Incorporating Developmental Monitoring into Early Childhood Programs: Celebrating Milestones and Identifying Concerns

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Who We Are

New York Center for Child Development

- NYCCD has been a major provider of early childhood mental health services through federal, state, city and philanthropic funded programs in New York
- NYCCD has a long history of providing system-level expertise to inform policy and support the field of Early Childhood Mental Health through training and direct practice

Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC)

- NYCCD was selected by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene under Thrive NYC to develop a citywide Early Childhood Mental Health Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC)
- NYCCD's Subcontractor in the TTAC Center is New York University McSilver Institute for Poverty Policy & Research which offers clinic, business, and system transformation supports statewide to all behavioral healthcare providers.

http://www.TTACny.org

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Let's Talk About

Why monitoring children's development is important
Why you have a unique and important role in developmental monitoring
Why identifying children with developmental delays early is so important
What is developmental monitoring?
Understanding the difference between developmental monitoring vs. screening vs. assessment.
How to talk with parents about their child's development
Learn how to use the CDC "Learn the Signs. Act Early." resources in early childhood programs.

Uses things correctly (cup)

Walks down stairs holding on

Dresses and undresses self

Your Important Role in Monitoring Child's Development

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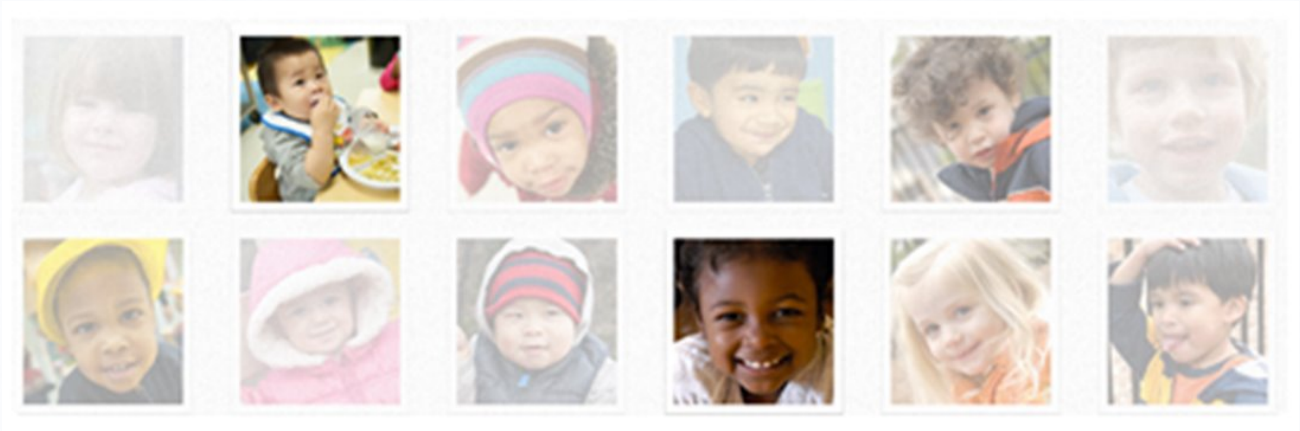
Learn the Signs. Act Early.

1 in 6 Children….



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Why Early Identification is important….

- Nearly 25% of young children in the U.S. are at risk for developmental delays.
- More than 80% of children with a developmental delay, don't receive the needed services until after the age of 3.
- Only about one-half of children with developmental problems are identified before school entrance

Why Monitoring Children's Development is so important….

- The most important reason for monitoring each child's development is to ***find out if a child's development is on track.***

- It is important to act early if there are signs of potential development delay because ***early treatment is so important for improving a child's skills and abilities***.

Early Treatment is important

- Because early treatment can make a big difference in a child's ability to learn new skills.
- Developmental disabilities increase a child's risk for poor school performance, frequent absences from school, and repeating a grade.
- Speech therapy, physical therapy, and other services are available in every state for free or at low cost to parents.
- However, if a developmental concern is not identified early, parents can't take advantage of these services.

