

Children with Special Needs

Early Warning Signs
Early Intervention



THE IMPORTANCE OF EARLY INTERVENTION

All children, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, are more alike than different. All children develop at different rates and in different ways. All children need safe and loving environments that will foster their optimal growth and value their uniqueness.

Some children are born with special needs that can effect their growth and ability to reach their full potential. Other children may show developmental concerns, delays or differences later in childhood. The first three years is a crucial time to notice warning signs that may indicate that a child needs special support services. Quality early intervention programs do make a difference in the lives of children with special needs and in the well being of their families.

Early intervention for young children with special needs can:

- minimize the effect of a high risk condition on a child's overall growth and development
- prevent at-risk conditions or early developmental irregularities from becoming more serious problems
- prevent the development of a "secondary" concern as a result of the initial developmental concern

THE GOAL OF EARLY INTERVENTION IS SUCCESS FOR EVERY CHILD!



REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

California Department of Education
Child Development Division
560 J Street, Suite 220
Sacramento, CA 95814
916.322.6233

Children's Health Council Parent Support Program
700 Sand Hill Road
Palo Alto, CA 94303
650.688.3608

Community Gatepath (Poplar ReCare)
875 Stanton Road
Burlingame, CA 94010
650.259.8500

County Office of Education Special Education Services
101 Twin Dolphin Drive
Redwood City, CA 94065-1064
650.802.5300

Golden Gate Regional Center
120 Howard Street, Third Floor
San Francisco, CA 94105
415.546.9222

Mid-Peninsula Speech and Language Clinic
900 Welch Road, Suite 20
Palo Alto , CA 94304
650.321.8111

MORE for Infants and Families
1764 Marco Polo Way
Burlingame, CA 94010
650.259.8544

PARCA/Developmentally Delayed Children and Adults
1750 El Camino Real #105
Burlingame, CA 94010
650.312.0730

Parents Helping Parents Resource Center
3041 Olcott Street
Santa Clara, CA 95054
408.727.5775



STOP LOOK LISTEN

ALL BEHAVIOR HAS MEANING

The early warning signs listed in this brochure are only a few of the indicators that a child may need further assessment and observation. If you suspect that your child or a child in your care may have special needs, seek assistance immediately. Early special help for a child is the best way to prevent more serious problems from developing later. Don't wait until a child enters kindergarten before you ask for help.

RISK FACTORS

The following situations can place young children at greater risk for having or acquiring special needs and developmental concerns:

- prenatal or other exposure to alcohol, drugs or tobacco
- children born to teen mothers or women over 40
- inadequate mother or infant nutrition
- chronic poverty
- prematurity and/or low birth weight
- home environment lacking adequate stimulation
- child abuse and neglect
- prolonged or unusual delivery

Any child may demonstrate some of these behaviors and NOT be having a difficulty. Certain behaviors may be part of a particular personality or temperament and should be looked at in the light of **the whole child.**

GENERAL BEHAVIOR

The child...

- By six months of age, avoids being held or resists being soothed or comforted
- Avoids or rarely makes eye contact with others
- Gets unusually frustrated when trying to do simple tasks that most children of the same age can do
- Displays violent behavior (tantrums, screaming, hitting) on a daily basis
- Stares into space, rocks the body, or talks to self more often than other children of the same age
- Has sleeping, feeding, eating or toileting problems

VISION

The child...

- Squints, tilts, or turns head to look at angles
- Frequently rubs eyes or complains that eyes hurt
- Has reddened, watering, or encrusted eyelids
- Often bumps into things or falls on the playground
- Closes one eye when trying to look at distant objects
- Sometimes or always crosses one or both eyes

HEARING

The child...

- Talks in a very loud or very soft voice
- Has had many ear, nose or throat infections or allergies
- By four months does not turn towards the source of sounds or voices or react to loud noises
- Uses gestures rather than words to communicate
- Usually turns the same ear toward a sound to hear
- Has unusually unclear speech compared with other children of the same age



PHYSICAL/MOTOR

The child...

- Has stiff arms or legs, or the opposite and has floppy or limp body posture
- Has poor coordination or moves in a clumsy manner compared with other children of the same age
- Uses one side of the body more than the other
- At three months, still has difficulty holding up head
- By age one, has difficulty sitting without help, standing up, reaching for objects or picking up objects
- By age two, has difficulty walking without help, kicking a large ball, or building a tower with two or three blocks
- By age three, does not walk up or down stairs, run without falling frequently, or turn pages of a book

COMMUNICATION/LANGUAGE

The child...

- By 6 months is unusually quiet and rarely makes sounds
- By age one, does not understand simple first words ("bye-bye", "bottle") and does not say simple first words ("mama" or "dada")
- By age two, is not talking at all, or does not speak in two word phrases
- By age three, does not follow simple directions, or speak in three- or four-word sentences



COGNITION/THINKING

The child...

- By age one, has a hard time solving simple problems such as finding an object after seeing it hidden
- By age two, cannot identify simple body parts or recognize self in a mirror
- By age three, cannot answer simple questions about a story, and cannot understand simple math concepts such as "one", "more" or count 1-2-3

EMOTIONAL/SOCIAL & PLAYING

The child...

- Displays self-abusive and repetitive behaviors (head-banging and rocking)
- Overreacts (screaming or crying) to unexpected sounds (unusual noises or sirens)
- Has few coping or problem solving behaviors
- Reacts strongly to the feel of certain substances or textures, and may not like being touched by parents or caregivers
- By age one, does not play games like "peek-a-boo" or "pat-a-cake"
- By age two, does not imitate parent or caregiver doing routine tasks (pretend cooking or cleaning)
- By age three, tends to play alone rather than with other children, or initiates play through hitting and pushing

REMEMBER

- Many young children with developmental concerns have high potential for both intellectual and creative achievement.
- A thorough knowledge of normal growth and development is necessary in understanding and working with all children.
- The partnership that exists between parents, caregivers, teachers, and specialists is critical for children with special needs to reach their full potential!

(Information adapted from the California Department of Education, the California Child Care Health Program, and the Portage Project TEACH, Region 5 Regional Access Project.)

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