

Developmental Evaluation



Talking with Parents

Sometimes it can be hard to know what to say to a parent when you have concerns or a developmental screening tool indicates that their child would benefit from a more thorough evaluation. Remember that at this stage you are using your professional judgement or a screening tool; you have **not** diagnosed a developmental delay.

You are helping parents to create a healthy foundation for their child; healthy physical, social, and emotional development is essential for success in school and life. Below are some things to keep in mind when talking to parents about a concern.

Conversation Tips: Empowering parents to want more information

- Take time to elicit their thoughts and feelings
 - If a parent is anxious, validate that their feelings are normal. The more you remain calm, the more calm the parent will be.
 - Explain that the parent hasn't done anything wrong.
- Reassure parents that an evaluation does not necessarily mean that their child will need services, nor does it commit them to services if that's what is recommended.
 - Services are completely **voluntary**.
- Tell them it is common to refer children for further evaluation, and that this is a **positive** step they can take to get more information on how to best support their child.
 - We know that parents want to give their children every advantage possible.

Sample Statements

1. Accentuate the positive first.

Thank you for participating in John's developmental screening. I noticed how well he is using his hands and fingers to reach for objects. He is also making a lot of appropriate sounds for his age. You must be talking and singing to him a lot at home, because what a difference you are making!

2. Ask for their feedback.

I noticed that he is not rolling over yet. This is a milestone I would typically expect to see at this age. What are your thoughts?

3. Make your recommendation.

I think it would be helpful to have someone who specializes in early childhood development take a closer look at him. We all want what's best for John and to give him every advantage possible. Let's see if he needs a little extra help in reaching his milestones.

4. Emphasize that earlier is better.

John's brain is growing so rapidly, and he is learning so many new things at this age. If he does need help, evidence shows that getting help early can make a big difference for his later development. This way we're doing everything we can to make sure he's ready for kindergarten.