Your Role

- The first years of life are so important for a child's development.
- Early experiences make a difference in how young children's brains develop and can influence lifelong learning and health.
- You have an unique opportunity to empower the families you serve to help their children achieve their full potential.

Your Role

- It’s important to keep in mind that it is never your role to make or suggest a diagnosis for any child.
- Your role is to:

- Look for and note each child's developmental milestones

- Share what you've seen with parents

- Encourage parents to talk to their child's doctor if you or they have a concern

Monitoring each child's development is easy with the right tools and resources

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) offers free, easy-to-use tools to help you look for and track developmental milestones.
- Milestone checklists are not validated screening tools nor can they be used to diagnose any developmental disability.

Developmental Monitoring

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Learn the Signs. Act Early.

What is Developmental Monitoring?

A series of activities in partnership with parents/caregivers of children birth to age five, including:

- Promoting of typical development through regular check-in conversations with parents through:
  - The use of developmental checklists
  - Detection of developmental concerns
- Ongoing, flexible process
- Ensure that all children who need support get access to developmental screenings and supports as soon as possible.

Developmental Monitoring

Done by parents, teachers, health professionals

Ongoing process-begins at birth

Sample tool:
"Learn the Signs. Act Early."
Milestone Checklists

Both:
Look for developmental milestones

Important for tracking signs of development and identifying concerns

Developmental Screening

Formal process

Recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics at 9, 18, and 24 or 30 months

Done by health professionals and may be done by teachers with special training

Uses a validated screening tool

Sample tool:
Ages and Stages Questionnaire

Better together: Developmental screening *and* monitoring best identify children who need early intervention (Barger et al, Disability and Health Journal, 2018)

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Benefits of Developmental Monitoring

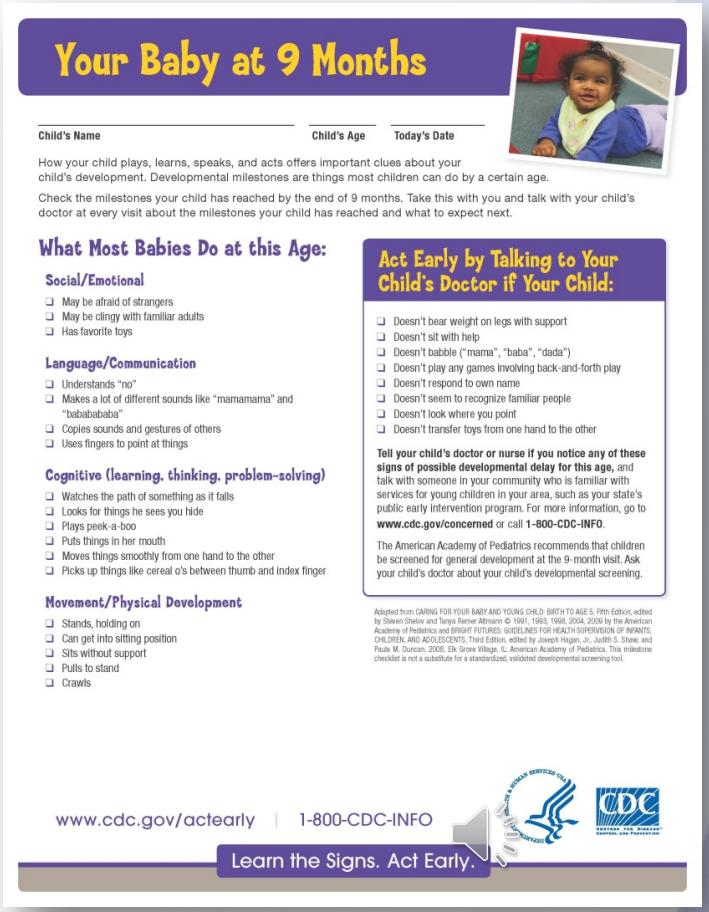
- Opportunity for meaningful discussion.
- Supports parents to learn about developmental milestones.
- Engages parents in actively monitoring development.
- Encourages parents to play with their children.
- Helps us know if children are developing on track.
- Provides parents an opportunity to voice concerns about development and choose a course of action.
- Identifying developmental delays as early as possible.

