



Missouri Milestones Matter

Implementation Guide

Draft

Acknowledgements

The Missouri Milestones Matter Implementation Guide provides instructions for early childhood professionals in using innovative ways to enhance awareness of developmental milestones using the Center for Disease and Prevention Control's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." messaging and materials.

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The Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services started Missouri Milestones Matter in 2018 with a core team comprised of:

- Stephanie Chandler, Coordinator of Children's Programs, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
- Alica Brewer Curran, Act Early Ambassador for Missouri, University of Missouri
- Lisa Eberle-Mayse, Director of Inclusion, United for Children
- Cindy Reese (Project Lead), Early Childhood Program Coordinator, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services
- Wanda Wilson, Program Development Specialist, Missouri Department of Social Services, Children's Division

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Background

This guide provides step-by-step instructions for early childhood professionals to use the Center for Disease Control (CDC) "Learn the Signs. Act Early" developmental checklists to monitor children's development with their family and refer the child for a developmental screening when appropriate. The ultimate goal is to ensure children are developing on track and when delays are identified, families are connected with appropriate resources to help their child.



This Implementation guide includes three components:

- 1) Preparation for developmental monitoring.
- 2) Use of developmental monitoring checklists includes selecting the appropriate checklist and guiding next steps.
- 3) Discussion with families about checklist results.

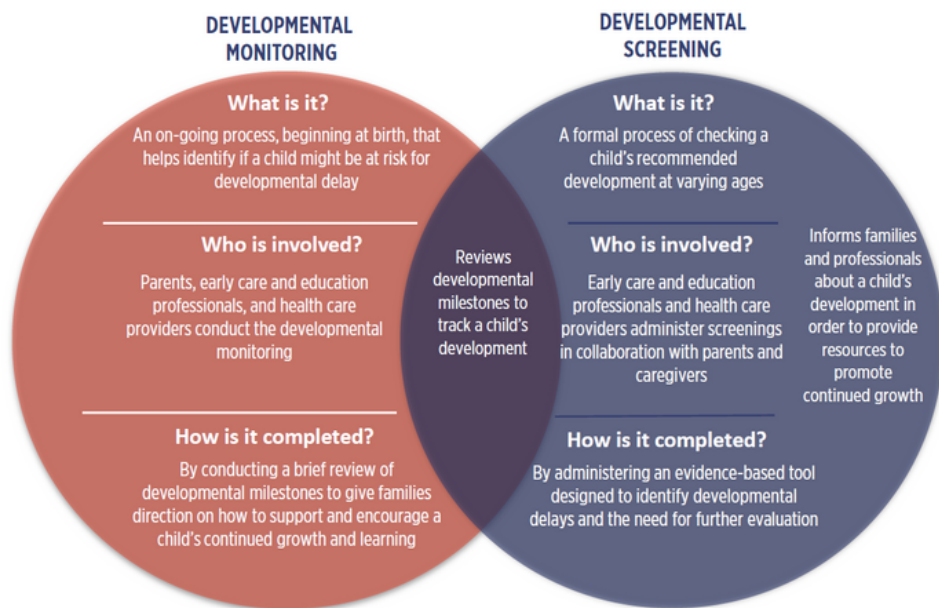
Developmental Monitoring vs. Screening

How a child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about their development. **Developmental milestones** are a list of developmental skills most children reach by a certain age. Developmental monitoring is a way to observe how a child grows and changes over time and whether the child meets the typical developmental milestones in playing, learning, speaking, behaving, and moving. Parents, grandparents, early childhood professionals, and other caregivers can all participate in developmental monitoring. The CDC milestones checklists are a quick tool for monitoring children's development. The checklists allow adults in a child's early life to provide surveillance of the child's development, making sure they are meeting critical developmental milestones.

Developmental screening takes a closer look at how a child is developing. The tools used for developmental and behavioral screening are standardized questionnaires or checklists based on research that ask questions about a child's development, including language, movement, thinking, behavior, and emotions. Developmental screening can be done by a doctor, nurse, home visitor, or child care professional among others.

Developmental screening is a formal process of checking a child's recommended development at varying ages. Examples of developmental screening tools used by early childhood professionals across the nation are the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ), the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA), or the Developmental Indicators for the Assessment of Learning, 4th Edition (DIAL-4).

Developmental monitoring and screening can be used together. The graphics below shows how they complement each other.



