

NOAS

PreService:

Child Development

Learner Guide

Overview

- ✚ This course discusses how to find and apply good child development information. It introduces the importance of providing positive childhood experiences and supporting nurturing relationships.

Learning Objectives

- ✚ Explain the importance of making caregiving decisions based on the child's development
- ✚ Find reputable child development information on the internet
- ✚ Identify ways to provide positive childhood experiences

Developmental Milestones

- ✚ Domains
 - Social / Emotional
 - Language / Communication
 - Cognitive
 - Movement / Physical

Activity - Using the milestone handout, decide if Maya is delayed, on target, or ahead in your assigned developmental domain.

Maya

Age: five years, six months

- ✚ Struggles to wait her turn when the family plays cards and has had a note sent home from preschool about her impulsive behavior
- ✚ Dresses herself unless the clothing has buttons or ties
- ✚ Trips easily and has trouble hopping up and down
- ✚ Sits at the kitchen table and draws/colors for almost 15 minutes
- ✚ Watches the dog play in the yard and can tell you what it's doing
- ✚ Counts to 13 and points out all numbers between one and five
- ✚ Loves to play a game where you say a short word, and she thinks of a rhyming word (most of the time, her word rhymes)
- ✚ Even though she has a chore chart posted on her bedroom wall with pictures, she does not do any chores unless given specific directions.
- ✚ She can write her name, but sometimes the "y" is backward.

Domain	Delayed	On Target	Ahead
Social /Emotional			
Language/Communication			
Cognitive			
Movement/Physical			

Other important things to share with the doctor...

- What are some things you and your child do together?
- What are some things your child likes to do?
- Is there anything your child does or does not do that concerns you?
- Has your child lost any skills he/she once had?
- Does your child have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely?

You know your child best. Don't wait. If your child is not meeting one or more milestones, has lost skills he or she once had, or you have other concerns, act early. Talk with your child's doctor, share your concerns, and ask about developmental screening. If you or the doctor are still concerned:

1. Ask for a referral to a specialist who can evaluate your child more; and
2. Call any local public elementary school for a free evaluation to find out if your child can get services to help.

For more on how to help your child, visit [cdc.gov/Concerned](https://www.cdc.gov/Concerned).

Don't wait.
Acting early can make
a real difference!



Finding and Applying Good Child Development Information

Set realistic expectations

It is common for children who have experienced trauma to have developmental delays. Expectations should be set based on where the child is, not where they “should” be.

Discipline Appropriately

Recognize and Report Concerns

Notes:

Positive Childhood Experiences and Relationships

The four “blocks” in the Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences (HOPE) framework (Tuffs Medical Center, 2021) are:

1. Positive relationships with family, other adults, and peers
2. Safe, equitable, and stable environment
3. Social and civic engagement for belonging and connectedness
4. Opportunities for social and emotional growth

Relationships

All development happens in the context of relationships. Attachment skills are needed to develop and maintain these relationships.

Safe, Equitable and Stable Environment

- ✚ A child needs to BE safe and FEEL safe.
- ✚ Too many rules can overwhelm, but a few important rules can help the child know what is expected of them, which helps them feel safe.
- ✚ Important rule: no racist, discriminatory, and rejecting language and behavior will be tolerated in the home.
- ✚ Routines help create felt safety.

Notes:

ABCs of Safe Sleep

- ✚ A _____
- ✚ B _____
- ✚ C _____

Social and Civic Engagement for Belonging and Connectedness

- ✚ Normalcy includes activities that any child their age would be doing. These activities are critical to development.

Reasonable and Prudent Parent Standard:

- ✚ Careful and sensible parental decisions that maintain the child's health, safety, and best interests while at the same time encouraging the child's emotional and developmental growth.

- ✚ Agencies have differing policies as to how the Reasonable and Prudent Parent standard is applied. You must follow your agency's policies.

Opportunities for Social and Emotional Growth

- ✚ Two foundational areas of social and emotional growth are:

1. Self-regulation

- ✚ Self-regulation is the child's ability to express emotions and manage behaviors in healthy ways.
- ✚ Children who have experienced trauma may struggle with self-regulation because they have dysregulated stress response systems.
- ✚ Scenario: Amanda is sitting at the kitchen table and really struggling with math homework.