Developmental Monitoring: Warning!

- However helpful, milestone checklists have some important limitations.
- Milestone checklists are not validated screening tools.
- The AAP recommends that all children receive a developmental screen using a formal, scientifically tested screening tool at 9, 18, and 24 or 30 months.
- Milestone checklists cannot be used to diagnose any developmental disability.
- Diagnosing a child with a developmental disability often requires an in-depth evaluation by one or more specialists.

How to Use the CDC Tools for Developmental Monitoring

- The CDC, in conjunction with the AAP, developed tools to make your work easier
- Help parents become better partners in monitoring development
- Objective, research-based information may make visits more productive



Your Baby at 9 Months

Child's Name | Child's Age | Today's Date

How your child plays, learns, speaks, and acts offers important clues about your child's development. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age.

Check the milestones your child has reached by the end of 9 months. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

What Most Babies Do at this Age:

Social/Emotional

- ❑ May be afraid of strangers
- ❑ May be clingy with familiar adults
- ❑ Has favorite toys

Language/Communication

- ❑ Understands "no"
- ❑ Makes a lot of different sounds like "mamamama" and "bababababa"
- ❑ Copies sounds and gestures of others
- ❑ Uses fingers to point at things

Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- ❑ Watches the path of something as it falls
- ❑ Looks for things he sees you hide
- ❑ Plays peek-a-boo
- ❑ Puts things in her mouth
- ❑ Moves things smoothly from one hand to the other
- ❑ Picks up things like cereal o's between thumb and index finger

Movement/Physical Development

- ❑ Stands, holding on
- ❑ Can get into sitting position
- ❑ Sits without support
- ❑ Pulls to stand
- ❑ Crawls

Act Early by Talking to Your Child's Doctor if Your Child:

- ❑ Doesn't bear weight on legs with support
- ❑ Doesn't sit with help
- ❑ Doesn't babble ("mama", "baba", "dada")
- ❑ Doesn't play any games involving back-and-forth play
- ❑ Doesn't respond to own name
- ❑ Doesn't seem to recognize familiar people
- ❑ Doesn't look where you point
- ❑ Doesn't transfer toys from one hand to the other

Tell your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for this age, and talk with someone in your community who is familiar with services for young children in your area, such as your state's public early intervention program. For more information, go to **www.cdc.gov/concerned** or call **1-800-CDC-INFO**.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children be screened for general development at the 9-month visit. Ask your child's doctor about your child's developmental screening.

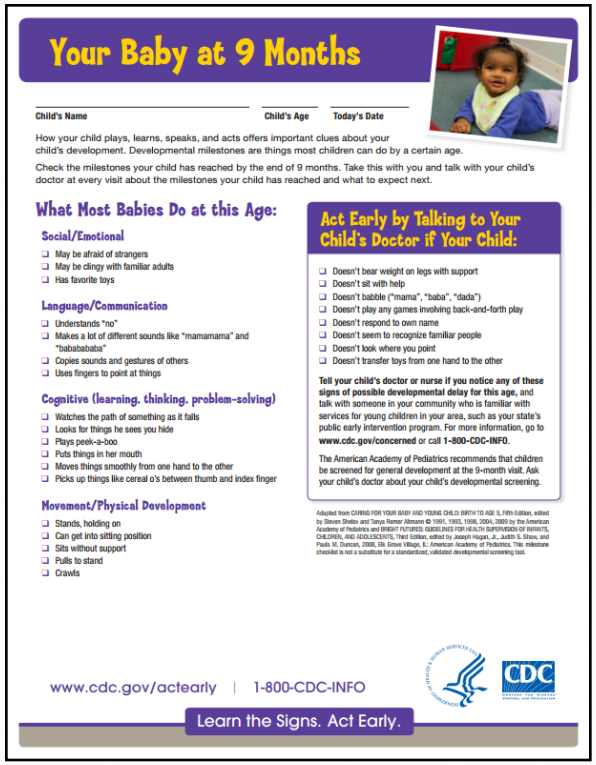
Adapted from CARING FOR YOUR BABY AND YOUNG CHILD: BIRTH TO AGE 5, Fifth Edition, edited by Steven Shelov and Tanya Remer Altmann © 1991, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2009 by the American Academy of Pediatrics and BRIGHT FUTURES: GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH SUPERVISION OF INFANTS, CHILDREN, AND ADOLESCENTS, Third Edition, edited by Joseph Hagan, Jr., Judith S. Shaw, and Paula M. Duncan, 2008, Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics. This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool.

