

HELPING YOUR BABY OR YOUNG CHILD WITH SPECIAL DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS



Dear Parents and Caregivers,

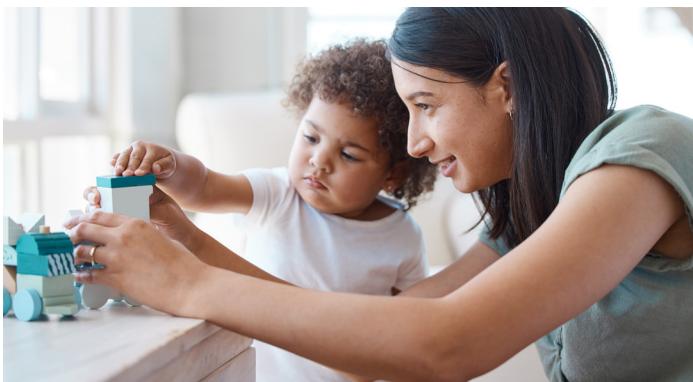
Is your child learning at a slower pace than other kids their age? You might wonder what to do next. Should you wait and see if they catch up? Try some activities at home to help them learn? Or get professional help?

Many young children with medical diagnoses might also learn at a slower pace. The **Early Connections team** wants you to know there are many resources to help your child develop.

What are developmental delays?

Babies and young children are always growing and learning new things. Development includes skills like rolling over, sitting up, crawling, walking, or talking. It also includes learning everyday skills like eating, dressing, and using the bathroom. Young children are also learning to connect with others. They do this through playing, smiling, and taking turns.

When a child is not showing these skills at the usual age, they might have a developmental delay. Developmental delays are common. About 1 in 6 children experience them. Many of these children catch up as they get older, but some might continue to have delays. The good news is there are many services to help children with their development.



Where can I find free help for my child's development?

Don't wait to get help for your child's development. Talk to your child's doctor about what you are noticing. Reach out to these resources (and see links at the end of this handout):

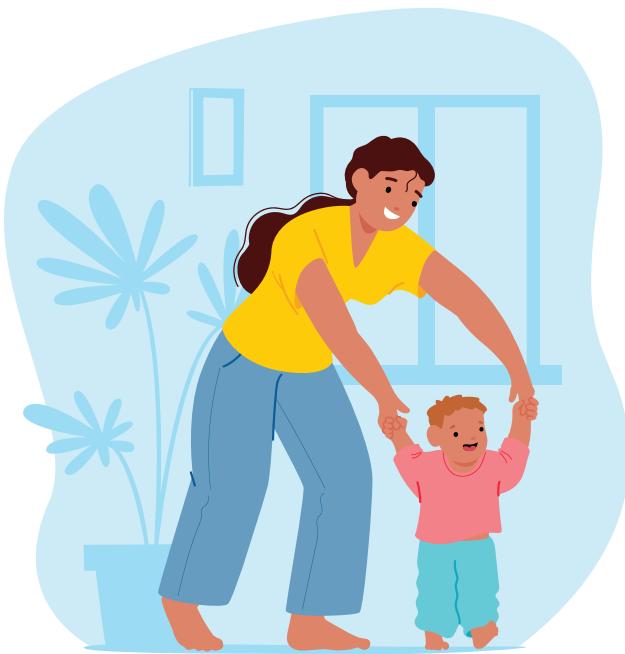
- **Early Start:** This program is California's early intervention system. It helps children from birth to 3 years old. Early Start offers services to support your child's development. You don't have to wait for a referral to Early Start. You can contact your local Regional Center and ask for an intake. First, they do an evaluation to see how your child is doing in different areas. In an evaluation, they will watch how your child moves, makes sounds, and plays. Some children can qualify even if they don't have delays, based on their medical history. After talking with you about the results of the evaluation, they create a plan for services. Most of the time, Early Start services happen at home.
- **Family Resource Center:** These centers are often run by parents who have children with developmental delays. They offer resources and can connect you with other families.
- **Help Me Grow:** Help Me Grow LA has a phone line and website to help families connect with local resources. If you ever feel stuck or need more information, they can be a big help.

Things to remember

When a child has a medical condition or has been sick, it's common for them to have delays in their development. This is because their body is focused on healing. If you're worried, talk to your child's doctor to make sure the services go at a pace that works for your child. And don't worry if your child is not meeting all their developmental milestones. Developmental milestones are things most children do at a certain age. For example, the age when a child walks, or puts two words together. If your child is feeling sick or recovering from an illness, they might be delayed in their developmental milestones. They will learn at the pace that is right for them.

If your child was born early ("premature"), then they will need more time to meet their milestones. This website has helpful information about how that works: www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/Corrected-Age-For-Preemies.aspx

If your child still needs help after age 3, Early Start will connect them to services for older children. If your child has a developmental disability, California has help for them for their whole life. This help can make your child become as independent as possible. There are also free school services and supports for young children who need extra help after age 3.



TIPS FOR PARENTS

With early intervention services, you are in charge! You know your child best. Here are some tips to get the best support for your child:

- **Stay in touch with your Service Coordinator.** If your child is in Early Start, you'll have a Service Coordinator. They help make sure your child gets all the services they need. Don't be afraid to reach out if you have any questions or concerns.
- **Learn about the people helping your child.** Ask for the name and contact information of anyone working with your child. Ask what kind of service they are providing. Keep these cards in a safe place.
- **Ask your therapists or evaluators to give you copies of your child's reports.** These might be useful to your medical providers and help you track your child's progress over time.
- **Get involved and ask questions.** Early intervention works best when you're involved. It can be tempting to use the time when your child is with the therapist to do other things. But if you can, try to join in. You'll learn a lot and can get ideas for activities to do at home.

Where can I find online resources for more support?



Early Start Program: Information Packet for Individuals & Families

The Department of Developmental Services has an Early Start program booklet for caregivers. Different languages are available.

[www.dds.ca.gov/consumers/
new-information-packet/](http://www.dds.ca.gov/consumers/new-information-packet/)



Early Start Program: Regional Center Lookup

To find the Early Start program closest to you, enter your address in this look-up tool.

[www.dds.ca.gov/rc/
lookup-rcs-by-county/](http://www.dds.ca.gov/rc/lookup-rcs-by-county/)



Family Resource Centers

Parent-to-parent support and resources.

www.frcnca.org



Help Me Grow LA

Call 833-903-3971 or visit the website for resources.

[publichealth.lacounty.gov/mch/
helpmegrow/](http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/mch/helpmegrow/)



Milestones Moments Tracker

The CDC has an app to help you track your child's milestones from ages 2 months to 5 years.

[www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/
milestones-app.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html)



Baby Navigator

This website gives you info on what milestones to look for. It shows you how to support your child's development.

www.babynavigator.com



Pathways

This website has resources about child development. It also has activities to do with your baby.

www.pathways.org



Vroom

Vroom offers tips to help you make the most of everyday moments with your child. Visit the website for more info or to sign up for tips.

www.vroom.org



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