

Early Support for Infants & Toddlers



Practice Guide: Screening

Overview

Many early intervention service providers use screening tools during referral and intake as a mechanism to determine if a child referred to early intervention should proceed to evaluation and assessment. In many instances administering a screening tool will **not** be necessary because a medical diagnosis and/or sufficient developmental information are available to determine that an evaluation and assessment is the appropriate next step. In other cases, screening may be needed to supplement information received from families and referral sources when making the determination to proceed with an evaluation to determine eligibility. In any case, the early intervention provider must inform the parent that an evaluation must be conducted if specifically requested by the parent at any time.

The results of screening may help to inform the professionals conducting an eligibility evaluation and assessment but they may NOT be used to determine a child's eligibility for Part C services. This is because screening instruments do not provide sufficient information in all required domains. This practice brief will help providers determine when screening may be needed for a particular child.

IDEA Part C Requirements

The 2011 regulations permit a lead agency to adopt procedures under 34 CFR §303.320 to screen infants and toddlers who are referred to determine whether they are suspected of having a disability. Developmental screening in all areas can be very helpful when insufficient developmental information is available to determine whether conducting an evaluation and assessment is appropriate as the next step. During the initial contacts with families and referral sources, Early Intervention (EI) team members will gather information about the child's abilities and skills across developmental areas that will help them understand the nature of the concerns that led to the referral. If, during this phase of the process, the EI team member is uncertain if the concerns expressed indicate that the child needs an evaluation and assessment, s/he may choose to request a screening of the child's skills and abilities before making the decision to proceed to the evaluation and assessment.

Part C regulations do require that information provided by hospitals, physicians and others involved with the child be reviewed as part of the child's evaluation and assessment. Therefore, any screenings or developmental assessments that were conducted prior to referral to ESIT must be considered in determining whether evaluation and assessment of the child is the appropriate next step. The information gathered should also be used to develop the IFSP if the child is found eligible. If the decision is made to conduct a formal screening, the FRC completes the following steps:

1. Explains and provides the parent/caregiver with the **ESIT Parent Rights**,
2. Explains the **Notice and Consent for Screening** form, and obtains the signature of the parent/caregiver.
3. Maintains copies of the signed **Notice and Consent for Screening** in the child's record.

Please refer to the ***Procedural Safeguards - Technical Assistance and Training Guide*** (<http://www.del.wa.gov/publications/esit/Default.aspx>) for further information about procedural safeguards.

Practice Considerations

The decision to proceed to evaluation and assessment is not always based on screening results that show areas of concern within a child’s development. For example, it may be determined through a conversation with the parent following a screening that the child is now able to perform skills they were not demonstrating at the time of the screening. In this case, the “delay” may have reflected a lack of opportunity to interact with specific materials and practice skills rather than a need for Part C eligibility evaluation; these skills quickly emerged following greater awareness by caregivers. Conversely, some children who pass a screening may still require further assessment and evaluation. Observations during the screening process about the functional use of skills or parent concerns or desire to proceed are valid reasons to proceed with eligibility determination even if the screening does not indicate a delay. The EI team may also determine further evaluation is necessary based on a parent’s description of atypical or other concerning developmental patterns.

Special care should be taken when administering developmental or social emotional screening tools and interpreting screening results if a family is from another culture, or English is their second language. Cultural and/or language factors such as lack of opportunity to practice targeted skills, the developmental expectations for a child within a particular culture, or whether the parent understood the intent may all influence a child’s performance on a screening tool and the screening results.

Initial screening information may be gathered by the FRC or other EI team member. This information must be shared with the team in order to make decisions regarding next steps. The following table will help the EI team assess the level of information present during the initial stages of intake and referral in order to determine whether screening would be an appropriate step prior to moving to evaluation and functional assessment.

IF...	Screening may be appropriate:	Screening may NOT be appropriate:	Additional Considerations
Initial developmental information gathered from referral sources and the parent is unclear, inconsistent, or the EI team is not able to determine if the child is in need of an evaluation and assessment or which areas are of greatest concern and require further evaluation.	✓		
Developmental concerns are more qualitative in nature and are not easily conveyed through verbal report.	✓		
No other professional has seen the child.	✓		
The family requests a screening even though the child’s described developmental skills and behaviors appear to be within a typical developmental range.	✓		If a parent requests an evaluation, an evaluation must be conducted.
The child has an established condition (a		✓	Children with

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diagnosed physical or mental condition) as defined by WA state Part C eligibility guidelines that has a high probability of resulting in development delay.			established conditions should be automatically eligible and proceed directly to the comprehensive developmental assessment. No screening should be conducted.
The child is referred to an ESIT Program with an existing diagnostic evaluation or assessment that indicates a delay in one or more areas of assessment.		✓	Depending on the age of the information available, this information should be used in eligibility determination. No screening is needed.
Child is referred to an ESIT Program with existing screening results, from a valid and reliable screening tool, that indicate the need for further assessment in one or more areas of development.		✓	There is no need to do an additional screening, evaluation should be conducted.

Implications of the Results of Screening

Once screening is completed, the EI team will need to make decisions about the next steps for evaluation and assessment.

- If results of screening are below cutoff scores in any area (i.e. show concerns or potential delays in any area) - refer for evaluation and assessment with parent consent.
- If results of the screening are above cutoff scores in all areas (i.e. show no concerns in any area) - reassure the family, and refer for evaluation only if parents have continuing concerns.
- If results are inconclusive (i.e. close to cutoff scores and/ or difficult to interpret in light of cultural or linguistic factors) - rescreen with an interpreter, another tool, and/or in a short period of time; refer to evaluation if parents have continuing concerns.

Resources

NECTAC Resources on Screening, Evaluation and Assessment

<http://nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/screening.pdf>

<http://www.nectac.org/topics/earlyid/screeneval.asp>

WA Resources

http://del.wa.gov/publications/esit/docs/PrescreenChart_English.pdf

Additional Resources

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/fh/mch/devscrn/ (Developmental and Social-Emotional Screening of Young Children in MN)

www.challengingbehavior.org/do/resources/documents/roadmap_1.pdf (Screening for Social Emotional Concerns: Considerations in the Selection of Instruments (TACSEI January, 2009))

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