

Tip Sheets

Red Flags and Referral



Learning happens throughout our lives, beginning at birth. Children learn and grow physically, socially, and cognitively. These

growth areas and the child's overall health are important when we monitor development.

While most children develop on a similar trajectory, we must be aware of signs the child is not moving along the expected developmental pathways.

Stages of Typical Development

Birth to 8 months

- Demonstrates a preference for the face, smell, and sound of a familiar person
- Smiles and make eye contact as a social interaction
- Looks at and/or holds own hands
- Spreads and grab toys
- Babbles
- Smiles at themselves in the mirror
- Sits with support

12 to 18 Months

- Uses a few gestures one after the other to get what they need (show, reach, point, wave)
- Eats snacks on their own
- Hits two blocks together
- Turns to the person speaking when their name is called
- Plays hide and seek and other social games
- Stands alone
- Takes small steps
- Walks holding one hand

18 Months to 3 Years Old

- Enjoys being read to
- Follows simple commands without gesturing
- Points to simple body parts
- Begins to use pronouns such as "mine"
- Speaks sentences with three words
- Shows increased fears (darkness, monster, etc.)
- Expresses emotions with increased control

Red Flags

- No big smiles at 6 months
- No babbling at 12 months
- Does not repeat gestures at 12 months
- Does not speak words by 16 months
- Does not say a meaningful two-word phrase at 24 months
- Any loss of speech, babbling, or social skills at any age
- Little or no eye contact
- Does not respond to your name
- Unusual motor behavior or apraxia
- Stiffness or getting stuck in an activity
- Little or very reactive sensory input
- Very excited and regulatory problem

Through careful, consistent observation of all children in the program, you can identify early developmental concerns and make a request for an assessment or refer parents for an evaluation.

Observation and Documentation

Choose the format that works for you, observe the child in a variety of activities and for an extended period of time. Record the time of day, the day of the week, and the activity that the child was

involved in during the observation. Remember it is okay for family and staff to experience a variety of emotions when we first suspect a concern about a child's development.

Sharing Concerns with Parents

When sharing concerns with parents:

- Pick a private place to talk.
- Have documentation that is objective.
- Take cultural differences into consideration.
- Be respectful.
- Have resources for reference ready to share.
- Do not diagnose.

Additional Resources

Help Me Grow MN | Red Flags by Age for Referral of a Child

<https://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/GetHelpChild/WhenRefer/RedFlags/index.html>

The Children's League | Developmental Red Flags

<https://www.tclny.org/developmental-red-flags>

CS Mott Children's Hospital | Speech and Language Development: Red Flags

<https://www.mottchildren.org/health-library/ue5084>

CDC | Milestone Moments

https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/milestonemomentseng508.pdf

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