

Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for WIC

Implementation Guide

A Guide for Implementing the Developmental Milestone Checklist Program from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Find this content in an accessible format at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/wicguide/>



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention



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Top Photo: Baby giggling with mother, Photo 2: WIC volunteer interacting with a child., Photo 3: Four preschool-age children hugging and smiling

Introduction

Now Available: Virtual options for promoting developmental monitoring in the WIC program! Go to page 35 to learn about these easy-to-use virtual options.

Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for WIC Staff

WIC providers know that how a child plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves for his or her age are important signs of a child's healthy growth and development.

When a child's development is delayed, WIC providers also know the value of a timely referral to support both the child and family.

The Developmental Milestone Checklist Program, developed in collaboration with WIC staff and tested in WIC clinics, helps you engage parents in monitoring their children's development and support them with timely referrals when needed.

The Program has 3 core components:

- **Environmental Graphics**—Engaging graphics on the walls and floors of the clinic introduce milestone monitoring in a fun and friendly way.
- **Administering Checklists**—Staff invite the parent to complete a parent-friendly milestone checklist during certification and mid-certification visits, or whenever there is a question or concern.
- **Making Referrals**—Staff review checklists and make referrals if there are any missing milestones or other concerns noted.

No longer hosting in-person visits or going hybrid? Check out the virtual options on page 35.

Simple messages and easy-to-use tools are integrated seamlessly into your clients' regular visits, typically taking less than 5 minutes per visit.

This guide provides all the guidance you need to get your Milestone Checklist Program up and running. Remember, you can adapt this model to best fit your clinic and processes.

Why WIC?

- WIC staff are likely to encounter children with developmental disabilities because developmental disabilities are common—affecting about 1 in 6 children—even if they are not always readily apparent.
- Children with nutritional risk factors are at increased risk of developmental delay and need close monitoring. Early identification can open the door to services and support that can help the child gain skills and help parents better support their child's needs.
- Nutrition and development go hand-in-hand. Tuning in to their child's development can help parents be more responsive to and supportive of their baby's feeding cues, boost parents' feeding confidence, and lead to positive feeding interactions.
- WIC staff can benefit from the tools and resources provided by this program when talking with parents about their child's development, especially when parents raise a developmental concern.
- Making referrals for potential developmental delay supports the WIC framework of monitoring children's growth and development and making referrals to community resources.
- WIC staff have reported that this Program engages parents, educates, and empowers staff members, and leads to completed doctor referrals.

The guidance provided in this guide is based on the WIC Milestone Checklist Program designed and tested by the University of Missouri in partnership the Missouri Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program, and supported with funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

This guidance was updated by the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN) through the Developmental Monitoring Project for WIC, supported with funding from the CDC.

What is Developmental Monitoring?

WIC Staff are well-positioned to engage, educate, and empower families to track their child's developmental milestones and take action to help their child when there's a possible concern. Supporting families is what WIC does best!

First, What are Developmental Milestones?

Developmental milestones are skills that most children achieve by a certain age. Children reach milestones in how they play, learn, speak, act, and move. Skills such as smiling by 2 months, waving “bye-bye” by 12 months and trying to use a spoon by 18 months are some common developmental milestones, though there are many more.

Children develop at their own pace, so it's difficult to tell exactly when a child will learn a given skill. However, age-specific developmental milestones give a general idea of the skills to expect. The milestones included in CDC's developmental milestone checklists reflect what MOST (at least 75%) of children achieve by a given age.

What is Developmental Monitoring?

Developmental monitoring is tracking when or whether a child reaches the milestones that are expected by his or her age. It is something parents and other caregivers can do, on a regular and ongoing basis. Doing so provides important information about a child's developmental health. Using CDC's developmental milestone checklists makes it easy!

Why Monitor Developmental Milestones?

Monitoring developmental milestones using a simple milestones checklist helps parents know what skills are typical at their children's ages and what to expect next. It also helps them to know when to act if they have a concern or if there are signs of possible developmental delay or disability, so they and their children can get the services and supports they need as early as possible.

Parents know their children best. If a child is not meeting the milestones for his or her age, or if WIC staff or a parent think there could be a problem with a child's development it is important that the child be referred to their primary healthcare provider or another program for developmental screening and follow-up. WIC staff can help parents monitor their children's development and support them in taking action when there is a concern.

“Referrals to *First Steps*, our early intervention program in Missouri, doubled after our WIC clinics began using the developmental milestones checklists. Referrals were appropriate and usually resulted in services for the child. The Developmental Milestones Program has offered real benefits to the children of our county. I am proud to have helped them along the way. I am excited about the success we've seen and hope all WIC clinics adopt it.”

Tina Schnelle
Barton County Health Department, MO

How Common are Developmental Disabilities?

Developmental disabilities among children and youth are quite common and are a significant public health issue.

- 1 in 6 children aged 3–17 years have developmental disabilities—conditions that affect how children play, learn, speak, act, or move for their age.
- Many children with a developmental disability are not identified until after they start school.
- Children from families with low incomes, like those served by WIC, are at even greater risk.

How Can the WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program Promote Child Development?

Integrating the Milestone Checklist Program into WIC has been shown to

- Increase parental reports of learning about early child development;
- Increase early identification of children with developmental delays and disabilities so children and families can get the services and supports they need; and
- Enhance collaborative efforts between WIC and community service providers to improve screening and referral to early intervention services.



Mother hugging her 18 month old daughter.

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

Find this content in an accessible format at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/wicguide/about-cdcs-learn-the-signs-act-early-program.html>

Learn the Signs. Act Early. (LTSAE; www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) is a program of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that encourages parents of children ages birth to 5 years and providers who care for them to

- Learn the signs of healthy development (developmental milestones);
- Monitor every child's early development; and
- Act early on possible developmental concerns: talk with the doctor and ask for developmental screening.

The program offers parent-friendly milestone checklists, printable from the www.cdc.gov/milestones or accessible through a free app, that make developmental monitoring practical and easy (www.cdc.gov/MilestoneTracker).

Note: The materials provided by LTSAE are parent education and engagement tools that support developmental monitoring and help staff decide when to refer a child to other professionals for screening; they are not a replacement for developmental screening.

How Developmental Monitoring Helps WIC Staff

WIC Staff are well-positioned to engage, educate, and empower families to track their child's important developmental milestones:

- ✓ WIC providers are an important resource for parents in the community and may be the first to notice potential developmental delays.
- ✓ Parents look to WIC providers as a trusted source of information about their child's growth and development.
- ✓ WIC providers may be concerned about a child's development and need tools and resources to more easily communicate that concern to the parent.

Developmental Monitoring in WIC Supports WIC Staff and Helps Parents:

- Helping WIC staff bring up and respond to questions or concerns from parents about their child's development
- Providing a quick and easy way to monitor a child's early development using the *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* milestone checklists
- Helping parents set goals related to their child's growth and development
- Offering parents information about their child's development
- Providing WIC staff with resources and tools to refer a child when indicated
- Helping WIC staff understand child development so that they may help educate parents on this important topic
- Providing an additional, valued service to children and families that can help improve retention through age 5

Work done in Missouri has shown that the WIC Milestone Checklist Program using *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* materials can improve developmental monitoring of young children and help identify children that would benefit from early intervention services and support.



WIC Volunteer reading a book to a toddler.



Happy three year old son showing affection.

The Missouri Model:

Missouri WIC Developmental Milestones Checklist Program

How was the Missouri Model Developed?

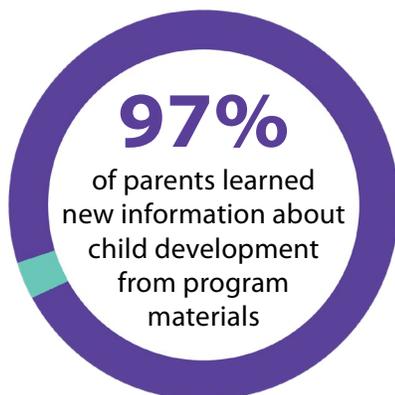
In 2010, the University of Missouri was one of four grantees funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to explore how best to expand the reach of *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* messages and materials to engage families in monitoring their children's early developmental milestones. The Missouri Developmental Milestones Program was developed to address the needs of both WIC clients and WIC staff around developmental monitoring.

The Missouri Program was developed in two phases before being expanded statewide: Phase I implementation included 11 WIC clinics in the city of St. Louis; Phase II further tested the model developed during the first phase by replicating in nine additional WIC clinics across four diverse, eastern counties of Missouri.

The Program was developed and refined to

- Build the program around CDC's LTSAE public health campaign to promote developmental monitoring;
- Have WIC staff promote developmental monitoring by supporting parents in completing developmental milestone checklists;
- Overcome previous barriers in addressing developmental concerns by WIC staff; and
- Ensure that the Program works in real-life WIC settings.