Developmental Monitoring	
WHO:	Early childhood professionals, parents, or other caregivers
WHAT:	Look for developmental milestones
WHEN:	From birth to 5 years
WHY:	To help you: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ celebrate your child's development ➤ talk about your child's progress with doctors and child care providers ➤ learn what to expect next ➤ identify any concerns early
HOW:	With easy, free checklists – get yours at www.cdc.gov/Milestones

Developmental Screening	
WHO:	Healthcare provider, early childhood professional, or other trained provider
WHAT:	Look for developmental milestones
WHEN:	Developmental Screening at 9, 18, and 30 months of age Autism Screening at 18 and 24 months of age
WHY:	To find out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ if your child needs more help with development, because it is not always obvious to doctors, child care providers, or parents ➤ if more developmental evaluations are recommended
HOW:	With a formal, validated screening tool

If developmental monitoring indicates a child is not meeting their milestones, oftentimes the next step is to have a formal developmental screening completed. In some situations, results from a developmental screening will demonstrate a need for further evaluation. There is a wide spectrum of reasons for delays. Encouraging families to talk to their pediatrician to rule out vision, hearing, or other health concerns is a good place to start. Occasionally, children will need a more formal evaluation aimed at identifying specific developmental delays. Formal evaluations may take place with a developmental pediatrician, Missouri First Steps (0-3 years), or local public school district (3-5 years).

Preparing for Implementation

There are a number of things your program can do to prepare for implementation of developmental monitoring using the CDC milestone checklists. Keep in mind implementation may not look the same for every program. Some programs may choose to track children using the tracker app while other programs may find the paper checklists to be more manageable. Consider the size of your program and how comfortable you or your staff are in using technology. Below is a list of things you can do to prepare for implementation:

- Review CDC "Learn the Signs. Act Early." website and familiarize yourself with the resources and information available: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>
 - Along with the checklists and link to the app, there are video clips showing milestones in action, books for families, etc.
- Examine Missouri's Early Connections website for resources for families and early childhood professionals: <https://earlyconnections.mo.gov/>
- Consider your program size, structure, and the community you serve and decide when and how you will roll out developmental monitoring within your program.
 - Decide whether you will use the paper checklists or the app
 - Frequency of monitoring. Monitoring should be an ongoing process. The CDC recommends monthly monitoring; however, some programs establish a quarterly or semester schedule to coincide with parent/family conferences.
 - Make copies of paper checklists if using them, and consider how to organize them within individual classrooms.
- If your program has staff, meet as a team to introduce Missouri Milestones Matter process.
 - Share this guide, the checklists appropriate for their classroom age groups
 - Consider how you will organize materials if using paper checklists
 - Review the Milestones Tracker app
- Plan how you will promote developmental monitoring with families
 - Display posters around the building to generate interest
 - Send home informational flyers to families
 - Add information to newsletters or other communication promoting the app
 - Ideally, families and providers complete checklists separately and then discuss at a conference together. Consider how you will organize materials.
- Develop a list of potential resources and referral options:
 - Identify organizations that administer developmental screenings (ASQ-3, DECA, etc.)
 - Make contact with organizations to discuss their referral and feedback process. Ask if there is a written document that details the referral process. If not, create one to capture key steps of the referral process (including any paperwork needed to complete the process) for future reference when families are referred.



Using Monitoring Checklists

Step 1: Choose the Appropriate Checklist

If you are using the paper checklists refer to table below for assistance in choosing the correct checklist. If you are using the app, it will select the correct checklist based on the age of the child.

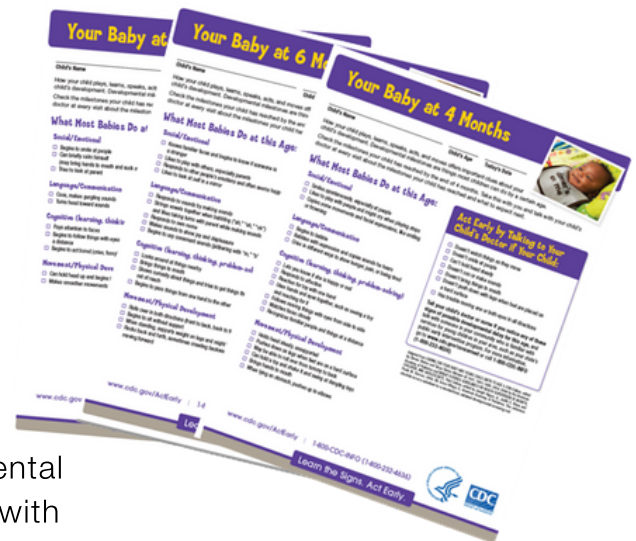
Choose Checklist:	For children in this age range:
2 month	2 months old, but not yet 4 months old
4 month	4 months old, but not yet 6 months old
6 month	6 months old, but not yet 9 months old
9 month	9 months old, but not yet 1 year old
1 year	1 year old, but not yet 18 months old
18 month	18 months old, but not yet 2 years old
2 year	2 years old, but not yet 3 years old
3 year	3 years old, but not yet 4 years old
4 year	4 years old, but not yet 5 years old
5 year	5 years old



Using Monitoring Checklists

Step 2: Begin Using Checklists

Set aside time to go through the checklists and allow time for observation of each child for whom you are completing a checklist. Check off each milestone the child meets. Allow extra time for the first few times you complete the checklists. The process will go faster as you become familiar with the checklists and the process.



