child care settings (Administration for Children and Families, 2016).

The following is an overview of policies, practices, resources, and strategies outlined by ACF (2016) to help states, territories, and tribes design and implement CCDF plans for consumer education on developmental screening.

### Help Families and Providers Participate in Developmental Screening and Recognize Milestones

- ◆ Provide infant and toddler programs with resources to promote staff's capacity to engage in regular and linguistically and culturally appropriate discussions with families about infants' and toddlers' healthy development.
  - Talking with families about Developmental Concerns; <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/parent-family-community-engagement-simulation-boosting-school-readiness>
  - Learn the Signs. Act Early., developed by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is an initiative that supports improving the early identification of autism and children's developmental disabilities (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016b); <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/>.
  - The CDC's website provides tools that help families track children's development and resources that assist families if they identify concerns (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016a); <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/parents/index.html>.
- ◆ Encourage infant and toddler programs to maintain a practice of suggesting that families discuss their children's development with their primary health care providers during each infant and toddler wellness visit.



- *Watch Me Thrive! Developmental Screening Passport*, from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Education, is a developmental screening record that parents and providers can use (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, n.d.); [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/screening\\_passport.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/screening_passport.pdf).
- ◆ Implement the regular use of developmental screeners, and provide parents with the opportunity and support to take an active role in completing the screeners.

## Strengthen the Capacity of the Infant and Toddler Workforce

- ◆ Provide infant and toddler care teachers with ongoing professional development on children's social, emotional, cognitive, and physical development, as required by the CCDF Final Rule (45 C.F.R. § 98.44(b)(1)(iii), 2016).
- ◆ Require infant and toddler child care programs to provide ongoing training that supports staff members' ability to administer developmental and behavioral screening, foster children's social-emotional development and behavioral health, engage in appropriate strategies to promote positive behaviors, and understand how to refer children for additional screening and assessments, when appropriate.
  - *Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns* is a free online training provided by the CDC. This course promotes infant and toddler care teachers' awareness and understanding of developmental monitoring in a 1-hour, four-module format (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016c); <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/index.html>.
  - *Early Educator Central (ECC)* is an online initiative that promotes the careers of infant and toddler educators by providing resources that increase their competencies and advance their education. ECC leverages and makes accessible high-quality, federally funded coursework, and provides tools and resources for professionals and systems supporting the infant and toddler workforce (Early Childhood Central, n.d.); <https://earlyeducatorcentral.acf.hhs.gov/>.
- ◆ Use CCDF quality funds to offer training that promotes infant and toddler care teachers' skills to engage with families, enhance families' understanding of child development and developmental screeners, and provide outreach in a culturally and linguistically appropriate manner.
- ◆ Enhance the professional development of the infant and toddler workforce by requiring that preparation programs are aligned with up-to-date research and best practices regarding family engagement, child development, developmental screening and referrals, and strategies for positive behavioral guidance.
- ◆ Establish state and territory entry-level credentials that include requirements for infant and toddler care teachers to demonstrate competencies in early childhood development, social-emotional development, skillful parent partnerships, and family engagement.

## Leverage and Distribute Existing Resources on Developmental Screening, Monitoring, and Family Outreach That Can Support Child Care Providers

- ◆ States, territories, and tribes can disseminate resources through multiple channels, such as, websites (both those of the Lead Agency and other relevant stakeholders), state subsidy programs, CCR&R agencies, parent associations, local early childhood advisory councils, provider associations and unions and other existing state networks.
  - *Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!* is a public campaign launched by the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education "to encourage healthy child development, universal developmental and behavioral screening for children, and support for families and providers who care for them" (Early Childhood Development, 2015a, p.1). The website provides guides to developmental screening for specific audiences, including early care education providers, early intervention/early childhood special



education providers, families, primary care providers, and communities; <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/child-health-development/watch-me-thrive>.

- The *Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! A Compendium of Screening Measures for Young Children* compiles research-based screening tools for children ages birth to 5 years and provides information on the required training, cost, age range, administration time, and quality level associated with each tool (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014b); [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/screening\\_compendium\\_march2014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/screening_compendium_march2014.pdf).

