# Chapter 3: What to Do When You Suspect a Delay

**Introduction:** Every child is unique, but there are skills that you and your child’s doctor will be watching for to see if your child is reaching developmental milestones as expected. Screening for expected skills is an important part of well-child visits with a pediatrician or family doctor. Screening can help identify the first sign that your child may need an evaluation or benefit from services, extra opportunities to practice certain skills, or different ways of learning skills.

## Definitions:

* The terms **'developmental delay'** or **'global development delay'** are used when a child takes longer to reach certain development milestones than other children their age. This could include learning to walk, learning to talk, attempting to meet their own needs, learning new things, and interacting with others socially and emotionally.
* **Family:** Families provide support, love, and care, and a sense of belonging by providing social, emotional, physical, and other support to each other. Family includes parents, brothers, sisters, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, foster parents, and others who share responsibility and support for each other.
* **Professional:** A professional is a member of a profession who has special experience and expertise in their area of practice. A professional is someone whose job requires special education, training, and skill and who is subject to standards and ethics in their field.
* **Team:** A team is a group of diverse individuals, all working together for a common purpose. The individuals on a team should have common goals and objectives and work together toward achieving those goals.

## What Families Should Expect:

* Your child may first go through a screening process to determine if an evaluation is necessary. Every child’s screening may be different. During this process, you may expect it to feel scary when you think your child might have a delay. Professionals may use language and terms that you might never have heard before and you may not know what they all mean.
* Expect that there will be much to learn.
* It might be hard to hear that your child might have a delay. The team will want you to ask questions, even if you feel it’s a question you should know the answer to.
* The results of the screening might not be able to be shared with you right away. If this is the case, ask when you might expect to hear about the results.

## What Families Want Their Team Members to Know:

* I want team members to know the struggles I am having with my child at home and when we go out.
* You can help it be less scary if you explain the concepts and benefits of developmental screening, give me a clear overview of how screening works, and review the specifics of how to complete a screening with me before the screening starts.
* All of this is new to me. There is so much to learn, and the process is confusing. Please talk to me in language I can understand and explain the terms you are using. Remember, you do this all the time, but I am dealing with coming to terms with the possibility that my child is delayed while learning a new system at the same time.
* It is hard to hear that my child might have a developmental delay. It’s even harder to wait to hear the results of a screening or test. Please do your best to get results back to me quickly and provide me with ideas for how to help my child if there is a suspected delay.

## What Professionals Want Families to Know:

* We know that screenings and evaluations for possible delays can be scary to parents. Try to think of the process as a way to see your child, what they are learning, and how they grow. This might help you feel more comfortable with the process and to see successes where you may not have before.
* We can make the process easier for you if you let us know what you need to be more comfortable during your child’s screening. We may be able to conduct screenings with you. Let us know if we need to do a better job to clarify the process, answer your questions, and help you better understand the screening tool, and what it is looking for.

## Family Checklist:

* Have I told my child’s doctor that I have concerns about what my child can and cannot do?
* Do I have notes about my concerns that I can share with my child’s doctor?
* Have I followed up on any recommendations for my child?
* Am I participating actively in the screening process for my child?
* Do I know what to do with the screening results?

## Team Member Checklist:

* Do we take the time to explain the screening process to families in a way they can understand?
* Do we have multiple ways to engage families including, written materials, family nights or open houses, in-person screening processes, or parent training events?
* Do we communicate screening results quickly and in a positive way?
* Do we provide families with appropriate, timely and reliableinformation about referrals, services and supports, and learning activities- including the time frames that may be involved?
* Do we follow up with families periodically and throughout the process, including post-screening or evaluation to discuss further questions and concerns?

## Resources:

[Center for Parent Information and Resources: Early Intervention Overview](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/ei-overview/)

[Child Development Concerns](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/child-development-concerns)

[Communicating With Your Child's School Through Letter Writing](https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/communicating-your-childs-school-letter-writing)

[Learn the Signs Act Early](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html)

[Developmental Milestones](http://cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html)

[Disability Rights Ohio](https://www.disabilityrightsohio.org/)

[Early and Periodic Screening, Diagnostic and Treatment](http://medicaid.gov/medicaid/benefits/early-and-periodic-screening-diagnostic-and-treatment/index.html)

[Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](https://sites.ed.gov/idea/)

[Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities](https://www.ocecd.org/)

[Ohio Coalition for the Education of Children with Disabilities Tip sheet: Communication (for Parents)](https://filecabinet5.eschoolview.com/0070A15E-AF6D-4D46-909C-064C531689BF/Communication%20Tips%20for%20My%20Childs%20Right%20to%20FAPE%20Training.pdf)

[Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities: Ohio Early Intervention Families Section](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/families)

[Ohio Department of Education: Families of Children with Disabilities](https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Families-of-Students-with-Disabilities)

Ohio Department of Education [Office for Exceptional Children: Ohio Required and Optional Forms](https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education/Federal-and-State-Requirements/Ohio-Required-and-Optional-Forms-Updated)

[Ohio Department of Education: Special Education](https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Special-Education)

[Ohio Statewide Family Engagement Center](https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/)

[Playing a Role in the IEP Process](https://www.understood.org/en/articles/playing-a-role-in-the-iep-process): Also available in Spanish

[Q&A about Part B of IDEA: Parent Participation](https://www.parentcenterhub.org/qa2/)

[Should I Be Concerned About My Child’s Development?](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/families)

[What is Evidence-Based Early Intervention](https://ohioearlyintervention.org/what-is-ei)

[Working Together to Achieve Family Outcomes](https://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/decrp/PGF_FAM1_professionalroles_2018.pdf)

[Youth.gov: The Impact of Family Engagement](https://youth.gov/youth-topics/impact-family-engagement)