Talk with families at enrollment about the developmental monitoring that will occur while the child is enrolled with your program and encourage the family to participate in the monitoring process. You can start by giving them a checklist to complete at enrollment and encourage them to download and use the app.

Moving forward, providers should plan to complete a developmental checklist within 4 - 6 weeks of child's enrollment in the program. This allows opportunity for the provider to get to know the child, and gives the child time to demonstrate what they are able to do. Continue tracking the child's development according to the schedule your site has decided upon (monthly, quarterly, bi annually). Review any previous developmental information for each child.

Step 3: Review the Checklist and Determine if Child is Meeting all Milestones.

When using a developmental monitoring process in your classroom/program, many children will meet the developmental milestones for their age, but the information gained through this monitoring process can be valuable in guiding future classroom activities, and communicating with parents about all the gains their child has made. If there are possible delays, the information on the checklists provide a good starting point for conversations about accessing a developmental screening or a referral for further evaluation.

To determine if a child is meeting their milestones or not, review the checklists to see how many boxes were checked. If three or more boxes were not checked or one in the purple box on the right is checked, then the child may not be meeting their milestones.

Talking with Families

Meet with parents regularly to discuss the results of your monitoring checklists. Sitting down with the parents in person is best, but is not always possible. Video conferencing (Zoom, Facetime, Teams, etc.) are good alternative options. This discussion can take place within an existing parent conference, at a home visit or in a stand alone meeting.

This conversation should be collaborative and focused on the child's strengths! Hopefully the parent has completed a checklist of their own prior to meeting. If not, offer them an opportunity to complete prior to reviewing your checklist results.

Share a copy of the checklist completed at your program. Discuss how your checklist results compare with the one completed by the family and/or the families' observations at home.



This meeting with the family allows you to celebrate all the milestones accomplished. This is also a great opportunity to talk about milestones the family can look forward to in the next few months. Additionally, you can give the parents ideas of activities they can do to continue to support their child's development. Suggested activities are on the back of the checklists. You can provide additional activities and talk about things you are doing in your program to support this child's development.

Let the parents know when to expect the next parent/teacher milestone check-in. If the parents have not downloaded the CDC Milestone Tracker app, this is a good time to encourage them to do so.



Reviewing Milestones for all Children

Meet with parents	Meet with parents, in person if possible for a collaborative conversation about the child's milestones. Video conferencing (Zoom, Facetime, Teams, etc.) are good alternative options.
Review checklists and compare results	Provide the parents with a copy of the checklist completed at your program and compare the results with the parent's checklist and observations at home. If the parent has not completed a checklist prior to the meeting, offer an opportunity to complete one prior to reviewing your checklist.
Celebrate milestones met!!	Take an opportunity to celebrate all of the milestones the child has met. This is also a good time to talk about what milestones the family can expect in the next few months.
Discuss activities for continued development.	Give the parents ideas of activities they can do to continue to support their child's development. Suggested activities are on the back of the checklists. You can provide additional activities and talk about things you are doing in your program to support this child's development.

If All Milestones Are NOT Met

Discuss next steps	In addition to the above steps, you will begin conversation about possible next steps. This is a collaborative conversation, allowing both parent and provider to share thoughts and concerns about the child. Through this discussion, some families may choose to continue developmental monitoring or seek additional information about their child's current development. Different families will have different needs. Your support for the child and family can continue with ongoing monitoring and conversation.
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All Milestones Are NOT Met

Encourage parents to share developmental checklist with the child's physician.

The child's physician is a great resource for families to begin. They can rule out some potential causes, including hearing and vision. Some physician offices also offer developmental screenings.

Discuss options for developmental screening.

If your child care or home visiting program offers developmental screening using a validated tool (ASQ-3, Dial-4, etc.) you can offer to conduct a screening.

If your program does not offer developmental screenings, discuss referral options. ParentLink offers screenings to any family across the state online or by phone. If more than one organization/program offers screening, identify the one preferred by the parent.

Follow-up with parents approximately 2 weeks after the initial referral.

You should follow-up with the parents in a couple of weeks to determine if they were able to connect with organization/program to schedule a time for a developmental screening.

If the family was not successful in connecting with the organization/program talk about the reasons. It is possible they just haven't had time. If they experienced barriers (transportation, hours, couldn't reach anyone, etc.), explore ways to overcome them. This may include reaching out to the organization with the family or facilitating a ride. In some cases, this may include identifying a new place to receive the screening.

