



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON
Health

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Health Services Newsletter

SCREENING IN HEAD START

How are the children in your program growing and learning? Before you can answer that question your program must measure the growth and development of each child upon enrollment. This will help your program map how well each individual child is progressing. [The Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) require within 45 days (30 days for programs with shorter durations of 90 days or less) from a child's enrollment date, a program will obtain appropriate screenings to identify any developmental, sensory, and behavioral concerns. These screenings along with ongoing assessments help programs tailor learning experiences and other services to the individual needs of a child. They should also be used to determine if a child should receive a more formal evaluation to identify any disabilities. As a health services manager, you may or may not be responsible for these screenings. However, all health managers should partner with other content staff (disabilities coordinator, mental health consultant, family services workers, teachers, nutrition staff), families and your Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) to ensure appropriate screenings are provided and modifications are made to accommodate each child's needs.

Your program should have a record of:

1. Procedures used for screening and assessment.
2. Parent and family provided information that informed the screening process.
3. A report of screening results. This includes discussion of results with families and if further assessment or evaluation is needed.
4. Evidence that screening and follow-up assessment or evaluation was completed in a timely manner.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Screening.....	1
Supporting Staff.....	2
Engaging Families	2
For Your Family Newsletter	2
What next?	3
Empower Parents of Children with Disabilities.....	3
What is Screening, Assessment, and Evaluation?.....	3
Resources	4



SUPPORTING STAFF

Every program is different. Some health managers also serve as the disabilities coordinator and have extensive input and review of the screening process. Regardless of exactly how you fit in the screening process in your program, you have the opportunity to partner with other content staff and teachers to discuss screening results, health concerns, and ways to partner with families. As a health manager you can:

- Attend staff meetings to review screening and assessment results.
- Share important health information with other staff to inform screening results such as lead levels, chronic health conditions.
- Provide professional development opportunities.
- Engage your Health Services Advisory Committee member to provide training for staff or feedback on program screening processes.
- Partner with community organizations such as Child Find, your Local Education Agency, and Early Intervention Agencies.

Families can be the most powerful ally and asset throughout the screening process.

FOR YOUR FAMILY NEWSLETTER

YOU CAN TAILOR THE FOLLOWING
TO INCLUDE IN YOUR OWN
FAMILY NEWSLETTER.

We are so glad you have chosen to enroll your child in our Head Start program! To make sure we are helping your child learn in the best way possible, Head Start staff will be contacting you to discuss the growth and development of your child. We look forward to hearing how well your child is growing and the ways we can help him or her learn.

ENGAGING FAMILIES IN SCREENING & FOLLOW-UP

Families can be your most powerful ally and asset throughout the screening process. They are the expert on their child and can provide meaningful and reliable information. Screenings are also an opportunity to support parents to focus on their child and increase their understanding of their child's development. When parents are active partners in the assessment (and intervention) process, staff and families are able to share an understanding of what is best for the child, the parents' priorities, and goals for the child's learning and development. You can engage families by:

- Discussing and explaining the screening process and results. Make sure to include an explanation of the tools you used and any relevant developmental, linguistic or cultural accommodations made for their child.
- Listening to parent feedback and concerns on the screening and assessment system. What was useful or confusing to them?
- Helping parents navigate follow up. Does the child need a formal evaluation? If so, how can you help the parent begin this process?
- Engaging your Parent Committee to inform a program's screening procedures. How can our program make this easier for parents?
- Partnering with parents to determine individual health services appropriate for their child.



WHAT NEXT?

Information gathered during a child's first 45 days in your program should be used to determine if there is a need for further assessment and possibly formal evaluation. You might be asked to partner with families to determine the best next steps. Your role as health manager will also be to partner with the disabilities manager, mental health consultant, or other related provider to determine how your program can provide the optimal health services for each child.

ENGAGE FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Families of school age children with disabilities often describe their early experiences with assessment reports and individualized planning as confusing and intimidating. Head Start and Early Head Start can empower families with expectations they will carry with them into their child's school career. Families should be able to expect:

- assessment procedures and results will be explained to generate informed decisions,
- parent concerns will be addressed,
- resources, including other parents, will be identified to provide support and guidance.

Staff can help these parents practice communication, advocacy, and decision-making skills using screening and assessment results for their children.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, AND EVALUATION?

Screening

The screening process is the preliminary step to determine if sensory, behavioral, and development skills are progressing as expected. The screening itself does not determine a diagnosis or need for early intervention. Your screening process should begin at enrollment and be completed within the first 45 days of enrollment into Early Head Start and Head Start.

Assessment

Assessment is an on-going process to determine a child's and family's strengths and needs. The assessment process should be continued throughout a child's eligibility and be used to determine strategies to support the development of the child in the classroom and at home. This can be both a formal or informal process.

Evaluation

A formal evaluation is performed by a qualified professional to identify or diagnose a developmental, sensory, or behavioral condition or disability requiring intervention. Only children who were identified through screening and ongoing assessment as possibly having a condition or disability might require intervention. The Early Intervention Part C agency or Local Education Agency in your community must be notified for a formal evaluation to determine his or her eligibility for early intervention, special education or other related services.

RESOURCES

ECLKC Resources

1. [Screening and Assessment in Head Start](#)
2. [Early Head Start Tip Sheet No 1 Screening Premature Infants, August 2010](#)
3. [Early Head Start Tip Sheet No 27 Screening Infant/Toddler Behavioral Skills, October 2007](#)
4. [Webinar: Developmental Screening, Assessments and Evaluations for Infants and Toddlers](#)
5. [Developmental Screening and Assessment Instruments with an Emphasis on Social and Emotional Development for Young Children Ages Birth through Five](#)
6. [The Challenge of Assessing Children: One Migrant Head Start's Story](#)
7. [IEP Basics](#)
8. [Supporting Parents through the IEP/IFSP process](#)
9. [Developmental Screening, Assessment, and Evaluation: Key Elements for Individualizing Curricula in Early Head Start Programs](#)
10. [Sensory Screening Protocol](#)

NATIONAL CENTER ON HEALTH

Our Goal:

To help Head Start and Early Head Start programs implement best practices and effective approaches within medical and dental care access, health awareness, healthy active living, emergency preparedness, and environmental safety to support healthy outcomes and school readiness for young children and their families.

CONTACT US!

The National Center on Health welcomes your feedback on this newsletter issue as well as your suggestions for topics for future issues. Please forward your comments to

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School Readiness Begins with Health.

