



Tip Sheet 3 ***When to Use a Screening Tool***

Routine screening at predetermined ages for all young children helps assure parents when their child's development is like other children of the same age, and provides the best opportunity to identify potential delays early.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends developmental screening using a standardized tool at a minimum of three ages: 9, 18 and 24 or 30 months. The AAP also recommends screening whenever parents or medical providers are concerned about a child's development.



Why is developmental screening important?

Routine universal screening of young children with a validated tool promotes a better understanding of each child's development. Early identification of potential delays allows for timely access to appropriate supports and services promoting optimal development for every child.

From a first word to a first step, children's lives are full of important milestones. There are many points along the way that warrant the careful observation that a developmental screening tool can provide.

Beyond well-child exams, other programs serving young children may want to consider adding developmental screening to the services they provide. A coordinated approach within a community may provide screening at additional intervals beyond the AAP recommendation. Many programs have their own requirements for developmental screening practices, which should be taken into account when coordinating a community-based screening system. For example, Head Start screens each child upon enrollment.

Coordinating with community partners ensures that parents have many doors to developmental screening services. When planning this coordination, community-based programs will want to consider cost, staff time, the type of relationship they have with families, and other agencies providing screening when deciding how often to screen each child.

Each developmental screening tool has prescribed times for administration, linked to the age of a child.

- Be sure to refer to the tool's manual for appropriate "administration intervals." These intervals are the ages of a child at which there is an appropriate questionnaire or observation form.
- Some tools are designed so that you can screen a child at any age. Others may have limited "intervals" requiring you to plan accordingly.



Wisconsin Early Childhood
Collaborating Partners

Developmental Screening Tip Sheets

Tip Sheet 3 (continued) When to Use a Screening Tool

What's next for your team?

How often and at what intervals will your community screen children?

For more information:

- **American Academy of Pediatrics Policy Statement
*Identifying Infants and Young Children with
Developmental Disorders in the Medical Home: An
Algorithm for Developmental Surveillance and
Screening***
tinyurl.com/AAPPolicyStatement
- **Critical Time Periods for Early Childhood Screening
and Assessment**
tinyurl.com/PeriodicityTable

"Parents," throughout, refers to parents, family members who are primary care givers, guardians and/or foster parents. Developmental screening is most effective when integrated into the context of families and local communities. Engaging families in the process of development screening in a way that honors their cultural and linguistic practices will result in more accurate identification of potential delays and increased follow through with referrals. After all, parents are the most important people in a child's life.