Make program adjustments to fit the needs of the child

Regardless of whether or not the child received a developmental screening, you can still support continued development by making adjustments and adding activities to meet their needs.

If the child received a screening, let the parents know you would be very interested in receiving a copy of the results. Talk to them about how this information could help guide classroom activities and to help support conversation between you and the parents to develop shared goals for the child.

Tips for Talking with Parents about Developmental Concerns

Tips	Examples
<p>Talk about development regularly</p> <p>Talk with parents regularly about their child's development – not only at times of concern -- and provide them with resources so they can track milestones at home.</p>	<p>I am so happy to be Taylor's new teacher! I care a lot about making sure all my children are on track in terms of how they play, learn, speak, act, and move for their age, so I will be looking for and tracking Taylor's developmental milestones and sharing his progress with you regularly. It would be great if you would look for milestones at home, too, and let me know what you're seeing as well. I have some free milestone checklists that can help.</p>
<p>Use good listening skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen closely, make eye contact, nod when appropriate, and be silent when the parent is speaking • Repeat the parent's main points when you respond so they will know you heard and understood • Consider how the parent feels about what they are saying • Watch and listen closely for clues to those feelings and acknowledge them when you respond • Ask for more information when necessary 	<p>It sounds like you are pretty worried and I hear you saying that you do not hear Taylor speak clearly at home. Is that correct?</p> <p>Let's talk about what you have noticed at home. Can you describe specific situations?</p> <p>Is there anything else about Taylor's development you'd like to talk about?</p>
<p>When you have concerns to share:</p>	
<p>Highlight the child's strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let the parent know what the child does well and the milestones they are meeting • Keep the conversation positive 	<p>We love having Taylor in class. He follows the classroom rules and really loves to sing, dance, and act during our circle time.</p>
<p>Make sure you are well prepared</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest time in building meaningful relationships with the parents and discuss developmental progress regularly • Complete the milestone checklist for the child's age to help the parent know that you are basing your comments on facts and not just feelings 	<p>Since our last meeting, I have noticed a few things about Taylor that I would like to discuss with you. I've been completing a milestone checklist for him, like I do for all the children, and I see he is meeting his cognitive milestones very well. However, he is not meeting a few of his language/communication milestones. For one, I have noticed that Taylor doesn't speak clearly enough for most people to understand. As you can see on the checklist, a five-year-old typically speaks clearly.</p>
<p>Encourage the parent to share any concerns with the child's doctor</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remember it's not your role to make or even suggest a diagnosis • Remind parents of the importance of acting early on concerns 	<p>There might not be anything to be concerned about, but I do think it's important to talk to Taylor's doctor about this in the next few weeks to be sure. Take this checklist with you when you go, share it, and ask the doctor for a developmental screening. This will help the doctor and you to know whether Taylor might need a little extra help. Getting help early can make a big difference! Let me know if you need anything from me for that doctor's appointment.</p>
<p>Follow-up with the family in a few weeks</p>	<p>Thank you for taking time to meet with me again. I know the last time we talked about Taylor's development, we were concerned about his language skills. Have you been able to talk with Taylor's doctor about this?</p>

Tips for Talking with Parents about Developmental Concerns

How to Respond

If parents disagree with you about their child's behavior or abilities

- Try: Sometimes children behave differently at home than they do at school. I'm only able to share with you what I've seen in the classroom. How does Taylor act when he's around other children in the neighborhood?

If a parent gets angry or upset

- Try: I understand that you are upset. Like you, I want what's best for Taylor. That's why it's important for me to share with you what I'm seeing. If he does need some extra help, I want him to have the opportunity to get it as soon as possible. Do you want to discuss your questions and concerns now, or would you rather think about this a little more and meet again (in a couple of days, next week, etc.)?

If the parent reports that the doctor said wait and see

- Try: While it's true that every child develops at their own pace, there are certain milestones we typically see from most children by Taylor's age. If you are concerned, you can reach out to early intervention directly to see if Taylor qualifies for services. You don't need a doctor's referral. Acting early may make a real difference for Taylor, so it's better to find out for sure. If his development is delayed enough to qualify for help, you can get those services started right away and then follow-up with the doctor.

Be Mindful of Cultural Differences

Not all cultures place the same emphasis on particular developmental milestones. When communicating with families, be aware of your own cultural biases in making decisions about how to communicate with families.

These tips were taken from the CDC, "Learn the Signs. Act Early. Tips for Talking with Parents about Developmental Concerns". To view or download the full document on the CDC website, click [here](#).

Your efforts to understand essential developmental milestones and provide parents with the resources to help children will ensure all Missouri children reach their full potential!



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