www.cdc.gov/actearly | 1-800-CDC-INFO

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Milestone Checklists



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www.cdc.gov/actearly | 1-800-CDC-INFO

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

- Checklists by age starting at 2 months and going through 5 years
- Lists milestones across 4 areas of development
- Identify causes for celebration or concern
- cdc.gov/milestones

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Milestone Moments Booklet

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

www.cdc.gov/ActEarly

Milestone Moments Booklet

- Includes:
  - -Complete milestone checklists (2mo – 5yrs)
  - -Activities to try at home
  - -Space to write down questions
- Intended for parent use throughout a child's early years
- Helps parents prepare for well-child visits; gives you a parent-friendly reference

Tips for Using the Milestones Checklist

- Print a copy of a blank checklist for each child's family; let them know you'll be updating it each month and encourage them to do the same at home
- Review the latest checklists at every month at your home visit as a way to share the child's progress with the parents
- If a child is between two ages for which checklists are offered, use the checklist for the younger age.

CDC's Milestones Tracker App

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

www.cdc.gov/ActEarly

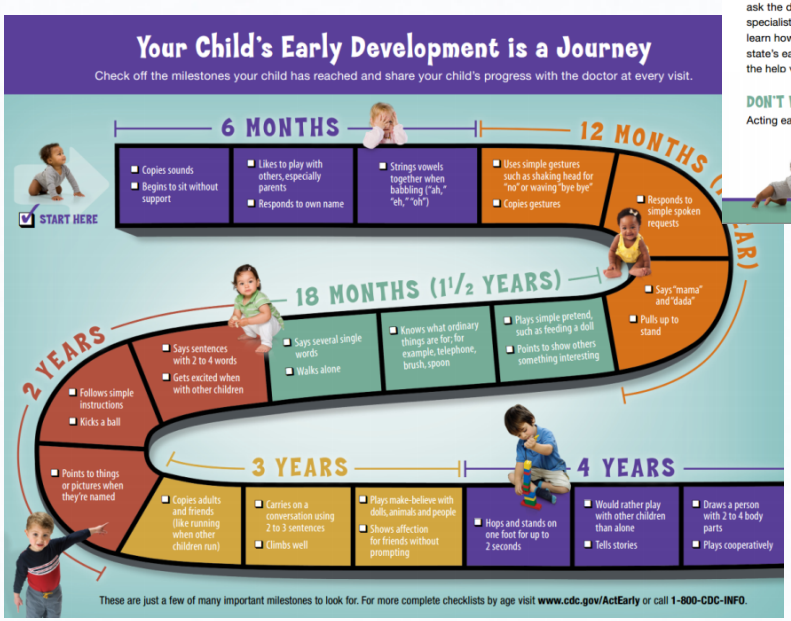
CDC's Milestones Tracker App

Features:

- Personalize checklists for multiple children
- View photo and video examples of each milestone
- Get tips and activities to support a child's development
- Get a notice when it's time to "act early" and talk with parents about developmental concerns
- Generate milestone summaries to share with a parent or other important care providers

Milestones Brochure

Select milestones at a glance for ages 6 months to 4 years



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

Milestones Brochure

Features:

- A great introduction to the importance of developmental monitoring and acting early on concerns
- Highlights a few key milestones for a variety of ages
- Available in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Korean
- Easily printed and photocopied