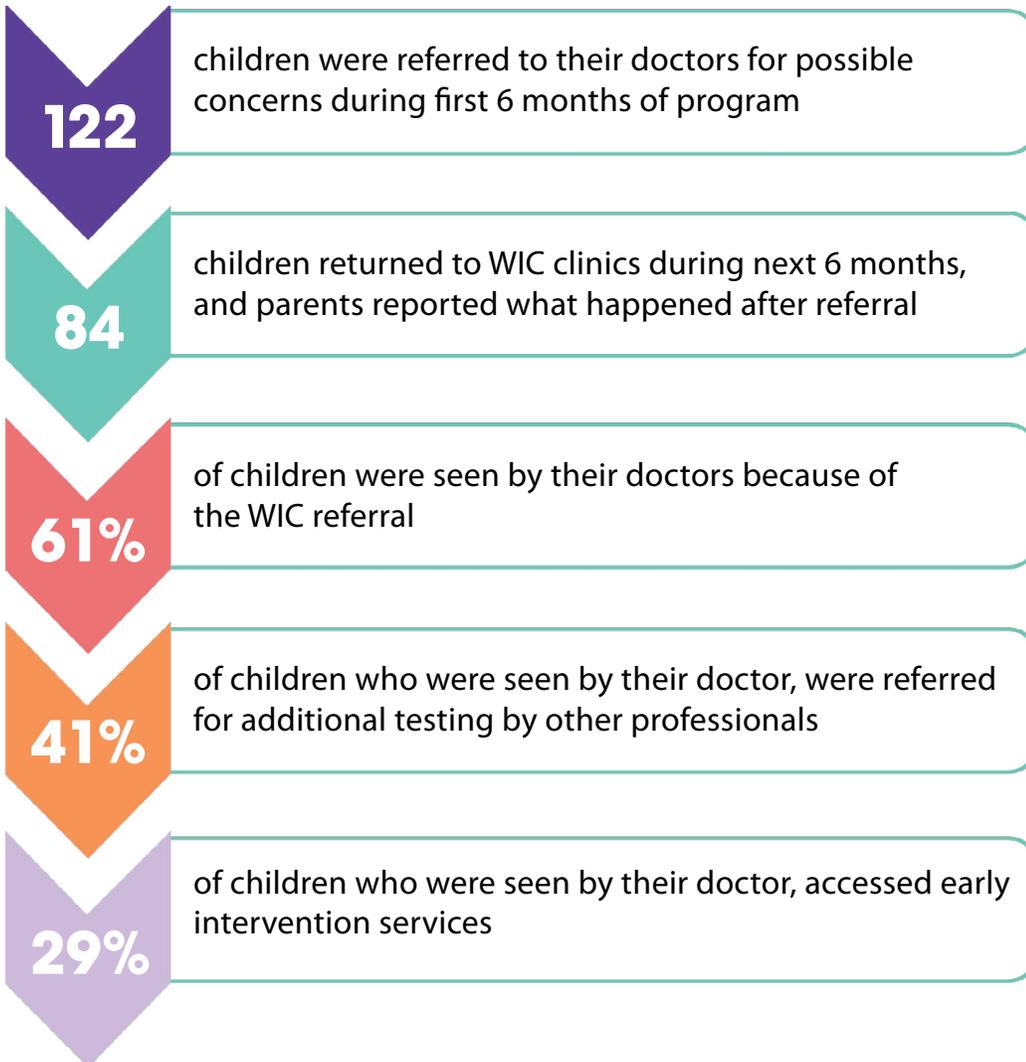
The campaign's primary messages to parents are: (1) learn the signs of healthy child development; (2) act early if there is a concern; and (3) talk to your child's doctor. Those messages are built into a series of age-specific checklists, ranging from ages 2 months through 5 years. The messaging was reinforced by colorful, family-friendly graphics on the walls and floors of WIC clinics. The graphics introduce key concepts of early child development in a fun, engaging way.



What Difference Did It Make?

- More children's development was monitored by their parents
 - ★ In 18 months, >14,000 parents in St. Louis and nine clinics across eastern Missouri completed milestone checklists.
- Parents learned new information about child development
 - ★ Of 119 parents participating in a survey about the Program, 97% reported learning new information about child development from the Program materials.
- Children with missed milestones were referred to their doctor for developmental screening, were further evaluated if needed, and received services, if needed.
 - ★ The Program evaluated referral outcomes of 122 children aged 12–48 months who were referred to their primary care doctors for possible developmental concerns during the first 6 months of program implementation. Of the 122 children, 84 returned to WIC clinics during the following 6 months, and parents reported what happened after the referral:
 - 61% of the 84 children were seen by their doctor because of the WIC referral.
 - Of the children seen by their doctors, 41% were referred on for additional testing by other professionals and 29% accessed intervention services.

Children who were referred saw their doctors and received services.



What Did WIC Providers Think of the Program?

WIC staff found the program useful and easy to implement:

Useful

- 90% said the program helped them learn when to refer and how to support parents
- 95% said they referred one or more children
- 95% said the program promotes healthy development

Easy to implement

- 95% said parents were willing to complete the checklists
- 80% said the program takes 5 minutes or less

Additionally, in focus groups, WIC staff indicated that the program engages parents, empowers staff members, and leads to completed doctor referrals.

How to Monitor Development

Getting your WIC Milestone Checklist Program Up and Running

Planning your WIC Milestone Checklist Program will take some time and require some decision-making, but once you've decided how best to customize the program for your state, agency, or clinic, maintaining the three core components of the program—graphics, checklists, and referrals—is easy!

A few easy steps will get you started:

- Identify program champions
- Encourage WIC staff to take the [Introduction to Child Development for WIC Staff training module](#)
- Develop a process for training, implementation, and tracking that works best for your clinic(s)
- Customize and prepare materials
- Spread the word
- Do a test phase where the staff try it out, identify challenges
- Make changes based on staff questions and feedback
- Begin implementing

Before you know it, you'll be better at supporting staff to handle questions and concerns about development, educating and engaging parents, and making referrals to promote children's healthy development.

This Implementation Guide will describe the process step-by-step and offer tools and other resources to help.



A three year old child showing affection.

Identifying Program Champions

Champions, at both the state and clinic level, can help promote and support the program.

State-level Champions

Missouri found it helpful to have two champions at the state level: one within the state WIC agency and one who could help answer questions about child development and why the program was important.

- The state WIC agency champion helped to recruit clinics and provided technical assistance when agencies or clinics had questions about implementation.
 - ★ When Missouri moved toward statewide implementation (in 108 agencies and more than 200 clinics), the state WIC champion spent 2–4 hours per week supporting the expansion.
- For expertise on child development, Missouri WIC looked to the University of Missouri for support.

CDC's Act Early Ambassadors (www.cdc.gov/ActEarly/Ambassadors), pediatricians, other primary healthcare providers, and child development specialists from universities or other organizations can also be asked to help support your developmental monitoring program. Also because a successful program will identify children who may be referred to early intervention services, engaging leadership from the state's early intervention service-providing agency (IDEA Part C agency) or Child Find program could also be helpful.

Clinic-level Champions

Identifying a champion at each clinic is also important. The clinic-level champion can

- Support training and implementation;
- Help other staff resolve problems;
- Orient new staff to the program
- Ensure materials are readily available; and
- Provide feedback and encouragement to staff.

“For a voluntary project like this, it’s critical to have a clinic champion to keep the momentum going. This work is too important to families to let fizzle out.”

***Bridgette Delgman-Yawberry
WIC District Nutritionist, MO***

Recruiting Clinics and Training Staff

Recruiting Clinics for Your WIC Milestone Checklist Program

Implementation will vary by state and location, depending on agency resources and the interest of the WIC clinics. The lead agency will need to decide whether to implement in all clinics or roll out to a few clinics or clinics in a limited region, scaling up to statewide later.

Developmental monitoring using milestone checklists has proven useful to WIC staff in Missouri, and many clinics and agencies across the country have adapted the Missouri model for their own use. Remember, however, developmental monitoring is not a requirement of WIC. Therefore, it will be necessary to promote the program by explaining the benefits to both WIC clients and WIC staff. In many cases, developmental monitoring can be considered an educational contact when linking nutrition and self-feeding skills to development. This will be a decision of your state WIC agency.

PRO TIP: Once clinics are recruited, they will want to get started. Make sure you are ready with all materials needed for clinics and a process for supporting your clinics.

It is essential to have all the support pieces in place before recruiting clinics.

Support materials can be found at www.cdc.gov/WICGuide and include:

1. One-page flyer explaining the benefits of the program and what is involved
2. An [Introduction to Child Development for WIC Staff training module](#)
3. A website or implementation manual with any state-specific information for program implementation, including how to obtain materials, recommended referral sources, how to access technical assistance, training videos, and more
4. A laminated *Deskside Reference Guide* with step-by-step implementation instructions for each WIC staff person
5. A simple and sustainable strategy for how to train staff to implement the program; see “Training Staff” below
6. Printed checklists customized with any state-specific information and guidance for how to organize checklists in the clinic
7. [CDC’s digital online milestone checklists](#)
8. Environmental graphics with instructions on how to apply them
9. A designated point of contact for clinics to call with questions or concerns

District and other meetings attended by WIC agencies and clinics are a good place to discuss the opportunity to participate in your WIC Milestone Checklist Program and share a sample *Deskside Reference Guide* to illustrate ease of implementation. Your champion(s) can be very helpful in doing so.

