

MOVING FORWARD

News and information about the education of special needs students for teachers and parents

Fall 2016

Indiana's DEVELOPMENTAL DELAY Dilemma

A developmental delay means that a child is significantly less developed based on the expectancy levels of children the same age. The timetable for when certain skills should emerge is called **developmental milestones**. Typically, it is the parents who first recognize that their child is not meeting milestones at the appropriate time. There could be delays in all areas, or just specific ones, such as communication, memory, motor or social skills.

States Age Limits for Developmental Delay Status

Illinois 3 through 9 years old
Indiana 3 through 5 years old

Hammond borders the state of Illinois, where state law extends the age of services for a developmental delay through 9 years old.

The dilemma is that families often transfer into our school system with a barrage of special education services that our schools cannot implement. This means that another educational assessment has to be initiated to investigate other areas of eligibility. At such a young age, the only viable categories tend to be speech, cognitive, autism, and emotional disabilities.

It is difficult to gauge what causes a developmental delay, but is often linked to genetic, environmental or medical factors. Regardless of the origin, research indicates that the best and most effective approach for addressing developmental delays is **EARLY INTERVENTION**. Some children may need just a little extra time and maturity to rectify their deficits, while others may need long term, intensive interventions.



Unfortunately, if the children do not qualify, Indiana educators have little choice but to place these children in general education with little or no support. Without special education services, these children, arguably still developmentally delayed, begin their educational careers at least one step behind their peers. Sadly, some students never catch up.

With diagnostic testing, **federal law** indicates that the term Developmental Delay can be used as a means to obtain special education services for children ages 3 through 9. The **state interpretation** of this federal law determines whether the term applies to children aged 3 through 9, or any range in between. Indiana's special education law (known as **Article 7**) uses a short age range of only 3 through 5 years old.

The Indiana legislature has been debating raising the age range for Developmental Delay for some time, but to no avail. Parents and teachers **needs to write their lawmakers** and let them know that research supports increasing the age limits, so that schools can offer intensive assistance to children who need it the most.

Indiana is one of the most financially stable states in the nation. We need to be proactive and do what is best for our most vulnerable students. **It will be money well spent, and it is a smart investment in our future.**

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"We worry about what a child will become tomorrow, yet we forget that he is someone today."

Things You Should Know About Developmental Delay...

States have a legal obligation to help children who are experiencing a developmental delay in one or more areas.

- **Child Find** is an outreach system in place that provides basic developmental screenings and evaluations free of charge to families.
- Early intervention services for children under the age of 3 are typically provided to eligible families either free of charge, or on a sliding payment scale determined by family income.
- Special education services are meant for children over the age of three. Services are provided to eligible children free of charge through the public school system. If your child has passed his or her third birthday and you're concerned about a developmental delay or disability, call your local school (even if your child isn't enrolled there), and ask how to have your child evaluated.
- Public schools work with First Step programs to make sure there is a smooth transition into a special needs preschool if services continue to be warranted. Children in First Steps must be receiving services on or before their third birthday.

IDEA's Definition of Developmental Delay

IDEA is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Through IDEA, early intervention services and special education services are made available to our nation's children.

(1) Who is experiencing developmental delays as defined by the State and as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments and procedures in one or more of the following areas: physical development, cognitive development, communication development, social or emotional development, or adaptive development.

(2) Who, by reason thereof, needs special education and related services.

Source: IDEA

Developmental Milestones 3-6 Years old

Since it is difficult to gauge what "normal" developmental is, it may be more effective to note when skills **DO NOT emerge**. The absence of skills is much more concerning. Here are some general developmental milestones to consider:



Physical and Motor

- Is able to use a spoon, dress and undress self
- Has refined coordination and learns many new skills
- Is very active and likes to climb, hop, and skip
- Can start to copy shapes

Emotional/Social

- Shares and take turns
- Plays cooperatively with peers
- Is developing some independence
- Is developing ethnic and gender identities
- Learning to distinguish between reality and fantasy
- Learning to connect feelings, thoughts and actions
- Likes to sing and dance

Communication

- Speaks in sentences of 5 to 6 words
- Asks questions

- Tells stories
 - Speaks clearly enough to be understood by strangers
- ## Intellectual
- Children's ability to understand language usually develops ahead of their speech.

- By age 6, their vocabulary will have increased to between 8,000 and 14,000 words (but it is important to remember that children in this age group often repeat words without fully understanding their meaning).
- They have learned the concepts of same/different, up/down, ahead/behind, and beside.
- Preschool children are still unable to see things from another's perspective, and their reasoning is based on what they can visualize or what is important to them.
- When questioned, they can generally express who, what, where, and sometimes how, but not when or how many.
- Begin to develop a sense of time
- Can count 10 or more objects

Milestone Resources: National Resource for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning and The Early Childhood Direction Center

Causes and Risk Factors of Delays

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, about 15% of children 3 to 17 years old have one or more developmental disabilities.

Most developmental disabilities begin before a baby is born, but some can happen after birth because of injury, infection, or other factors. These deficits can reflect a wide range in severity, with some that improve over time, and others that result in long-term deficits.