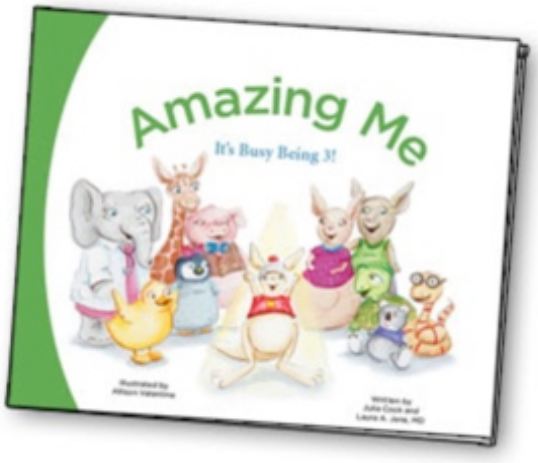
Tips For Using the Milestones Brochures

- Laminate a copy and take it with you to share it with the parents at the home visit.
- Include copies of the brochure in the parent resource center and in the lobby.
- Post a link to the brochure on your center's website.

Age Appropriate Books

For 1 years old

For 2 year old



For 3 year old

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

How to help families when there are concerns about development

1. Developmental monitoring to validate and pinpoint potential developmental concerns
2. Conversation between the family and the child's doctor about developmental concerns
3. Developmental screening using a validated screening tool is conducted to determine if action is necessary
4. Referral to a specialist for establishing a diagnosis
5. Referral to the local early intervention system to determine if the child is eligible for services

To refer parents to Early Intervention services:

If you work in a child care center or for another employer, make sure you know your center's policies. Be aware of your center's referral procedures, and let your supervisor know you plan to refer a parent to early intervention services.

Children 0-3 Years Old:

- If the child is younger than 3 years old, contact your local early intervention system.
- Tell parents to call and say *"I have concerns about my child's development and I would like to have my child evaluated to find out if he/she is eligible for early intervention services."*

Children 3 Years Old or Older:

- If the child is 3 years old or older tell parents to call any local public elementary school even if their child does not go to school there and say *"I have concerns about my child's development and I would like to have my child evaluated through the school system for preschool special education services."*
- If the person who answers is unfamiliar with preschool special education, parents should ask to speak with the school or district's special education director.

How To Talk To Parents About Their Child's Development

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Talking about Child's Development

- Parents see you as a trusted partner, and they look to you for information about how their child is developing.
- Using good listening skills can make your conversations with parents easier and help you feel more confident.

Talking about Child's Development

- Sharing milestones with parents can help them have realistic expectations and better understand their child's behaviors.
- If parents do not know when a child should have a certain skill, they may worry unnecessarily.
- For example:

  If a parent says she is concerned that her 2-month-old is not rolling over, you can reassure her that rolling over from tummy to back is a typical milestone at 4 months.

Talking about Child's Development

- When a child reaches milestones early or late, it's important to share that information with parents. Parents always like to hear if their child has met a milestone early.
- For example:

  "Today Janie built a tower of 5 blocks! That's a milestone we usually don't see until about 2 years old, so she's a little ahead. Way to go, Janie!"

Talking about Child's Development

- Although it's not as fun to share information about late milestones, it's important to give parents that information as well.
- For example:

  "Kofi is meeting lots of his 2-year-old milestones – I've seen him copy other children, and he points to things when I say them, and I know he knows names for parts of his body like ears, nose, and eyes. I haven't heard him say short sentences with 2-4 words yet. What are you seeing him do at home?"

Good listening skills help make a conversation more successful

- Using these skills will help build relationships and encourage better communication:
- During the conversation, listen closely; try to make eye contact, nod when appropriate, and be silent when the parent is speaking.
- After listening, repeat back in your own words the parent's main point so he or she will know you heard and understood.
- As you listen, also consider how the parent feels about what he or she is saying. Watch and listen closely for clues to those feelings.
- Developing and using these listening skills in your conversations with parents will help to enhance your relationships with parents and make difficult conversations more successful.

Monitoring Development: How to encourage families?

- Milestone checklists and the Milestone Moments booklet from CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." program are easy-to-use, proven tools as useful for families as they are for you.
- Be sure to encourage families to take a look at the "Learn the Signs. Act Early." website and give them ideas of ways they can use the materials:
  - Put the Milestones Brochure or Milestone Checklists on the refrigerator and watch for milestones
  - Put a Milestone Moments Booklet in the play area and refer to it at the respective ages

Monitoring Development: How to encourage families?