Training Staff

Your strategy for training staff to implement your WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program is best determined by your team, in collaboration with clinic leadership and clinic-level champions. Efforts should be made to keep the training as simple as possible, which, in Missouri, helped to improve clinic buy-in and sustainability.

Training efforts in Missouri included dedicated time during a regular staff meeting to review the state-customized implementation manual and *Deskside Reference Guide*, view the 20-minute training video, practice mock encounters, and answer questions. A key component of the training was making sure staff knew what resources to review or whom to consult when they had a question or problem.

Remember, there is no expectation that WIC staff become child development experts, nor experts in developmental delays or disabilities. They need only to be able to engage parents in completing milestone checklists, use the provided resources to answer common questions about the program, and make referrals when warranted.

To help staff feel more confident, you can encourage them to take the [Introduction to Child Development for WIC Staff training module](#).



Two four-year-olds sharing toys while playing.

Component 1 – Environmental Graphics

Environmental graphics (wall and floor block decals) are a key part of the program. They are designed to be applied to the floors and walls of WIC clinics and to introduce the concept of developmental milestones in a fun and friendly way. The graphics raise awareness of typical child development and set the stage for more direct communication between WIC staff and parents about child development. The graphics may also increase awareness of milestones among pregnant women and other family members at the WIC sites. They also signify institutional support for the program.

The graphics were very well-received by WIC staff and clients in Missouri. Staff reported that almost all parents noticed them and spent time reading them.

English and Spanish* versions of the files are available for use by your printer/fabricator. Contact ActEarly@cdc.gov to request access to the files.

* Currently, the wall and floor blocks are only available in English and Spanish. Programs are welcome to translate on their own. Guidance for translating can be found at www.cdc.gov/ActEarly/Materials (look for “translations” header on page)

“The graphics introduce the subject of developmental milestones before the family ever comes to my desk. Their kids are out in the waiting area, playing hopscotch on the floor blocks before I call them back. Then they see the wall blocks in my office and usually the parents will start talking among themselves, ‘Oh yeah, my baby does that already.’ They are anxious to see how their child matches up with others their age.”

Liz Wise
WIC Nutritionist
South County Health Center, MO

Sample Wall Blocks:

Typically produced as a set of 10 adhesive-backed posters (14 X 14 inches) covering a variety of ages



Sample Floor Blocks:

Typically produced in a set of 3 large (12 X 24 inches) and small (12 X 12) adhesive-backed blocks to be applied on the floor to form a path



Component 2 – Administering Milestone Checklists

Developmental Milestone Checklists

Age-appropriate milestone checklists are an essential part of the WIC Milestone Checklist Program. These checklists include the skills that most children develop by that age. They were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* Program, with milestones adapted from the American Academy of Pediatrics’ *Caring for Your Baby and Young Child* and *Bright Futures* publications (www.aap.org). They use parent-friendly language and helpful examples and have been well-received by parents of young children across the country.

The WIC Milestone Checklist Program requires that parents are offered the opportunity to complete a developmental milestone checklist appropriate for the age of their child during WIC certification and mid-certification visits. In addition, checklists may be used any time a parent or WIC staff has a concern about a child’s development.

Checklists can be printed by the state, agency, or clinic and customized with your logo and contact information, specific referral guidance, and local resources for families. Including local contact information for referrals and services is very helpful to families. Request customizable files from ActEarly@cdc.gov.

Tip: For virtual appointments use [CDC’s digital online milestone checklists](#) and/or have parents complete a checklist within [CDC’s Milestone Tracker app](#).

Find Milestone Checklists here: www.cdc.gov/wicguide/tools

Checklist Content

Twelve checklists are available from ages 2 months to 5 years (2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 1 year, 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, 30 months, 3 years, 4 years, and 5 years). All checklists are structured in the same way.

The image shows a sample of a milestone checklist for a 2-month-old baby. The form is titled "Your baby at 2 months" and includes fields for "Baby's Name", "Baby's Age", and "Today's Date". It contains several sections of milestones to check, such as "Social/Emotional Milestones", "Cognitive Milestones", "Language/Communication Milestones", and "Movement/Physical Development Milestones". There is also a section for "Other important things to share with the doctor..." and a "Don't wait. Acting early can make a real difference!" message at the bottom with logos for CDC, WIC, and the American Academy of Pediatrics.

The front of the checklist includes

- The checklist age at the top
- A space to enter the child’s name, age, and the date
- A brief description of developmental milestones
- A list of milestones under the heading “What Most Babies/Children Do at this Age,” organized by categories of development: social/emotional, language/communication, cognitive, and movement/physical development; this section is used to monitor the child’s progress and to educate parents about typical abilities at that age
- At the bottom in a pink box under the heading “Other important things to share with the doctor...” are a list of questions related to child development. Encourage parents/caregivers to answer the questions and share with their child’s doctor.
- At the bottom of the checklist in the green box is a recommendation to talk with the doctor if there are any concerns, along with information on requesting a referral and early intervention programming. This area can be customized to include contact information for agencies in your area or state that provide screening, further assessment, and other services for young children.

The back of the checklist includes sections that the state WIC agency must customize to provide parents with the best referral guidance and program contact information for their state.

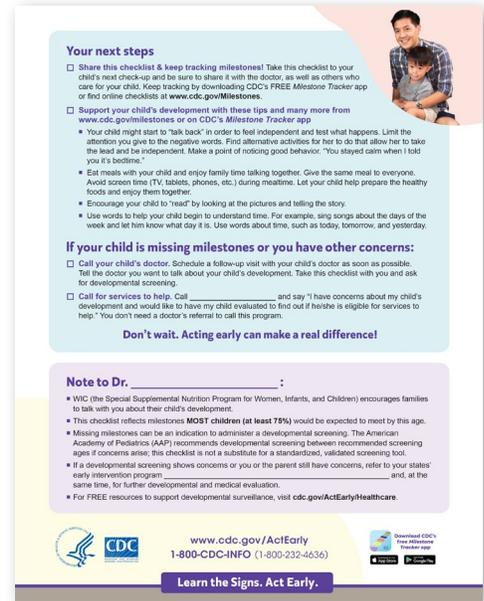
The section entitled “Your Next Steps” includes

- Next steps for all parents to take, including sharing the checklist with the child’s doctor and continuing to track milestones between WIC visits
- Steps for parents to take if the child is missing milestones or there are other potential developmental concerns
- Age-specific parenting tips

This section serves as the “referral” and must be customized with appropriate contact information.

A note with helpful background information for the child’s doctor (or whomever the parent will be referred to for developmental screening) appears near the bottom of the page.

This section can also be customized when the referral is being made to an entity other than the child’s doctor.



Four Simple Steps

Administering the checklists is very simple and can be easily adapted to any clinic flow.

Below is how checklists are typically integrated into certification and mid-certification assessment appointments. Keep in mind that the checklist can also be used during other appointments or any time a parent or WIC staff has a concern or question about a child’s development.

1. **Offer an age-specific checklist.** The WIC staff member offers the parent the opportunity to complete an age-specific checklist for each child being certified that day. For virtual appointments, WIC staff members can encourage the parent to fill out the [age-specific online checklist](#) and email the results to the WIC clinic or fill out the checklist via the [CDC Milestone Tracker App](#) and email the summary to the WIC clinic. The WIC staff can then review the checklist at the next WIC visit. WIC staff can also send information to parents on how to fill out the online or app-based Milestone Checklists.
 - If a child was born prematurely (<37 weeks gestation), offer the checklist that fits his or her corrected age. Find instructions for calculating corrected age here: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/Corrected-Age-For-Preemies.aspx>
 - If a child is between checklist ages, always use the younger checklist. For example, if the child is 20 months old (actual or corrected age), use the 18-month checklist rather than the 2-year checklist.
 - If the parent informs you that their child has already been diagnosed with a developmental delay or is receiving specialized services for developmental concerns (e.g., speech/language therapy, early childhood special education, or other early intervention like speech therapy), there is NO need for the parent to complete a checklist or provide a referral to the doctor. Often, this can be indicated in a child’s record so the checklists are not brought up with the parent in the future.
 - Refer to the *Deskside Reference Guide* for examples of simple, clear language staff can use with parents:
 - * “You may have noticed the graphics on the walls and floor about child development and milestones. Tracking milestones that (child’s name) is reaching is an important way to help your child learn and grow.”
 - * “We are using this checklist to help track children’s development. Thinking about how _____ plays, speaks, learns, acts, and moves is just as important as measuring his/her height and weight.”

- * “So let’s go through this checklist of developmental milestones and see how he/she is progressing. Let’s answer these first two questions together about what most children do at this age. Does _____ copy others, especially adults and older children? Does he/she get excited around other children?”
- * “Go through the rest of the checklist and be sure to ask me if you have any questions. Start by putting _____’s name and age on top, along with today’s date.”

2. Allow the parent time to complete the checklist during the visit. This can be done while information is entered into your data system, if applicable, thus taking advantage of some “down time” for parents during an appointment.

