

# 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.*