2. Initiative

- ✚ Initiative is the child's ability to use independent thought and action to meet their needs. Rather than avoiding a situation that is difficult for the child to handle, it is best for their development to coach them through it.

Notes:

Unrealistic Expectations

Handout

- ✚ My love will be enough.
 - You may believe you can erase years of maltreatment and mistrust if you just provide enough love to the child. Children who have experienced trauma need love, but they also need you to have the knowledge and skills to meet their needs and start the healing process.

- ✚ I will feel love and connection to this child quickly.
 - Attachment develops over time, and many children protect themselves from rejection by refusing to allow themselves the vulnerability of attachment. When children are slow to connect emotionally, it is only human to anticipate that you will likewise need time to develop attachment to the child.

- ✚ This child will step into my family system and easily learn how to function within the family rules, goals, and ambitions.
 - Of course, the child may be asked to make significant adjustments to your family, but you also need to make significant adjustments. Families who recognize the areas in which flexibility is essential (e.g., scheduling, behavior management, diversity impacting lifestyle and values) will be much more successful.

- ✚ This child's needs will be just like those of my biological children.
 - The strategies you used with your permanent children may not be effective with children who have experienced trauma. New skills and strategies will be needed, as well as empathy, patience, and flexibility. In addition, many children who come into care need intensive services that take more time and effort than caregivers expect (running to appointments, extended hospital stays, participation in therapy, etc.).

- ✚ My biological children will embrace this new child as a sibling.
 - Whenever a new child joins the family, whether by birth, foster care, kinship care, or adoption, the existing children in the home will be affected by the changing family system. Your permanent children may be initially excited about the prospect of having a sibling but feel very differently after the child arrives.

- ✚ This child will fit into our extended family and be welcomed by them.

Sometimes the extended family does not have the same commitment to the foster care plan. If problems surface after the placement, your extended family may withdraw support. This can lead to disappointment and strained family relationships. It is important to have conversations with your extended family about child protection and foster care/adoption. You may want to share some of the resources from this training series with them.

- ✚ My friends and acquaintances will validate my role as parent in the child's life.
 - Like the extended family, some friends may withdraw their support from you, leading to feelings of isolation. Your friends may even question why you should have to deal with challenges: "Why don't you just send them back? You're not the 'real' parent anyway."

- ✚ This child will forget about their birth family and their past.
 - Moving into a new family does not erase a child's past attachments. Even if the child has no memory of the birth family, the birth parents are "psychologically present" for the child.

- ✚ I will not need to have any contact with this child's primary family.

Partnering with the primary family is an expectation for caregivers and encouraged for adoptive families. It is in the child's best interest to stay connected to important people in their lives, as well as their culture and history.

✚ I can do for this child what was not done for me, or I will not do to this child what was done to me.

- Parenting a child who has experienced trauma can trigger your own painful memories of victimization or abandonment. Even if you have addressed your trauma, hearing the child's story, especially if it is like your own, can bring on strong emotions. You may even revert to unhelpful coping behaviors.

✚ I will never feel any second thoughts or ambivalence about providing a home for a child with a traumatic past.

- It is common for children to test the stamina and commitment of their caregivers or adoptive parents. When you feel tested, you may have moments of doubt or ambivalence about the decision. These feelings are normal and should be expected.

✚ This child will be grateful for me and my family.

- From the child's perspective, the placement with your family means loss and introduction to new, unfamiliar people and routines. Even if you have a relationship with the child, placement in your home will be a change. Additionally, some children may view you as the barrier keeping them from going home. This child will join our family permanently. Most children in foster care are in the temporary custody of the agency and will be reunited with their primary family. Others may go to live with a kin or family member. In 2021, only about 14% of the children in care left care into an adoptive placement.



Resources

Recommended child development sites:

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Center on the Developing Child: Harvard University
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- HealthyChildren.org
- Devereux Advanced Behavioral Health: Center for Resilient Children
- Ohio Department of Health: Parents & Caregivers

Tips for Helping Children and Teens before and After Visits

<https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/adoption-and-foster-care/Pages/Tips-for-Helping-Children-and-Teens-Before-and-After-Visitation.aspx>

Partnering with Birth Parents to Benefit Children

http://www.ifapa.org/pdf_docs/resourceparentspartneringwithbirthparents.pdf