- If you build developmental monitoring and feedback into your monthly home visits, then families will begin to notice what their child is accomplishing and might begin monitoring their child's developmental milestones at home.

- Having frequent conversations about development with families can show the parent that you value their child and his or her development.

How to communicate when you have a concern

- Before raising concerns with families, make sure you are well prepared:
  - Beforehand, invest considerable time in building meaningful and collaborative relationships with the parents. Chances are, parents may already have some concerns of their own and might feel more comfortable having that conversation if they feel they have a relationship with you that is built on mutual respect and open communication.
  - Complete a milestone checklist for the child's age, either as a single sheet or in the Milestone Moments booklet. If the child is between ages of the milestone checklists, use the checklist for the younger age.
  - Prepare for the conversation by reviewing some helpful tips for talking with parents about developmental concerns.
- Use the completed milestone checklist as the basis for your conversation.

When talking to parents about a concern…

Avoid:

"I think Jason is behind in his development. He can't do things other children can do at his age."

TRY:

I wanted to take a minute to talk with you about how well Jason is developing. I like to use a checklist for developmental milestones from CDC and the American Academy of Pediatrics. It's good for helping us understand his development and which milestones he's met, along with which ones he's still working on.

Focus on specific developmental milestones in your conversation, without including any diagnostic labels…

AVOID:

"I saw a special on TV last week about autism and I am pretty sure that's what Jason has."

TRY:

"Does Jason turn and look at you when you call his name? I have noticed that he does not seem to respond to his name but continues to play with a truck, spinning the wheels around and around."

Start off the conversation by highlighting some of the child's strengths…..

AVOID:

"Jason doesn't know what to do with a toy phone or even a spoon, and there are other milestones he hasn't met either. This list shows all the milestones he can't do."

TRY:

"Jason has made some real progress in his developmental milestones lately. I noticed he really likes to play alongside other children, and he is good at following simple instructions. There are other milestones he's met, and some he's still working on. Let's take a look at this list, and you can fill me in on whether you've seen some of these at home, too."

Be clear about what your goal is for the conversation…. Be honest, kind and respectful

AVOID:

"Look at all these milestones Jason is missing on this checklist. That means that something is really wrong with his development. He's way behind the other kids in this room."

TRY:

This checklist can help us better understand Jason's development, and that's what we're trying to do. But even if he is missing some of these milestones, that doesn't necessarily mean anything is wrong. It's always a good idea to pay attention to his development and to talk about it when you take him to the doctor. I'll give you a copy of this milestone checklist so you can take it with you and talk about it with his doctor the next time you go.

Make the conversation a two-way discussion…

AVOID:

"So that's the list. Take it to the doctor and see what he has to say about it. That's what I wanted to cover today."

TRY:

"Have you seen Jason do some of these milestones at home? PAUSE. Now that we've looked at the checklist, what are your thoughts? PAUSE. What do you think is a good idea to do next? PAUSE."

Other ways you can continue to support the families:

Remind parents that their questions and concerns are important and that sharing them with the child's doctor is an important step to getting their child the early help he or she might need.

Print a copy of the tip sheet Concerned about development? How to talk with the doctor. and give it to the parent. This sheet includes

- steps parents can take to prepare for the visit with the doctor,
- ways parents can ensure that all of their questions and concerns are addressed,
- how parents can be sure they've understood what the doctor has told them and the next steps to take, and
- what parents can do if they feel uneasy about the advice the doctor has given them.

Later, follow-up with the parents to find out how the visit with the doctor went.

If the parent is not satisfied with how the visit went or is feeling uneasy about what the doctor said, encourage the parent to consider getting a second opinion.

Act Today!