## Strengthen the Capacity of Local Programs to Offer Comprehensive Services by Partnering with Community Organizations

- ◆ The Early Head Start–Child Care Partnerships show how states, territories, and tribes can leverage CCDF funds to expand both programs’ capacity to offer developmental screening activities and family engagement services.
  - *The Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive! A Community Guide to Developmental and Behavioral Screening* offers strategies to support communities create an integrated and unified system for providing development screening (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2014a); [https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/communities\\_guide\\_march2014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/communities_guide_march2014.pdf).

## Support Universal Developmental Screening by Strengthening Standards for Licensing and QRIS

- ◆ States, territories, and tribes can use quality improvement CCDF funds to create, implement, and improve quality rating and improvement system (QRIS). States, territories, and tribes can develop quality standards that include developmental screenings.
  - *Caring for Our Children Basics: Health and Safety Foundations for Early Care and Education* offers guidelines to strengthen licensing and QRIS health and safety standards, including support for developmental and behavioral screening (Administration for Children and Families, 2015); [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/caring\\_for\\_our\\_children\\_basics.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/caring_for_our_children_basics.pdf).

## Use and Promote Opportunities in Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program to Enhance Child Well-Being and Provide Preventive Screenings

- ◆ Encourage families to enroll in health insurance and educate them about existing resources.
  - Children receiving CCDF subsidies may also be eligible for Medicaid and the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP) (Insure Kids Now, n.d.). For answers to frequently asked questions about Medicaid and CHIP, visit <https://www.insurekidsnow.gov/about/faq/index.html>.
  - The Early Childhood Development’s Health Insurance Marketplace Resources for Early Care and Education Providers webpage offers resources that child care providers can use to help families obtain health care coverage (Early Childhood Development, 2015b); <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/eecd/child-health-development/affordable-care-act/marketplace-resources-for-ecce-providers>.
- ◆ Develop a partnership with state Medicaid agencies.
  - Consider express lane eligibility, which allows states, territories and tribes to use eligibility factors gathered by one express lane agency for determining a child’s eligibility for another express lane agency. Agencies that fall in this category might include Head Start, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), CCDF-funded child care programs, and others (Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, n.d.).



- Consider presumptive eligibility options, which can help eligible children obtain Medicaid or CHIP before their application is processed.
- Develop a unified application that allows families to apply for CCDF subsidies in conjunction with Medicaid or CHIP. For more information, visit the Center for Medicare & Medicaid Services' Continuous Eligibility for Medicaid and CHIP Coverage webpage at <https://www.medicaid.gov/medicaid-chip-program-information/by-topics/outreach-and-enrollment/continuous.html>.

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## Additional Resources

- ◆ The *Developmental Screening Resources in Support of Reauthorization* (2015) by the National Center on Child Care Quality Improvement provides an overview of resources that support CCDF Administrators meet the requirements of the provisions of the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014; [https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/293\\_1508\\_developmental\\_screening\\_resources\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/public/293_1508_developmental_screening_resources_final_0.pdf).
- ◆ This resource compiles a list of assessment and screening tools for infants and toddlers <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/resources-for-measuring-services-and-outcomes-in-head-start-programs>
- ◆ Zero to Three's Developmental Screening and Assessment webpage at <https://www.zerotothree.org/early-development/developmental-screening-and-assessment> provides information designed to support parents' awareness and understanding of and participation in the developmental screening and assessment process. It features the following:
  - The "Infants and Young Children with Special Needs" training;
  - The *Infant and Toddler Development, Screening, and Assessment* report;
  - "I Am Concerned About My Child's Development. Who Do I Talk to About My Worries?" A resource for parents who are concerned about their child's development;
  - The *Developmental Screening, Assessment, and Evaluation: Key Elements for Individualizing Curricula in Early Head Start Programs* policy resource; and
  - The *Achieving the Promise of a Bright Future: Developmental Screening of Infants and Toddlers* policy resource.

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