3. Review the checklist. When the parent has finished, the WIC staff member notes whether there are any missing checkmarks alongside the milestones, or any parental concerns written or otherwise. This makes determining the need for a referral simple:

- When ALL milestones on the checklist are checked and there are **NO** concerns written or otherwise expressed, this indicates the child is reaching his or her developmental milestones. You can reassure the parent by saying:
 - * “It looks like _____ is on track for meeting these developmental milestones.”
 - * “Take this checklist with you and share it with your family so they can see how great _____ is doing.”
 - * “If you ever have any concerns or questions about _____’s development, be sure to talk to his/her doctor.”
 - * “If you haven’t already, download the FREE CDC *Milestone Tracker* app and keep tracking _____’s milestones. Share the milestone summary within the app with the doctor at your child’s next visit.”
- Check the first two items under “Your Next Steps” to encourage the parent to “share this checklist with the doctor” and to “keep tracking milestones” and then return the checklist to the parent.
- Check the first box under “Your Next Steps” to encourage the parent to “share this checklist with their doctor” and to “keep tracking milestones”. Suggest the parent read over the WIC specific parenting tips and then return the checklist to the parent.

4. Make a referral, if appropriate. Potential developmental concerns are indicated by a missing checkmark alongside **ANY milestone OR ANY parental concern**, written or otherwise, about the child’s development. In any of these situations, the child should be referred for developmental screening and follow-up.

Unless there is another referral protocol in place, refer the parent to the child’s doctor for review of the checklist and for developmental screening:

“Great job completing your child’s milestone checklist, we know you want to support your child’s development...”

- “... It would be a good idea to talk with your doctor about this checklist. I really care about what the doctor has to say about _____’s development.”
- “...Please call _____’s doctor and schedule a follow-up appointment to talk about his/her development and ask for a developmental screen.”
- “...I am going to write _____’s doctor’s name on it so you can give it to the doctor and he or she will know exactly what you want to talk about.”
- “...I’d like to know what the doctor has to say the next time you come for your WIC appointment.”

REMINDER: Developmental Milestone Checklists are not screening tools nor are they indicators of developmental delay or disability. Rather, they are designed to engage parents in monitoring children’s development and to help staff and parents decide when to refer to the child’s doctor for developmental screening.

PRO TIP: Record the referral, set an alert!

When possible, note the referral in the child's record. If available, an alert can be set as a follow-up reminder for staff to ask the parent about the outcome of this referral at the next visit. If appropriate in your state, following up on the referral can be included as a participant-centered goal.

Linking Child Developmental Monitoring to Nutrition Education

WIC staff can easily transition from discussing the child's developmental milestone checklist to providing education about growth and nutrition. Here are some examples:

- "Good nutrition is important to a child's physical and developmental growth. Would you like some information on how to incorporate WIC foods into your child's diet?"
- "I know you want your child to eat foods that they need to grow, develop, and do their best. Would you like some ideas on helping your child learn to make healthy food choices?"
- "Feeding your infant solid foods is not only about providing nutrition, but is also important for infant development. Can I give you some information on appropriate foods to provide to your child?"

Component 3 – Making a Referral

Referrals for Potential Developmental Delay

Most WIC staff participating in the Milestone Checklist Program will identify children with potential developmental delay. For these children, making an appropriate referral for developmental screening and further assessment is critically important so that the child and family can have the opportunity to benefit from early intervention services.

You will need to identify both how your clinic(s) will make referrals and appropriate referral resources in your state or local area. It may be helpful to consult with your state's CDC Act Early Ambassador (www.cdc.gov/ActEarly/Ambassadors), who can advise you on the referral resources in your state.

You may also wish to consult with a person knowledgeable in Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) privacy requirements to ensure your referral process, especially in following up with families after a referral, complies with HIPAA standards and regulations. It is not commonly necessary for families to share information about evaluation or diagnostic results from a healthcare provider.

At a minimum, it is important to refer the parent to their child's primary health care provider to discuss the checklist and provide developmental screening and further evaluation, if warranted. Use the back of the checklist as the referral form, checking the appropriate boxes on the back and inserting the doctor's name in the "Note to Doctor" section.

Your state, agency, or clinic might have additional recommended tools to support the referral, so it is important to establish your referral protocol before launching your program.

For example, you might also choose to direct the parent to find out if their child might be eligible for services to help.

- If the child is younger than age 3, encourage the family to contact the state's early intervention program to see if their child might be eligible for services.
- Your state, agency, or clinic will need to identify the best approach to making a referral to early intervention.
 - ★ For example, if there is a single point-of-entry/care coordination service available in your state (find out here: <https://healthychild.nashp.org/referral>), share the contact information and complete a referral form.
 - ★ If care coordination is not available in your state, share the contact information for your state's early intervention program, found here: www.cdc.gov/FindEI.
- In some states, follow-up with other early childhood agencies for screening and further assessment may be the best for the child and family. Consult with your state's CDC Act Early Ambassador for information about helpful referral sources.
- If the child is older than age 3, encourage the family to contact their local school system to see if their child might be eligible for services.

The following links provide additional family-friendly resources that might be helpful to share along with your referral:

- Concerned about Development? How to Help Your Child (https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/help_pdfs/cdc_helpchild_eng.pdf)
- Tips for What to Say <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/concerned-whattosay.html>
- Find more at: www.cdc.gov/Concerned

Helping Families Follow-Up with Referrals for Developmental Concerns

Find this content in an accessible format at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/wicguide/helping-families-follow-up-with-referrals.html>

A family can experience many challenges to following up on referrals and navigating the systems of services for a child with developmental needs. The resources below may help you offer additional support:

- *Family Voices*—An advocacy group for parents that can help them identify resources and support in their state (similar to Parent to Parent). <http://familyvoices.org/>
- *Center for Parent Information and Resources*—A website with information about parent centers that provide information, support, and resources for children with disabilities and their families. <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/the-parent-center-network>

Additionally, parents sometimes report that their child’s doctor was not responsive to their concerns about the child’s development or suggested a “wait-and-see” approach that the family is feeling uneasy about. You can help support parents in getting their concerns addressed with a few reminders:

- Acting early on concerns is the best way to help their child
- They know their child better than anyone
- They can get a second opinion with another doctor
- They do not need a referral from the doctor to call early intervention services (younger than age 3) or their local public school (age 3 and older) to find out if their child might be eligible for services to help

As you know, you are a wonderful support to families:

- Your encouragement and reminders can go a long way toward getting a child and family the help they need.
- Remember, there are many resources in the community to support families in meeting their specific needs. Don’t feel like you need to have all the answers!

Tracking Success

Tracking Program Uptake at the State/Agency Level

Find this content in accessible format at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/wicguide/tracking-success.html>

Tracking is important for several reasons: enrollment, implementation, and demonstrating your success. It helps to know the level of interest among your WIC clinics (enrollment) and those that actually implement the program (implementation). Knowing levels of enrollment and implementation can help you expand and improve your program.

If enrollment is lower than expected, you can review and refine your marketing efforts to better engage your clinics. If many who enroll are not implementing, you can offer additional technical assistance.

After your clinics enroll, make them aware that you will be following up with them about implementation and any challenges they might have.

“Tracking and sharing the number of participating agencies across the state has really helped fuel some friendly competition that WIC families are benefitting from—because no one wants to be left out.”

Kathy Mertzlufft
Nutrition Services Manager, MO

Tips for Tracking

Clinic enrollment. An online enrollment process should make clinic enrollment easy to track, and posting this information may spur additional agencies/clinics to join.

Implementation. Tracking the number of clinics within your state or agency that are actively implementing may be more challenging, so be sure to let the clinics know that you will be following up to find out when they’ve begun implementing. Someone from your agency or your program champion may have to call clinics; asking for this information by email has been challenging in past efforts. Creative approaches may be needed to track implementation in your state or agency.

Impact. You might also like to know the difference this program is making for staff, families, and children. Program impact can be measured in a variety of ways. At a minimum, however, individual clinics will need to track certain implementation measures at the clinic level, introduced below. If you are interested in discussing the best ways to measure impact, please reach out to the CDC *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* team at ActEarly@cdc.gov.

Tracking Implementation and Impact at the WIC Clinic Level

Tracking a few key measures will help you know if your program is actually reaching your clients. It is important to know that clients who should have received the milestone checklists have received them and have been referred, if warranted. It also gives you valuable information to improve your program.

Programs are encouraged to develop a method to track the key measures listed below. You may be able to use your data system to track who has received the checklists and whether they have been referred for further evaluation and services.

Although tracking is ongoing, choose a specified time period to calculate this information. Initially, it might be helpful to review this information monthly or bimonthly. As the program matures, it can be done quarterly or every 6 months.