- View, print, or order FREE “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” resources at www.cdc.gov/ActEarly
- If you’d like to customize these materials for your practice and print them locally, contact ActEarly@cdc.gov

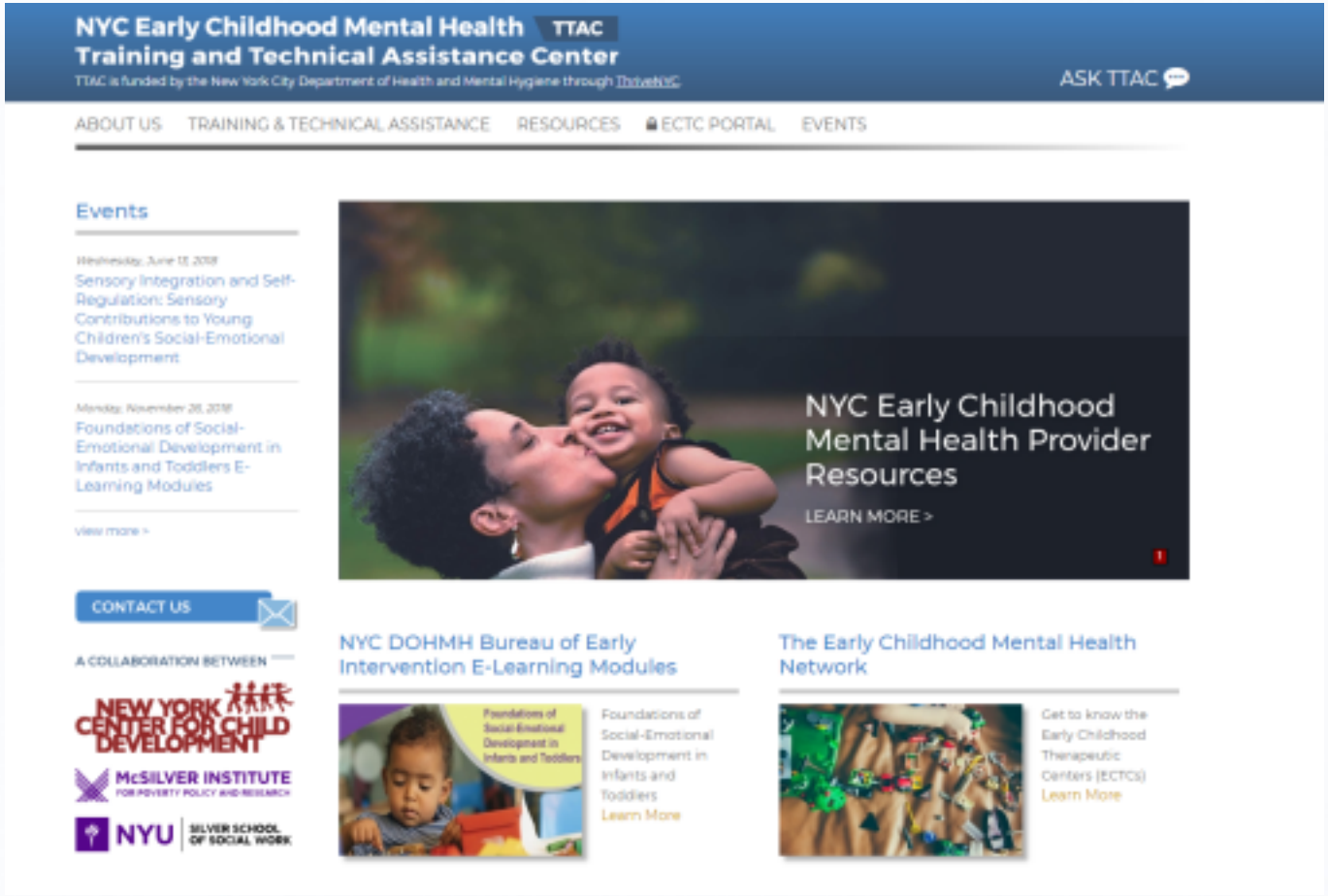
Remember!

- Looking for milestones is important!
- There are free resources to help.
- You can help the families you serve to help their children learn and grow.
- Acting early can make a real difference.

Make-believe play

Visit our Website

TTACNY.org
ttac.info@nyu.edu



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