

Developmental Delay (DD) Fact Sheet



What is a Developmental Delay?

Think of all the skills that children have to learn when they come into the world. We expect these skills to emerge naturally over time and know more or less when they should. This timetable for skills to emerge is commonly called the developmental milestones. Examples of skills include: talking, walking, eating solid food, etc. Children develop at different rates, but when these skills don't emerge more or less on a broad schedule, a child may be experiencing a developmental delay.

Definition of Developmental Delay under IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), defines Developmental Delay as...

Children with a disability for children aged three through nine (or any subset of that age range including ages three through five), may include a child –

(1) Who is experiencing developmental delays as defined by the State and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures in one or more of the following areas: Physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development; and

(2) Who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

[34 CFR §300.8 (b)].

It is a good idea to find out if your state has added details to this definition of DD. States are allowed to do so, if they choose. They also decide on the age range of children with who the term may be used (3-5, 3-9, or any subset between 3-9).

Your state may require that your local school district also adopt and use the term DD in working with children. However, your local school district may not use the term at all if your state has chosen not to use the term.

Five Developmental Areas

A developmental evaluation should be conducted by a highly trained professional who can use the results to create a profile of your child's strengths and weaknesses across the main developmental areas.

- Physical development
 - Such as fine and gross motor skills
- Cognitive development
 - Such as intellectual abilities
- Social or emotional development
 - Such as social skills and emotional self-regulation
- Adaptive development
 - Such as self-care skills

Adapted from NICHY (2011)

The results of the developmental evaluation will be used to decide if your child needs early intervention services and/or a treatment plan. Early intervention services are specifically designed to meet a child's individual needs. Examples of early intervention services include audiology or hearing services, physical therapy, occupational therapy, speech and language services, or assistive technology.



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