

ECE Guide for Waikato Early Intervention Services

An early identification and referral
guide for Early childhood centres



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Contents

Red Flags:

- Physical
- Social and Emotional
- Communication
- Sensory Processing
- Daily Functioning Skills

I have concerns about my child's development – what can I do now?

Procedure for identification and referral

Who can we refer to?

About this guide

This quick reference guide is designed to assist early years professionals in deciding whether to refer for additional advice, assessment and/or support.

It is not a formal screening or diagnostic tool. This guide highlights concerns in a child's developmental domains- social/emotional; communication; physical (fine and gross motor); cognition; daily functioning and sensory processing. Domains of children's development are closely related, as development in one influences and is influenced by the other domains. There is overlap within these domains as children learn and grow in a holistic way with their development interwoven across all their experiences. For example, fine motor skills are essential for performing everyday skills like self-care tasks (e.g. opening lunch boxes, using cutlery, putting on shoes) and academic skills (e.g. drawing, writing, cutting).

All children develop at their own pace; however, the guidelines provided in this booklet can provide a starting point for facilitating conversations about a child's development and a plan of action to obtain a more detailed developmental assessment.



The following pages outline some of the important red- flags or warning signs that a child might not be progressing as they should. A single red flag is not always an indication for concern, rather the impact of one or more red flags on the child's everyday functioning and participation, could be the start of a conversation about how a child is developing.

The negative statements of 'does not...' and 'not able to...' have been used to highlight a delay or absence of skills which lie at the boundary of the typical developmental range. Therefore, this guide is not intended as a definitive list, screening tool or checklist, rather it provides some information which can alert the teacher to the need for further investigation.

Physical

- Differences between right and left sides of body in strength, movement or tone
- Marked low tone (floppy) or high tone (stiff and tense) which is impacting on functional motor skills

Gross Motor

- Is not sitting well by 10 months
- Does not want to stand up, even supported, by 12 months
- Is clumsy (trips a lot when walking or running)
- Fatigues easily during movement activities
- Poor posture, slumps and finds it difficult to sit upright
- Poor balance and falls over with a gentle bump
- Has difficulty getting up from the floor (uses bear walk, person, or table).

By 3 years of age:

- Unable to jump on the spot
- Unable to kick a ball
- Is not able to climb stairs with minimal or no support.

By 4 years of age:

- Unable to safely play on outdoor equipment without difficulty.

Fine Motor

Fine motor skills refer to small and precise movements such as those of the hands. This domain also includes vision, as this is important in hand-eye coordination.

- Not reaching for and holding (grasping) toys/objects
- Hands frequently in a fisted position after 6 months of age.

By 18 months of age:

- Unable to pass an object from one hand to the other
- Unable to pick up, hold, bite, or chew food
- Unable to take things out of a container
- Unable to pick up small things using index finger and thumb
- Cannot handle small objects.

By 3 years of age:

- Difficulty with activities such as feeding, dressing, throwing and catching a ball
- Cannot draw lines and simple shapes such as a circle
- Cannot turn the pages of a book.



Social and Emotional

- Does not seem interested in what's happening around them
- Does not look at you
- Is withdrawn or worried
- Excessive anxiety as shown by things such as: change in appetite, not enjoying their usual activities, staying behind adults all of the time.
- Does not interact well with other people (e.g. is aggressive or shows no interest)
- Excessive anger through hurting others, slamming/throwing objects, damaging property
- Excessive anxiety related to being around new and/or familiar people/situations
- Has difficulty taking turns and sharing
- Does not notice or identify emotions in self or others
- Struggles with activities that have rules/winning/losing
- Frequent, unexplainable temper tantrums.

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Communication

- Does not consistently respond to sounds
- No babbling, pointing, or gestures by 12 months of age
- Is using fewer than five words at 18 months
- Does not imitate or copy
- Does not respond to name
- Does not understand simple instructions – for example, 'Ball please?'
- Vocabulary does not seem to be growing
- Not interested in talking with or playing with adults or other children
- Unusual language – repeating phrases from movies, echoing other people, repetitive use of phrases, odd intonation
- Slow processing of information/slow to understand what is said
- Frequent difficulty retrieving words.

By 3 to 4 years of age:

- Does not ask 'who', 'what', 'why' questions
- Language is not understood by most people
- Does not use three-word sentences.



Sensory Processing

These are some behaviors you may want to look out for that could indicate difficulty with sensory processing. Remember that we all respond to sensory input, however we should be concerned when the response significantly impacts the ability to participate in important daily activities.

