

Parent Frequently Asked Questions for Early Childhood Screening

What is Early Childhood Screening?

Early Childhood Screening is a free program in Minnesota that checks how a child is developing and growing. Screening supports children's readiness for kindergarten and promotes positive developmental outcomes. Screening may also lead to referrals for early learning opportunities.

When should I schedule an Early Childhood Screening?

The Early Childhood Screening program is available to children when they turn three years old. It is required before a child starts kindergarten, or must take place within 30 days of when a child starts kindergarten. Although your child may be screened any time before kindergarten, it is best to do so between three and four years of age, so that any health or developmental concerns can be addressed sooner. A comparable screening by a non-school provider (e.g., Head Start, Child & Teen Checkups or a health care provider) will also be accepted by school districts.

How do I schedule an Early Childhood Screening?

Local school districts provide Early Childhood Screening throughout the year. You may contact your school district for more information when your child turns three. To find your school district: <http://w20.education.state.mn.us/ELSSearch/search.do>

What happens during an Early Childhood Screening?

Early Childhood Screening checks your child's health and development. Screening in school districts is usually done by a teacher and a nurse. Screening includes a review of height, weight, vision, hearing, speech, social and emotional progress and overall development. Screening is done based on the age of the child, so that a three-year-old is only asked for what is appropriate for their age.

What if my child does not speak English?

If your child does not speak English, ask the district where you live if they will provide an interpreter. When a child is learning two languages, it is better to screen in the language most often heard and spoken in the home. Screeners may also screen in both English and in the child's home language with an interpreter, since as children learn two languages they have different strengths in both languages.

How do I prepare for an Early Childhood Screening?

You should bring the names and phone numbers of your child's pediatrician, any other health care providers and immunization records. You can also bring notes about:

Things that your child does well.

Questions about your child's health.

Questions about your child's development, such as learning, walking or talking.

Questions about your child's seeing or hearing.

What happens if the screener finds a concern during the Early Childhood Screening?

There are a few options if the professional providing the screening finds an area of concern in your child's development. The professional providing the screening and the parent may decide to refer your child for an evaluation by your local school district or medical clinic. The screener may also work with you to refer your child to other early childhood opportunities such as Head Start, School Readiness, Early Childhood Family Education, Early Learning Scholarships, Pre-kindergarten programs, Public Health home visiting program and other community resources.

Will screening mean my child has a label or diagnosis?

Screening does not result in a label or diagnosis for your child. If health or developmental concerns are raised during a screening, a parent and the screener may decide that further evaluation by a medical or educational professional is needed to help the child be ready for school. If a child needs extra help, it is better to get that help earlier than later. Some children have speech or developmental delays, which if given extra help, may be overcome before the child starts kindergarten.

Does a parent have a say in whether a child gets a referral for special education?

A parent perspective, on how the child is developing, is always taken into account when discussing referral information. A referral to special education may be made by a parent or by an Early Childhood Screening staff with a parents' permission. The Early Childhood Special Education team may then offer an evaluation by either a speech, developmental or physical therapist professional to see if the child is eligible to receive free special education services. These services may be provided in a home, a child care or the child's school.

May I conscientiously object to the Early Childhood Screening?

Yes, if a parent is a conscientious objector to the screening program for their child, the child does not need to participate in the state screening program. Refer to Minnesota Statute 121A.17.