Helpful Information to Collect

- 1. Number of eligible clients and percent who received a milestone checklist.** Knowing the percentage of eligible clients who received and completed a checklist helps you to know if some staff or clinics are struggling to implement the program as intended and gives you the opportunity to reach out to find out why, so that you can make adjustments to the program if necessary. Having a percentage near 100% shows you that program implementation is going well.
 - **Number of eligible children**—This is the total number of children who have had certification or mid-certification visits in a specified period, and have **not** already been identified with a developmental disability.
 - **Number of eligible children who have completed a milestone checklist**—This is the number of eligible children who had completed milestone checklists.
 - **Percent**—The number of clients with a completed milestone checklist (2nd bullet) divided by the number of clients who were eligible (1st bullet) in a specified period, multiplied by 100.
 - * Remember that this percentage could change over time. It will increase as staff incorporate the Developmental Milestone Program into their visits with clients on a routine basis.
- 2. Number and percent of eligible clients referred for possible developmental concerns.** These measures tell you about the impact the program is having in terms of increasing referrals for developmental concerns. Sharing this information regularly can invigorate staff who are motivated by helping children and supporting families.
 - **Number**—This is the number of children who were referred based on the checklist or parental concern.
 - **Percent**—The number of eligible clients referred divided by the number of eligible clients with completed checklists, multiplied by 100.

When WIC data systems and processes allow, it will also be helpful to measure:

- 3. Number and percent of eligible clients who followed up on a referral based on identified developmental concerns.** If this number is low, you can investigate why and make improvements to the program to help parents overcome challenges to the referral follow-up.
 - **Number**—This is the number of children who saw their healthcare provider or other professional because of the referral for developmental concerns.
 - **Percent**—The number who saw their referred provider, divided by the total number of children referred (#2 above), multiplied by 100.
- 4. Number of eligible clients referred for further testing or services by their healthcare provider.** This is the number of children who saw their doctor because of developmental concerns and were referred on for additional testing or services.



WIC staff showing parents CDC's Milestone Checklist.

Share and Celebrate Your Success

Setting up and implementing your WIC Milestone Checklist Program takes time and dedication. There will be challenges along the way, which can be resolved with the support of talented WIC staff at all levels, as well as the support of CDC, your state's CDC Act Early Ambassador, and others. Celebrate your achievements!

Share Your Success

After a few months, you're likely to have success with enrollment and implementation. In a few more months, your clinics will be providing developmental monitoring at certification and mid-certification visits. Share your successes with your leadership and those implementing the program. Share it broadly across WIC agencies in your state. Additional WIC agencies and clinics may choose to join efforts if they see momentum in clinic enrollment.

Leadership. Let leadership know. Developmental monitoring can make a real difference for WIC clients. Share your program success with leadership in your agency and beyond:

- Highlight stories from your clinics
- Use maps to show how agency and clinic participation has increased over time
- Try to get local media to do a story on the program

WIC Agencies and staff. WIC staff will want to know how they are doing. Information from tracking activities should be shared at the agency and clinic levels on a routine basis.

Recognize and Celebrate

WIC Agencies and Staff. You will have agencies and staff that embrace the WIC Milestone Checklist Program and have great success. Success is likely to energize folks to even greater success and encourage other clinics to participate. Find ways to recognize your participating agencies and clinics by

- Posting articles in newsletters or on your website;
- Including program successes in presentations at local, regional, or national meetings; and
- Giving recognition at state, district or agency meetings.

Implementation Tools and Templates for the Milestone Checklist Program

Implementation Resources for WIC Clinics

- A. [Developmental Milestone Checklists with Next Steps](#)
- B. [Printing Specifications for Environmental Graphics](#)
- C. [Installing Environmental Graphics](#)
- D. [Deskside Reference Guide](#)
- E. [Implementation Checklist for Clinics](#)
- F. [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- G. [Organization of Materials for Easy Access](#)

Implementation Resources for State WIC Agencies

- H. [Implementation Checklist for WIC State Agencies](#)
- I. [Content Checklist for Program Webpage](#)

Options for Promoting Developmental Monitoring During WIC Virtual Visits

- J. [Online Milestone Checklists](#)
- K. [Promoting the *Milestone Tracker* App](#)
- L. [Online Education Modules for WIC Participants](#)
- M. [WICShopper App – Developmental Monitoring Content](#)
- N. [Sample Social Media Posts](#)
- O. [Introduction to Child Development for WIC Staff Training Module](#)

A. Developmental Milestone Checklists with Next Steps

The following is a sample of Developmental Milestone checklists with Next Steps. View accessible checklists for all ages at www.cdc.gov/wicguide/tools.

Your baby at 2 months

Baby's Name _____ Baby's Age _____ Today's Date _____

Milestones matter! How your baby plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves offers important clues about his or her development. Check the milestones your baby has reached by 2 months. Take this with you and talk with your baby's doctor at every well-child visit about the milestones your baby has reached and what to expect next.



What most babies do by this age:

Social/Emotional Milestones

- Calms down when spoken to or picked up
- Looks at your face
- Seems happy to see you when you walk up to her
- Smiles when you talk to or smile at her

Cognitive Milestones (learning, thinking, problem-solving)

- Watches you as you move
- Looks at a toy for several seconds

Language/Communication Milestones

- Makes sounds other than crying
- Reacts to loud sounds

Movement/Physical Development Milestones

- Holds head up when on tummy
- Moves both arms and both legs
- Opens hands briefly

Other important things to share with the doctor...

1. What are some things you and your baby do together? _____
2. What are some things your baby likes to do? _____
3. Is there anything your baby does or does not do that concerns you? _____
4. Has your baby lost any skills he/she once had? _____
5. Does your baby have any special healthcare needs or was he/she born prematurely? _____

You know your baby best.

Don't wait. If your baby 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 baby'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 baby more; and
2. Call your state or territory's early intervention program to find out if your baby can get services to help. Learn more and find the number at cdc.gov/FindEI.

For more on how to help your baby, visit cdc.gov/Concerned.

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



Download CDC's free Milestone Tracker app

American Academy of Pediatrics
DEDICATED TO THE HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN®



Your next steps

- Share this checklist & keep tracking milestones!** Take this checklist to your child's next check-up and be sure to share it with the doctor, as well as others who care for your child. Keep tracking by downloading CDC's FREE *Milestone Tracker* app or find online checklists at www.cdc.gov/Milestones.
- Support your child's development with these tips and many more from www.cdc.gov/milestones or on CDC's *Milestone Tracker* app**
 - Feed only breast milk or formula to your baby. Babies are not ready for other foods, water or other drinks for about the first 6 months of life.
 - Learn when your baby is hungry by looking for signs. Watch for signs of hunger, such as putting hands to mouth, turning head toward breast/bottle, or smacking/licking lips.
 - Look for signs your baby is full, such as closing her mouth or turning her head away from the breast/bottle. If your baby is not hungry, it's ok to stop feeding.
 - Take care of yourself. Parenting can be hard work! It's easier to enjoy your new baby when you feel good yourself.
 - Talk, read, and sing to your baby to help her develop and understand language.

If your child is missing milestones or you have other concerns:

- Call your child's doctor.** Schedule a follow-up visit with your child's doctor as soon as possible. Tell the doctor you want to talk about your child's development. Take this checklist with you and ask for developmental screening.
- Call for services to help.** Call _____ and say "I have concerns about my child's development and would like to have my child evaluated to find out if he/she is eligible for services to help." You don't need a doctor's referral to call this program.

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

Note to Dr. _____ :

- WIC (the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children) encourages families to talk with you about their child's development.
- This checklist reflects milestones **MOST children (at least 75%)** would be expected to meet by this age.
- Missing milestones can be an indication to administer a developmental screening. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends developmental screening between recommended screening ages if concerns arise; this checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated screening tool.
- If a developmental screening shows concerns or you or the parent still have concerns, refer to your states' early intervention program _____ and, at the same time, for further developmental and medical evaluation.
- For FREE resources to support developmental surveillance, visit cdc.gov/ActEarly/Healthcare.



www.cdc.gov/ActEarly
1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

B. Printing/Production Specifications for Environmental Graphics

Please note: These specifications are for **one set of Floor Blocks** (6 large and 3 small blocks) **and one set of Wall Blocks** (10 blocks); adjust quantities for your situation.

FLOOR BLOCKS

Large styrene floor blocks

- 12 x 24-inch styrene floor graphic decals from six unique art files (choose English, Spanish, or combination)
- Full-color digital print with non-slip laminate on .020 dead white styrene
- Affix low-tack adhesive laminate with liner to back side
- Trim to bleed

Small styrene floor blocks

- 12 x 12-inch styrene floor graphic decals from two unique art files
- Full-color digital print with non-slip laminate on .020 dead white styrene
- Affix low-tack adhesive laminate with liner to back side
- Trim to bleed

Vinyl connector floor blocks

- 12 x 12-inch custom shape vinyl floor graphic from one unique art file
- Full-color digital print with non-slip laminate on MightyGrip self-adhesive vinyl or similar
- Affix low-tack adhesive laminate with liner to back side
- Trim to bleed
- *Optional: Digital cut in 12-inch radius quarter circle*

WALL BLOCKS

- 14 x 14-inch wall graphic decals from 10 unique art files (choose English, Spanish, or combination)
- Full-color digital print on WallMark PS Vinyl with low-tack self-adhesive or similar
- Trim to bleed

C. Installing the Environmental Graphics

The wall and floor blocks (when produced per the specifications) are designed to fit a variety of spaces and adhere to a variety of surfaces without damaging them.

