

RECOGNIZING & ASSISTING CHILDREN WHO ARE SHOWING DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

a handbook for parents and guardians



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INTRODUCTION

Monarch House has created this handbook as a resource for parents and guardians of infants and young children.

At Monarch House, we understand the important role parents and caregivers have in the early detection of developmental delays.

The research is clear that early intervention is beneficial for a child and therefore, the earlier a concern can be identified the sooner therapy can start.

This handbook outlines the steps you can take in identifying developmental concerns and provides guidance for next steps.



ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

DEFINITIONS

Developmental delay refers to the child not meeting/showing developmental milestones, such as sitting, walking or talking.

A developmental delay can be caused by organic, psychological or environmental factors.

Developmental disability is a cognitive, physical or social impairment that occurs in infancy or early childhood and lasts throughout the lifetime.

A developmental disability can improve greatly with early intervention and supports.

Motor skills are acts that lead to complex body movements. Gross motor movements include actions such as crawling, sitting, jumping and include larger muscles and body parts. Fine motor skills involve smaller muscles (i.e., hands) and are important in dressing, eating, writing etc.

Communication is the exchange of thoughts, information or feelings with another individual. This can be in the form of language or gestures and non-verbal messages.

In this handbook, difficulty refers to “not often or rarely showing age appropriate skills”.

A chart of typical developmental milestones can be found at:



...or you can ask your doctor for a copy.



WHAT TO DO

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

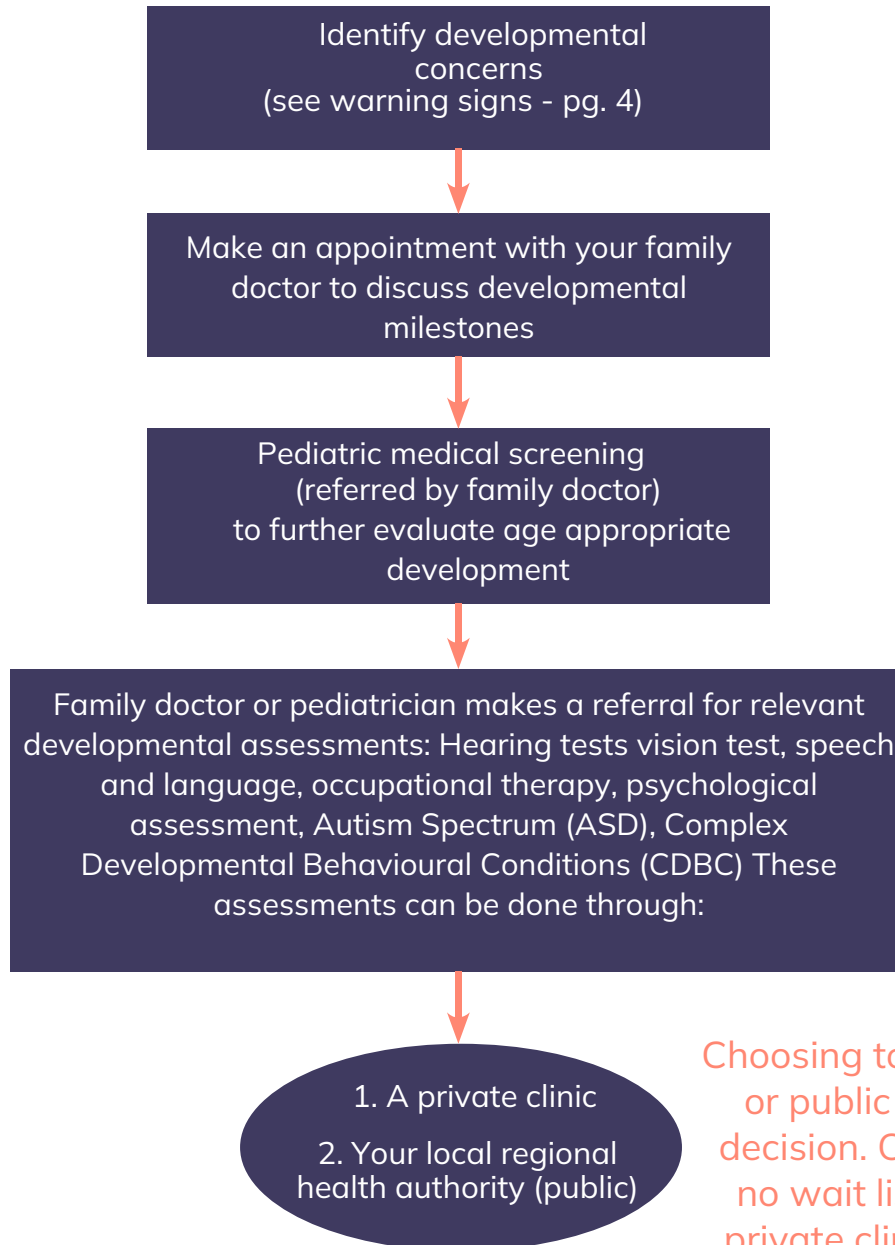
- **Difficulty with communication:**
 - Uses less words than other children his/her age
 - Loss of language skills
 - Does not understand simple instructions
 - Uses few or no gestures
- **Behaviour concerns:**
 - Easily upset when routine changes
 - Often does repetitive movements with objects
 - Often does repetitive movements with body parts (i.e., arms, hands)
 - Has difficulty paying attention to an activity compared to other children his or her age.
- **Difficulty with social/interaction skills:**
 - Avoids making eye contact
 - Does not share interests/objects with others
 - Does not listen when called by name
- **Self care delays:**
 - Bed time and sleeping patterns are not consistent
 - Feeding issues (i.e., picky eater, doesn't chew food)
 - Difficulty with toileting
 - Dependent on others for dressing
- **Motor concerns:**
 - Avoids playing on playground equipment
 - Seems to be more clumsy than other children
 - Uses one side of the body much more often than the other
 - Finds it hard to keep postural control (i.e., sitting)

Note: if your child shows two or more of the above signs regularly, make an appointment to see your family doctor.



IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS

Parents, trust your instincts when it comes to your child's development, you know them best! It is important to continually monitor your child's development and seek out second opinions if needed to ensure your concerns are properly addressed.



Choosing to go the private or public route is your decision. Often there are no wait lists through a private clinic, which can speed up the process.

The Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) has programs to help your child (see page 8) including: Early Intervention Therapy Program, Infant Development Program and Supported Child Development.

Call MCFD (1.800.663.9122) for more information

*A child does not need a diagnosis to access these programs

IN THE MEANTIME: STRATEGIES FOR THE HOME

Communication/social/play activities that support interaction and basic communication skills. These activities should be fun – if you or your child are becoming frustrated, stop and try again another time.

- Building blocks, ball drop toys, push button toys – work on your child taking one turn and then you taking a turn. If it is difficult for your child to play with toys you can try playing a simple tickling or chase game:
 - 1) Do a quick tickle or chase
 - 2) Stop and wait
 - 3) Encourage your child to communicate with you that they want you to “do it again”. Your child might communicate this by looking at you/making eye contact, using gestures or saying words. Be realistic in what you expect from your child and then be consistent in expecting this of him/her every time.
- Play can help a child develop independent skills such as dressing, bathing or feeding. To practice, play with a doll together (feed baby, bathe baby and put baby to bed) and pretend kitchen (take turns ‘eating’ what each other has made).
- Songs such as ‘Wheels on the Bus’, ‘Twinkle Twinkle’ & ‘Itsy Bitsy Spider’. If your child is interested help them do the actions by touching their hands.
- Books with simple pictures, colours or shapes – this can be a great quiet activity that you can do with your child, providing shared enjoyment and the opportunity to practice turn-taking when flipping the pages.

Helpful tips:

- Get down to your child’s level
- Simplify instructions and emphasize key words. For example, instead of saying “now we are going to put one block on top of the other” say “stack the block”.
- Be patient and give praise for all efforts.



• Supporting Positive Behaviours & Independent Skills

through the use of structured environments, communication style and play. It's important that these activities are fun – if you or your child are becoming frustrated stop and try again another time.

- We can set our children up for success predictable routine; children thrive in a structured environment. Make routines for daily events such as meal times and bedtimes.

This will help your child better understand what is expected of them (i.e., at meals I eat at the table and use utensils).

- Look for the positive behaviours you see your child doing and let him/her know what a terrific job he/she is doing. It is useful to teach appropriate behaviour rather than saying “no”. “No” provides zero information to a child. For example, when your child reaches for your coffee cup provide information and turn this into a time to teach the appropriate behaviour to your child. Instead of saying “no” say something like “Your cup is over here, this one belongs to Mommy/Daddy”.

- Providing an environment free of distractions will help your child be more successful in completing tasks independently. By clearing toys and other distractions your child will be able to focus their attention more easily on your instructions and/or the task at hand.

- Children often use behaviour as a way of communicating their wants/needs. It is important to encourage your child to use their words, take a break or ask for help.

- Exposing your child to different environments is very important to their development. Allow them to practice on different equipment at the park or gym to work on strengthening gross motor skills.

- When teaching your child life skills (i.e., putting on shoes, using a spoon), find time when you are not rushed and can allow you and your child extra time to practice.

Helpful tips:

- Provide clear and realistic expectations
- Demonstrate patience
- Do something active with your child (i.e., dance, chase, stretching)



MONARCH HOUSE IS HERE TO HELP

At Monarch House we understand that supports and resources are important to parents and guardians of infants and young children. Please see below for a list of resources both online and in the community to assist you through any challenges you may face. Remember, you are not alone; there are programs and professionals in your community to support your child and family. If you have questions or concerns regarding your child's development, please do not hesitate to contact us at Monarch House. We are here to help you in any way we can.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS & RESOURCES

Monarch House

info@monarchhouse.ca www.monarchhouse.ca

At Home Funding Program

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/at_home/pdf/ahp_guide.pdf

Infant Development Program (IDP)

https://www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/idp.htm

Early Intervention Therapies (Speech & Occupational Therapy)

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs

Supported Child Development

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/scd.htm

Ministry of Children and Family Support Line

1.877.387.7027

Autism BC

www.autismbc.ca

Regional Contacts for Children and Youth with Special Needs:

www.mcf.gov.bc.ca/spec_needs/contacts.htm

The information in this Monarch House handbook is provided for educational and informational purposes only, and is not intended to be a substitute for a health care provider's consultation. Please consult your own physician or appropriate health care provider about the applicability of any opinions or recommendations with respect to your child's developmental delays as these commonly present with variable signs and symptoms.

The information in this Monarch House handbook should not be considered complete, nor should it be relied on to suggest a course of treatment for a particular individual. It should not be used in place of a visit, call, consultation or the advice of your child's physician or other qualified health care provider. Information obtained in this handbook is not exhaustive and does not cover all signs, symptoms, ailments, physical conditions or their treatment. Should you have any health care related questions, please call or see your child's physician or other qualified health care provider promptly.

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