- Distressed by loud noises or busy places
- Indifferent to pain, hunger, or the cold
- Repetitive movements such as hand wringing/flapping, rocking, spinning, pacing, or bouncing
- Clothing preferences and avoidances such as clothing textures, seams, tags and resisting shoes or socks
- Picky eater- refusing food because of texture. Strong preferences such as crunchy, bland foods. Anxiety or gagging when presented with new foods
- Avoidance of messy play, dirt, sand, bare feet on grass, getting hands dirty
- Difficulty with bathing, hair and teeth being brushed
- Making constant noises (singing, humming, clicking)
- Using extreme force during tasks. Jumping, crashing or bumping into things on purpose
- Spatial awareness difficulty
- Craves spinning, rocking, or rotary motions
- Doesn't notice sounds, others around them or respond to name
- Needs to touch everything- people, items and wants to put things in mouth
- Resistant to moving activities such as swings, slides, elevators, or escalators
- Overly sensitive to smells or smells unusual items and materials.



Daily Functioning Skills

By the age of 3- 4 years:

- Is unable to feed self using utensils (spoon, fork)
- Refuses to eat or has power struggles over food
- Difficulty with falling asleep at night or staying asleep
- Challenges with bathing, washing hands
- Difficulty with toilet training
- Wetting and/or soiling pants during the day at 4-5 years old
- Is unable to dress and/or help with dressing (putting on shoes, undo buttons, pull up pants)



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I have concerns about a child's development—now what do I do?

Early intervention means providing help as early as possible for a child.

When observation and discussions suggest that a child has a potential developmental concern, referral may be necessary, so that formal screening and assessment can occur.

Responding early, rather using a prolonged 'wait and see' approach, will result in several benefits such as:



- ✓ **Improvement in the development area of concern**
- ✓ **Prevention of secondary difficulties arising in other areas of development**
- ✓ **Improved educational outcomes**
- ✓ **Increased school readiness**
- ✓ **Increased self-esteem and self-efficacy**
- ✓ **Better peer relationships**

Making a Referral

It is important to have a clear procedure for the identification and referral of children who need learning support.

An example of the procedure might include the following steps:

- Initial concerns would be expressed to a team leader and/or centre manager
- Discussion at a team meeting to clarify concerns
- Observations of the child to identify more precisely the nature of the concern. These might involve running records, time sampling, a language sample, Learning Stories, video recordings, ABC (Antecedent, behaviour, consequence) data gathering forms
- If a concern has been identified then conversation with the parent would be initiated. A formal meeting to discuss these concerns would be arranged, utilising the data gathered through observations.
- If it is agreed that the child requires further intervention, then a referral would be suggested. This process would be explained to whānau, then with permission, the process of filling in and signing referral forms would begin.

Early Intervention Services

In the Waikato there are three early intervention providers:

The Ministry of Education

Email: SEWaikato.Referrals@education.govt.nz
Phone: 07 850 8880

McKenzie Centre

Email: admin@mckenziecentre.org.nz
Phone: 07 839 5357



Wana Tamariki (formerly Conductive Education Waikato Trust) is a fun, play-based and whanau-focused early intervention service for infants and children with developmental delays. We can support children from birth to school age who need support meeting developmental milestones.

We welcome referrals from anyone (with parental/caregiver's prior consent) who feels a child may benefit from our support. A child does not need a medical diagnosis to access our service. Teachers can refer with the permission of the family or the family can self-refer. Referral is straightforward with a simple one-page referral form to fill in. After this form is received, an initial assessment of the child is organised which is undertaken by two of the relevant team listed above. If the child meets our criteria, specific support and strategies will be developed, in partnership with parents and ECE, to support the child to reach his/her potential

Please do not hesitate to contact Wana Tamariki for further information:

07 8557013
admin@wanatamariki.nz
www.wanatamariki.nz

Useful Websites:

autismnz.org.nz

education.govt.nz/early-childhood/teaching-and-learning/early-intervention/

kidshealth.org.nz/concerned-about-your-childs-development

plunket.org.nz

theotttoolbox.com

wellchild.org.nz



Although this document may be helpful in determining when to seek out further advice, it is not a replacement for diagnosis, intervention, or medical advice from professionals trained to properly assess the development of infants, toddlers, and young children. The information contained in this booklet was compiled from a variety of sources and is for general informational purposes only. Although every attempt has been made to ensure its accuracy, no warranties, or representations, expressed or implied, are made concerning the accuracy, or completeness of the information contained in this document.

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