Tips for Installing the Wall Blocks:

- The wall blocks are best used in sets of two or more, in sequence by age, and in a variety of colors.
- Put them where parents are most likely to see them: waiting areas, behind staff desks, above scales and changing tables, and other highly visible areas.
- Steps for installation:
 - ★ Be sure the wall surface is clean and dry.
 - ★ Place the wall blocks at or above eye level.
 - ★ Measure from a straight edge (the ceiling or corner) to make sure the wall blocks are level.
 - ★ Place the blocks about 2 inches apart.
 - ★ Placement is easiest if you peel off half the backing, position the wall block, and then peel off the remaining backing.
 - ★ Very firmly press the wall blocks in place, particularly along the edges, making sure there are no air bubbles; a credit card or another straight edge tool can help smooth them on.
 - ★ Very occasionally, the wall blocks will not adhere to certain painted walls; if this is the case, mounting products may help, or the wall blocks can be placed in a large frame or on a bulletin board.

Tips for Installing the Floor Blocks:

- Floor blocks are best used in an open area in a hall or waiting area. Using the floor blocks as a directional device to lead families from one area to another is ideal (for example, from the waiting area to the certifier's office).
- The floor blocks can be placed on most clean vinyl or tile floors; however, **they do not adhere well to carpet.**
- Steps for installation:
 - ★ Be sure the floor surface is clean and dry.
 - ★ Start with the small floor block (12 x 12), with an arrow that reads, "Every Child's Development is a Journey."
 - ★ Add the longer blocks. Use the purple squares as needed to connect the individual blocks and to make the path turn. If you have received curved purple pieces, they can also be used to make the path turn. (The curved purple pieces can also be cut using a straight edge blade for a more customized path.)
 - ★ Placement is easiest if you peel off half the backing, position the floor block and then peel off the remaining backing.
 - ★ End with the small floor block that reads, "Talk to the doctor about your child's development."
 - ★ Very firmly press the floor blocks in place, particularly along the edges, making sure there are no air bubbles.
 - ★ Floor blocks cannot be reused. If you have to pull them up, you will most likely need to use new floor blocks when replacing.

D. Deskside Reference Guide

View this handout, download and customize it from www.cdc.gov/wicguide/tools.

Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for WIC Deskside Reference Guide

ROLE OF WIC STAFF

At each certification and mid-certification appointment, give parents the opportunity to complete the age-appropriate checklist. The checklist may also be used during other regular appointments and any time a parent or WIC staff has a concern or questions about a child's development.

Have the parent complete a checklist for each child being certified that day unless the child has known developmental delay or disability; if the child is between checklist ages, use the younger checklist. If the child was born prematurely, use the corrected age.

Refer the parent for follow-up if indicated. If allowed by your state, the referral can be noted in the electronic data system. See details in the box below.

INTRODUCING THE CHECKLIST (Sample Script):

1. "You may have noticed the pictures on the walls and floor about developmental milestones." [OR "You might remember that I shared the link to an online milestone checklist/CDC's milestone tracker app."] "Tracking how (child's name) plays, speaks, learns, acts and moves for his/her age is just as important as measuring his/her height and weight."
2. "These checklists help us track your child's development. If you haven't completed it yet, we can do it together now."
3. "Let's go through the milestone checklist to see how _____ is doing on his/her milestones. Let's answer these first two questions together. Does _____ (read first item on checklist)? Does _____ (read second item)?"
4. "Go through the rest of the checklist and let me know if you have any questions. Be sure to add _____'s name and age, along with today's date."

Be sure the parent writes the child's name, age, and the date on the checklist and completes both columns of the checklist. Provide assistance if needed. Then review the checked boxes to determine next steps:

<p>IF > ALL milestone boxes are checked AND NO concerns noted in pink box or otherwise</p>	<p>IF > ONE or more milestone box is NOT checked OR ANY concerns noted in pink box or otherwise</p>
<p>THIS INDICATES THE CHILD IS REACHING HIS OR HER DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES.</p>	<p>THIS INDICATES NEED FOR A REFERRAL</p>
<p>"It looks like _____ is on track for meeting these developmental milestones."</p>	<p>"It would be a good idea to talk with your health care provider about this checklist. I really care about what the doctor has to say about _____'s development."</p>
<p>"Take this checklist home with you and share it with your family and _____'s doctor so they can see how great _____ is doing."</p>	<p>"Please call _____'s health care provider to schedule a follow-up appointment for developmental screening."</p>
<p>"If you have a smart phone, you can download a free app called <i>CDC's Milestone Tracker</i> to keep tracking milestones until your next visit."</p>	<p>"I am going to turn this checklist over and write _____'s health care provider's name on it so that he/she knows exactly what you want to talk about."</p>
<p>"If you ever have any concerns or questions about _____'s development, be sure to talk to the doctor."</p>	<p>"I want to know what the health care provider has to say the next time you come for your (date) WIC appointment."</p>
<p>Give the checklist to the parent and encourage them to keep tracking milestones. Remind them to download CDC's FREE <i>Milestone Tracker</i> app or find online checklists at www.cdc.gov/Milestones.</p>	<p>Check for understanding and encourage them to follow up. When possible, note the referral in the child's record. If available, an alert can be set as a follow-up reminder for staff. This enables staff to ask the parent about the outcome of this referral at the next visit.</p>

Common Questions From Parents

ABOUT THE PROGRAM

Do I have to do this? No. If you prefer not to, we can just move on.

Why are you asking me these questions? Thinking about how a child plays, speaks, acts and moves is just as important as tracking his or her height and weight. Height and weight can be indicators of healthy growth, just like these milestones can be indicators of healthy development.

I already filled out a checklist (here/at the doctor's office/at daycare). Do I have to do it again? Children grow and change quickly at this early age so it's a great idea to do this kind of checklist frequently. It's a good way to make sure a child is on track. *Note: If a child already has been diagnosed with a developmental delay or is receiving specialized services for developmental concerns (e.g., speech/language therapy, early childhood special education, or other early intervention like speech therapy), there is no need for the parent to complete a checklist or for a referral to the doctor. Often this can be indicated in a child's record so the checklists are not brought up with the parent in the future.*

Who is sponsoring this program? WIC provides oversight for this program. [A state would add their identifying information here if appropriate] is also supporting the program. This program was originally developed with the WIC program in Missouri, in partnership with the University of Missouri and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a federal agency interested in the health of children and families.

Where can I go for more information or to comment on this project? Contact [person's name] for more information. You can call or email at [telephone number and e-mail address].

ABOUT DEVELOPMENTAL MILESTONES

What is a developmental milestone? A developmental milestone is a skill that most children can do by a certain age. For example, most children can say "mama" or "dada" by their first birthday. These checklists were developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* Program, are informed by research, and were reviewed by development experts.

Where can I go for more information on developmental milestones? Additional sources of information include:

- CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." website is an excellent resource. <http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly>
- Family Voices. An advocacy group for parents to help them identify resources and support in their state (similar to Parent to Parent). <http://familyvoices.org/>
- Center for Parent Information and Resources. A website with information about parent centers that provide information, support, and resources for children with disabilities and their families. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org>

What do I do if my doctor isn't responsive to my concerns?

- Acting early on concerns is the best way to help your child and you are doing the right thing; you know your child better than anyone
- If your doctor tells you to "wait and see" and you feel uneasy about that advice, you can seek a second opinion with another doctor

You can also call [insert org name and number here] to find out if your child might qualify for services to help. You do not need a doctor's referral to do so.

How quickly do I need to contact my child's doctor? Is this an emergency? Can it wait until our next well-child visit?

While not an emergency, developmental concerns should be addressed promptly. Please see your child's doctor before your next WIC appointment. If your next well-child check-up with the doctor is more than a month away, don't wait. Call and get the soonest appointment available.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
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Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/actearly
1-800-CDC-INFO

Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for WIC

www.cdc.gov/WICGuide

E. Implementation Checklist for Clinics

View this handout, download and customize it from www.cdc.gov/wicguide/tools.

WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program Clinic Implementation Checklist

READY? GET SET! GO!

Use this checklist to make sure you have all the pieces in place at your clinic to implement your WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program.

Ready?

- Explore the information and materials on CDC's WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program website (www.cdc.gov/WICGuide).
- Review any state-specific website or implementation guidance, if available.
- Identify program champions at your agency and clinic.
- Request or print all program materials.
 - Wall and floor blocks (email ActEarly@cdc.gov)
 - Milestone checklists (download and print from www.cdc.gov/WICGuide)
 - *Deskside Reference Guide* (download and print from www.cdc.gov/WICGuide)
 - Frequently Asked Questions
- Complete the training: Watch CDC's online training video found at www.cdc.gov/WICGuide or receive training from other WIC staff.

Get Set!

- Connect with your program champion(s).
- Identify the best way to integrate the checklists into your clinic flow (e.g., when you enter data and parent has down time).
- Organize checklists and other materials into a toolkit or file drawer for easy access.
- Confirm your state or agency's recommended referral process for children with potential developmental delay.
- Install floor and wall blocks throughout the clinic.

Go!

