

ALL ABOUT Developmental Screening

What is developmental screening?

- Developmental screening is a short, easy-to-complete formal test of young children's developmental skills, such as motor, cognitive, language, and social-emotional skills.
- A developmental screener reliably distinguishes children who should be referred for further, more comprehensive assessment from those who don't need to be referred.¹
- Doctors, nurses, and other early childhood professionals use developmental screening to tell if children are on track with developing basic skills, or if they might have delays.²
- A developmental screening tool, such as ASQ®-3, is a research-based instrument that asks questions about a child's development and gathers information.³
- All children should receive developmental screenings.³

Why do we need developmental screening?

- Before the age of 18, about **one in seven children** in the United States will experience a developmental disability or a disabling behavioral problem.⁵
- Before the age of five, as many as **one in four U.S. children** are at risk for developmental delays or disabilities.⁴
- **Fewer than 50%** of these children are identified before starting school.⁵
- Identifying delays early and providing help before age five **produces effects that significantly exceed** those of services provided to school-age children.¹

Key words used in developmental screening

- *Surveillance*: The monitoring or tracking of children's developmental progress over time
- *Referral*: The action taken by screening personnel to connect families with the appropriate service for their child
- *Developmental milestones*: A set of functional skills and behaviors that are key markers of child development



1 Bricker, Macy, Squires & Marks. (2013). Developmental Screening in Your Community. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing.

2 Center for Disease Control. Developmental Screening Fact Sheet. http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/developmentalscreening.pdf

3 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. (2014). Birth to Five! Watch Me Thrive: An Early Care and Education

Provider's Guide for Developmental and Behavioral Screening. https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/ece_providers_guide_march2014.pdf

4 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. Birth to Five! Watch Me Thrive. <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ece/watch-me-thrive>

5 ZERO TO THREE (2012). Achieving the Promise of a Bright Future. <http://www.zerotothree.org/public-policy/policy-toolkit/devscreeningmar5.pdf>