It is often hard to pinpoint the exact cause of developmental delays. Research suggests one or a combination of the following factors:

- ◆ Genetics and chromosomal abnormalities
- ◆ Parental health and behaviors during pregnancy (smoking, drug use or drinking)
- ◆ Complications during birth
- ◆ Infections the mother might have during pregnancy, or the baby might have very early in life
- ◆ Exposure of the mother or child to high levels of toxins such as lead



For some developmental disabilities, such as fetal alcohol syndrome, which is caused by drinking alcohol during pregnancy, we know the cause, and it is preventable. For many disabilities, the cause is unknown. Even a healthy pregnancy can result in developmental deficits.

Another factor which may impede development is maternal deprivation. This occurs when mothers behave in an emotionally unresponsive fashion toward their children. This lack of stimulation can have a direct affect on a baby's ability to thrive. This is a form of neglect, whether intentional or not. Factors that may result in maternal deprivation include unplanned pregnancy, substance abuse, mental illness, financial hardship, lack of maturity or education.

Mothers that lack adequate prenatal care are more likely to give birth to low birth weight children. Children with exceptionally low birth weights tend to have higher rates of physical, emotional and learning deficits. Also, low income families run a much higher risk of lead poisoning due to insufficient housing.

WORKING WITH CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

Children with developmental delays share much in common with all young children in terms of what types of experiences support their learning and progress toward achieving developmental skill mastery. Provide the utmost opportunities within the family or preschool/daycare environment for social interactions with adults and children. This includes opportunities for maximum exposure and practice with language (e.g., listening to stories, music, conversation) and hands-on activities (e.g., coloring with crayons, playing games, learning to put on shoes).

Children with developmental delays can learn just like any other child, but most often require instruction at a slower pace, with some adjustments tailored to their individual strengths and needs.

Some general guidelines to support instruction include breaking tasks down into simple steps, giving clear, direct instructions, allowing time to practice new skills repeatedly, offering visual support or modeling, including experiences geared toward a child's strengths



and interests, and providing more direct adult hands-on guidance with difficult motor activities such as learning to ride a tricycle.

Children with developmental delays may also have problems with sensory processing. Some children are very easily distracted or overwhelmed by noises, lights, smells, sensations or textures. Be watchful for signs of sensory overload, such as agitation or hand-flapping, and provide the child time to completely calm down before attempting to engage them in learning new skills or continuing with a challenging activity.

Children with developmental delays often work much harder than other children to learn new things. Openly praise their progress with words and gestures no matter how small or how far from mastery they may seem to be.

SOURCE: "How to Help Developmentally Delayed Children Learn New Things" by Julie Christensen

WHAT TYPE OF SKILLS ARE DELAYED?

Every child develops at their own individual pace, and there is a very wide range for what is normal development in young children. However, it is very important to be aware of red flag indicators for developmental skill delays because early intervention can play a crucial role in helping children make progress toward achieving mastery of developmental speech, communication, cognitive, motor, social, emotional and behavioral skills.

Language and speech delays are by far the most common types of developmental delays. Speech includes a child's verbal expression, including the way words are formed and spoken. Language includes how a child expresses and understands information, including nonverbal gestures such as facial expressions.

Motor delays may include gross motor skills such as sitting, crawling or walking, or fine motor skills such as using fingers to hold a spoon or button a coat.

Social, emotional and behavioral delays may include a child's difficulties interacting with adults or other children. Examples of early warning signs may include a baby who does not smile at familiar people, a toddler who does not use gestures to wave, reach or point, a young child who shows no enjoyment being around people, or who cannot be comforted when upset or agitated.

Cognitive delays may include difficulties learning the function of common objects such as eating utensils, brush or comb, difficulties understanding or following simple directions, or the inability to imitate simple actions or words.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN WITH DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS



You can find out how to access early intervention services in your area by talking to your child's pediatrician, calling a community outreach program (such as Geminus), or inquiring at your local school. Here are some other resources to consider:

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center is also a great source of this information. Use [NECTAC's Contact Finder](#) located under "State Programs Under IDEA" and select "Part C Coordinators." ectacenter.org/search/mapfinder.asp

PACT-Parents and Children Working Together-Preschool. Half day/full year program. General education preschool year prior to kindergarten for children ages 4 to 5. Call your neighborhood public school for more information.

Title 1 Preschool. General education preschool programs in many neighborhood schools. Starts the year prior to kindergarten. **Title 1 Office/Hammond 219-933-2400, Ext. 1064**

First Steps. Birth to 3 years old. Children evaluated by a team who make eligibility decisions. Therapists work directly with children building skills and nutrition services are provided. **219-662-7790**

Hammond Head Start. Federally funded preschool program for children ages 3-5 (must be 3 by August 1). **219-989-7345**

Special Needs Preschool Program/Hammond. Preschool program for students with special needs. Children require an evaluation to determine eligibility. **Contact Becky Lee, Case Manager at Miller Preschool Diagnostics 219-989-8384.**

Health is the core of human development.

Gro Harlem Brundtland

Moving Forward

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