- Announce the program to your clients, community, local physicians, and others.
- Customize and share an announcement to clients, a press release with local media, and a letter with local healthcare providers.
- Invite parents to complete the checklists during certification and mid-certification visits.
- Review completed checklists with parents. Check for missing milestones, checked items in the purple box, and/or written parent concerns.
- Refer for screening when checklist indicates a possible developmental concern, or celebrate with parent if child is reaching age-appropriate milestones.

HELP!

If your clinic runs into any snags along the way, don't worry! Use this checklist to help you determine where the issues are, then review the *Implementation Guide* and *Frequently Asked Questions* to see if you can find the answer. If you still need help, contact your agency or state program champion.



U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
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Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

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

WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program

www.cdc.gov/WICGuide

F. Frequently Asked Questions

View this handout, download and customize it from www.cdc.gov/wicguide/tools.

Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for WIC Frequently Asked Questions

COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT MILESTONE CHECKLISTS

When do we offer the checklists to parents? Checklists should be given at certification and mid-certification appointments, except when an infant is younger than 2 months. There is no checklist for newborn to age 2 months.

Note: Upon offering a checklist, or during other interactions, the parent might inform you that the child has already been diagnosed with a developmental delay or is receiving specialized services for developmental concerns (e.g., speech/language therapy, early childhood special education, or other early intervention like speech therapy). If that is the case, there is no need for the parent to complete a checklist or for a referral to be made. Often, this can be indicated in a child's record so the checklists are not brought up with the parent in the future.

What checklist do I use if the child was born prematurely? If a child was born prematurely (<37 weeks gestation), offer the checklist that fits his or her corrected age, up until age 2 years. Find instructions for calculating corrected age here: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/preemie/Pages/Corrected-Age-For-Preemies.aspx>

What do we do with the checklists when there is no need for a referral? Give the checklist to the parent when the child is reaching his/her developmental milestones. Encourage the parent to share the checklist with others (e.g., the child's healthcare provider, child care provider or teacher, family members).

What do I do if a parent is upset that their child is missing milestones? Reassure the parent as you would when there is any concern (low iron, for example). You can say, "Children develop at their own pace; each child is different. But it's important to follow up with your healthcare provider to make sure. Just get it checked out."

What do I do if a parent considers a referral to be criticism of their parenting skills? You can say, "We know you are a good parent; that's why you'll want to check this out. We know you want to do all you can to help your child."

Does this program overlap with what healthcare providers may be doing in terms of developmental milestones? In some cases, it may. Young children grow and change quickly, so it's a great idea to do these kinds of checklists frequently. Most healthcare providers will agree that it's the best way to make sure a child's development is on track.

What can I expect if we have the parent "schedule a follow-up visit" with the child's healthcare provider? The WIC participant can take the checklist with them to this appointment and share any concerns they have about their child's development. The healthcare provider will discuss the child's development and determine if further follow-up or screening is necessary.

What if the child has already been diagnosed by a doctor or other healthcare provider with a developmental delay or disability? The parent does not need to complete a checklist. You can also indicate this in the child's record so you can skip the checklists with this parent in the future.

Can the WIC Milestone Checklist Program be billed to Medicaid? No, it is not a developmental diagnostic or screening assessment.

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Common Questions About Program Materials

How do we get more checklists? Check your state website or contact your state/agency technical assistance person.

Our WIC clinic is not allowed to access YouTube. How can we view the training video? Contact your state technical assistance person.

I only need materials in English, but I have received two wall blocks in Spanish. Wall blocks come in a combination of English (8) and Spanish (2). Using the full set implies inclusivity; however, the blocks are still effective with those two blocks removed.

How can I tell the difference between the floor blocks and the wall blocks? The wall and floor blocks differ in size and weight. There are two sizes of floor blocks: 12 X 12 and 12 X 24 inches; the wall blocks, on the other hand, are all 14 x 14 inches. Also, the floor blocks are heavier than the wall blocks.

The floor blocks are not sticking. What should I do? The floor blocks adhere well to most vinyl and tile flooring, but do not stick well to carpet. Contact your state or agency point of contact or the vendor that supplied the decals for additional support.

Can we mop over the floor blocks? If ordered per the recommended specifications, the floor blocks can be mopped over without damage; however, you will want to confirm this with the printer/fabricator.



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WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program

G. Organization of Materials for Easy Access

Find this content in an accessible format at: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/wicguide/organizing-material-for-easy-access.html>

Clinics will need to organize the checklists and other materials so they are readily available to WIC staff. This example is based on the Missouri WIC Developmental Milestones Program.

Every WIC staff member who will be administering milestone checklists should have a “toolkit” of materials near their desk. Having the checklists right at WIC staff fingertips is important to integrating the program into the clinic flow.



Steps:

1. Have all of your materials in hand
 - Adequate supplies of all checklists in English and Spanish. If you need checklists in additional languages, please contact the program at actearly@cdc.gov
 - *Deskside Reference Guide* and any other state or clinic-specific implementation guides for all WIC staff administering the checklists to keep at their desks or with the milestone checklists
2. Organize in file drawers or in file boxes
 - Decide if you will organize the milestone checklists in file drawers at WIC staff desks or in file boxes.
 - You will need one folder for the *Deskside Reference Guide* and any other state or clinic-specific implementation guides provided for your reference. You will need at least 18 hanging folders, half in one color for English and half in another color for Spanish. You will need additional folders in other colors if you will be offering checklists in additional languages.
 - Print file tabs for each folder.

H. Implementation Checklist for WIC State Agencies

View this handout, download and customize it from www.cdc.gov/wicguide/tools.

WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program State/Agency Implementation Checklist

Use this checklist to make sure you have addressed the major steps to support your WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program. It is essential to have all of your materials ready, your processes worked out, and your technical assistance in place before you begin recruiting clinics. To build anticipation and excitement, consider setting a specific "launch" date for all clinics to begin the project.

IDENTIFY PROGRAM CHAMPIONS

Recruit program champions at three levels and engage these champions to help establish your program.

- State WIC Agency Champion: This would be someone who knows the WIC system in your state, is well-respected among WIC agency staff, can be enthusiastic about the Milestone Checklist Program, and has the capacity to help support initiating and sustaining the effort. (Perhaps it is the person reading this!)
- Child Development Champion: This would most likely be a child development expert outside of WIC. Your state's CDC Act Early Ambassador, IDEA Part C Coordinators, and local pediatricians make excellent champions.
- Clinic Champions: Ideally, clinic leadership who is committed to implementing the program (this person should be identified as part of the enrollment process).

ESTABLISH PROCESSES

Making Referrals

- Determine the best process for making and tracking a referral for developmental concern.
- Customize the back of the milestone checklist to appropriately support the referral process.
- Develop any additional materials needed to support referrals, if needed.

Training Staff

- Determine how staff will be trained initially, and on an ongoing basis (annual refresher, new staff, etc.), to implement the checklist program; use existing resources from CDC's *Implementation Guide*, including CDC's training video, your customized *Deskside Reference Guide*, and any other materials you develop to support implementation.

Recruiting Agencies/Clinics

- Use your best channels to announce the program to potential participants: meetings, newsletters, direct mailings, routine calls, your website, etc.
- When enrolling clinics, ask each to identify a champion who can serve as the primary point of contact for that clinic's participation. Remember that clinic champions can help support training and implementation.

Enrolling Clinics and Distributing Materials

- Determine how local agencies/clinics will enroll in the program; an online form might be very helpful for tracking.
- Decide how the state or local agency will manage shipping milestone checklists and wall and floor graphics, if printed centrally, and who will manage it.
- Provide suggestions for application of environmental graphics and organization of milestone checklists and other materials.
- Distribute instructions for printing and laminating the *Deskside Reference Guide* and for organizing the milestone checklists and any handouts.

continued on back

Tracking Implementation

- Determine how you will track which clinics are participating in the program.
- Determine what information you want from each implementing clinic, how you will get it, and how often.

Technical Assistance

- Identify processes and primary contact person(s) for providing technical assistance, if needed.
- Ensure that your State WIC Agency Champion has what they need to provide technical assistance.
- Ensure that your Clinic Champions have what they need to implement the program in their clinics.
- Make a plan for ongoing implementation support, as well as a plan for celebrating success.

PREPARE YOUR MATERIALS

State-specific Guidance

- Prepare any state-specific guidance, especially if guidance differs from the general guidance provided by CDC (found at www.cdc.gov/WICGuide), and provide it to agencies and clinics.
- Include guidance for training staff and data collection (who and how will this be collected).

Milestone Checklists

- Obtain the customizable checklist files, available in English and Spanish, from CDC by contacting ActEarly@cdc.gov.
- Customize the checklists with your state WIC logo, local contact information, any specific referral guidance, and any local resources for families. Be sure that the back of the checklist is customized to reflect the referral process that you will recommend to clinics. CDC may be able to offer assistance with customizing the files; contact CDC at ActEarly@cdc.gov.
- Work through established channels to support printing.

Environmental Graphics

- Obtain the wall and floor block files, available in English and Spanish, from CDC by contacting ActEarly@cdc.gov.
- Work through established channels to support printing; find the printer/fabricator specifications at www.cdc.gov/WICGuide.

