

CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Program

Learn the Signs.
Act Early.



"The campaign information was a light to me and many of the families I work with, who were stuck in a tunnel of the unknown."

—parent of a child with autism, NJ

"This campaign and its materials are invaluable to us. It provides one more way we can help child care providers deliver superior care."

—professional child care assoc. board member, TX

"'Learn the Signs. Act Early.' fits perfectly with the work we do every day with families. The materials give our families a simple, concise overview of key milestones they can watch for in their children. And our staff is glad to have this additional support in talking with families about child development in a consistent, effective way."

—WIC Manager, MO

"When I found 'Learn the Signs. Act Early,' I knew I had to share it with others, especially the underserved groups in my community."

—parent educator, MI



The Importance of Early Identification of Developmental Delay and Disability

- CDC estimates that 1 in 68 children has been identified with an autism spectrum disorder and about 1 in 6 children aged 3–17 has a developmental disability.
- Many children with a developmental disability are not identified until after entering school.
- Early intervention (before school age) can have a significant impact on a child's ability to learn new skills as well as reduce the need for costly interventions over time.



Improving Early Identification of Developmental Delay and Disability

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) "Learn the Signs. Act Early." program aims to improve early identification of children with autism and other developmental disabilities so children and families can get the services and support they need as early as possible.

The program is made up of three components:

- **Health education campaign** promotes awareness of
 - » healthy developmental milestones in early childhood
 - » the importance of tracking each child's development
 - » the importance of acting early if there are concerns
- **Act Early Initiative** works with state, territorial, and national partners to improve early childhood systems by
 - » enhancing collaborative efforts to improve screening and referral to early intervention services
 - » supporting the work of Act Early Ambassadors to promote "Learn the Signs. Act Early." messages and tools and improve early identification efforts in their state
- **Research and evaluation** improves campaign materials and implementation activities and increases our understanding of the factors that influence early identification and referral

CDC works with the Health Resources and Services Administration, the Association of University Centers on Disabilities, the Association of Maternal and Child Health Programs and other partners in the delivery of this program.

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Division of Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities



“Learn the Signs. Act Early.” aims to change perceptions about the importance of identifying developmental concerns early and gives parents and professionals the tools to help.

CDC offers parent-friendly materials that are research-based, free, easily accessible and customizable.

- Materials are available for parents, early educators, and health care providers
- Milestone checklists, tips for parents, early warning signs, fact sheets, and other materials can be downloaded or ordered for free
- All materials are available in English and Spanish; some are available in other languages
- Find materials at www.cdc.gov/actearly



National, state and local programs that serve parents of young children can add “Learn the Signs.” materials to their resources for parents.

- CDC’s materials help programs address the need for child development resources
- Programs can customize CDC’s materials with their own contact information and distribute them to the populations they serve



Research and evaluation projects advance our understanding of how to improve early identification of children with autism and other developmental disabilities in population groups with health disparities.

African-American children and Hispanic children are less likely than white children to be identified as having an autism spectrum disorder.

- Research projects address information needs of parents, health care providers, and early educators to improve early identification in populations with health disparities
- Evaluation and feasibility studies address how to reach special populations with campaign messages and how to improve systems that identify and serve children with developmental delays

**Visit www.cdc.gov/actearly
or write to ActEarly@cdc.gov.**

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities

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