Other Support Materials

Consider whether any additional support materials may need to be produced, such as

- Referral Form (in addition to the back of the checklist)
- Laminated *Deskside Reference Guide* document (to support implementation at-a glance)
- "Toolkit" for each WIC staff administering the program, with color-coded folders to organize milestone checklists, the *Deskside Reference Guide*, handouts, and evaluation materials for easy access. These files can be stored together in a file drawer or in a plastic crate, binder, or expandable file folder if they will be used at more than one clinic site

For additional support in developing or implementing your WIC Milestone Checklist Program, contact CDC's *Learn the Signs. Act Early.* Program at ActEarly@cdc.gov.



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WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program

I. Content Checklist for Program Webpage

It may be helpful to set up a page for your WIC Milestone Checklist Program on your state agency's website to offer information on the program, clinic eligibility, how to enroll, where to obtain training, and how to get additional help. This offers clinic staff a one-stop resource for how to launch and implement the program.

Content for this webpage could include:

1. A banner with the name of your Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for WIC Example:

{State Name} Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for WIC

2. An introduction that identifies the state agency promoting the program, the purposes of the program, and the expected benefits of participation.

Sample language:

{State Agency} and {partners} encourage WIC agencies to implement the Milestone Checklist Program for WIC to engage parents in monitoring early developmental milestones and help identify and refer the 1 in 6 children with a developmental delay or disability

This program helps WIC staff engage parents in monitoring their children's early development and know when and how to refer families for follow-up if there are concerns. Using materials developed by experts at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program was originally developed in Missouri by WIC staff for WIC staff.

Evaluation of the program showed that it fit in well in WIC clinics, was easy for WIC staff, and was meaningful to families. Almost all WIC staff educators identified children with possible developmental delay and made referrals for more services.

The WIC Milestone Checklist Program uses a set of checklists and family-friendly wall and floor graphics to increase parents' awareness of developmental milestones and to promote the early identification of potential developmental delay. The program positively impacts families and children and is easy to implement (link to publications here).

The program content is based on the CDC's Learn the Signs. Act Early. public health campaign (www.cdc.gov/ActEarly).

3. Information on how to enroll in the program and obtain materials

This section would provide instructions on how local agencies and clinics in your state will enroll. A link to an online application or enrollment form could be included. Include information on how your state will distribute materials to sites and how sites can request materials.

4. Training materials

This section could include links to training materials developed by CDC or to training materials and any in-person training available from your state agency.

Training materials available from CDC:

- * Online Implementation Guide--A general Implementation Guide is available on the CDC website (www.cdc.gov/WICGuide). You can customize this Implementation Guide for your state and link to it here.
- * Training Video—A general training video (adapted from Missouri's) is available at www.cdc.gov/WICGuide; it is approximately 15 minutes long.
- * Obtaining technical assistance

This section would include a link to the clinic-level implementation checklist, the *Deskside Reference Guide*, Frequently Asked Questions, and information about how to obtain technical assistance.

5. Other resources and references

- * CDC's [Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#) public health campaign.
- * Missouri WIC Developmental Milestones Program Executive Summary
This summary describes the program's development during two phases.
- * [Introduction to Child Development for WIC Staff Training Module](#)

Useful publications:

- * *Impact of "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Materials on parental engagement and doctor interaction regarding child development.* Gadowski, Anne M., MD, MPH; Riley, Moira R., PhD; Scribani, Melissa, MPH; Tallman, Nancy https://journals.lww.com/jrnldb/Fulltext/2018/12000/Impact_of_Learn_the_Signs_Act_Early_Materials.3.aspx.
- * *Better together: Developmental screening and monitoring best identify children who need early intervention.* Barger, Brian, Ph.D.; Rice, Catherine, Ph.D.; Wolf, Rebecca, M.A.; Roach, Andrew, Ph.D. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1936657418300037>
- * *Developmental Monitoring and Referral for Low-Income Children Served by WIC: Program Development and Implementation Outcomes.* Farmer, J.E., Falk, L.W., Clark, M.J. et al. *Maternal Child Health J* 26, 230–241 (2022). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-021-03319-9>

Options for Promoting Developmental Monitoring During WIC Virtual Visits

Developmental monitoring can be done as part of a virtual visit or by phone with the help of virtual options available to your WIC clinics. It is important to note that most of these options are supplementary to the core WIC checklist program. These do not replace the core model but will help WIC staff be able to provide some options when in-person clinic visits are not possible.

**The core model for the WIC checklist program consists of:*

1. *Engaging imagery on the walls and floors of the clinic to introduce milestone monitoring in a fun and friendly way.*
2. *Helping parents complete a milestone checklist.*
3. *A brief discussion with the caregiver and a referral if there may be a developmental concern.*

J. Online Milestone Checklists

■ [CDC's Digital Online Milestone Checklists](#)

One way to closely replicate the core WIC checklist program is to encourage WIC participants to complete an online milestone checklist and email their child's summary to their WIC clinic prior to their next appointment with WIC staff. The steps in this process would include:

- ★ WIC staff provide information on how to fill out an online checklist during each WIC appointment. This could be done by:
 - Explaining the process during an appointment
 - Emailing or texting instructions
 - Linking to the web page from an appointment reminder
 - ★ WIC staff make a note of this in the participants' electronic record that serves as a reminder to ask about it at their next appointment.
 - ★ At their next appointment, the WIC staff ask if the participant has completed the online checklist or gives them a moment to do so.
 - ★ The WIC staff member reviews the completed checklist with the parent and refers for developmental screening or to another resource if appropriate.
- As in the core WIC checklist program, the checklist visit may be used as part of the parent's goalsetting. The WIC staff member can also set an alert to follow up if a referral is made. This option has the advantage of encouraging parent and WIC staff interactions regarding the children's development and underscoring the importance of developmental monitoring in the context of this relationship.

To use CDC's Digital Online Milestone Checklist:

1. Visit [CDC's Digital Online Checklist Page](#) and select the age of your child.
2. Fill in today's date.
3. Answer the questions about your child's development using the pictures and videos provided.
4. Enter your email address into the email box to receive a copy of your child's summary. Hit submit.
5. When you receive the email with your child's summary, forward a copy to your WIC clinic. Be sure to include your child's first and last name and birthdate.
6. Review the summary at your next WIC appointment and share any concerns you may have with your WIC provider.

Contact actearly@cdc.gov if you have any questions about the online checklist form.

Individual State Checklists: Another option is for states to set up their own online checklist form on their state's WIC website. Check out [Nevada WIC's online checklist](#) or [Massachusetts WIC's online checklist](#) for an example.

K. Using the Milestone Tracker App to Promote Developmental Monitoring During WIC Visits

The WIC clinic sets up an email account where WIC participants can email the results of the checklist from the CDC *Milestone Tracker* App. WIC staff encourage the participant to email their child's summary to the clinic before their next appointment. This step will greatly facilitate a parent and WIC staff partnership in monitoring developmental milestones.

- WIC staff provide information on how to download the app, fill out the checklist, and email the summary to their WIC clinic during each WIC appointment. This could be done by:
 - * Verbal information provided during an appointment
 - * Virtual handout
 - * Email
 - * Including in an appointment reminder
 - * Text
- WIC staff note that the participant was provided with directions on how to download the app and email their child's summary to the WIC clinic in the participants' electronic record to remind them to ask about it at their next appointment.
- At their next appointment, the WIC staff ask if the participant has downloaded the app and emailed the checklist summary to the clinic.
- The WIC staff member reviews the checklist summary with the parent, provides feedback about the child's development, and refers for further assessment if indicated.

As in the core WIC checklist program, the checklist visit may be used as part of the parent's goalsetting. The WIC staff member can also set an alert to follow up if a referral is made. This option has the advantage of encouraging parent and WIC staff interactions regarding the children's development and underscoring the importance of developmental monitoring in the context of this relationship.

Supplementary Activities to Promote Developmental Monitoring

These options are supplementary to the core WIC checklist program. These do not replace the core model but will help WIC staff be able to provide some options virtually and are considered a supplement to the core checklist program.

L. Online Education Modules for WIC Participants

Developmental milestones online nutrition education modules for WIC participants are available in both English and Spanish on WIChealth.org, WIC-ed.com, and WICSmart. If your state uses one of these online education platforms, simply contact them to see a preview and add it to your course listings.

Course Description: Good nutrition is important for the healthy development of a child’s mind and body. We keep track of children’s growth by checking their weight and height. We keep track of a child’s development by looking for developmental milestones – how children play, learn, speak, act, and move for their age.

In this course, you will learn about:

- Developmental milestones most children reach by a certain age.
- How to keep track of your child’s milestones and share this information with healthcare providers and teachers.
- Tips to support your child’s healthy development.

**If your child has a special medical condition, like having a developmental delay or disability, they may be following their own developmental path with a different order and time than listed in this course. Talk with your child’s healthcare providers, therapists, and teachers about what new skills your child will be working towards next.*

M. WICShopper App – Child Development Content

The [WICShopper App](#) offers [developmental milestone content for WIC participants](#) in the form of a button and banner. Any state who uses the WICShopper App can add the button or banner by contacting JPMA. When a participant clicks the button or banner they will be provided with information about:

- What developmental milestones are
- How to download CDC’s FREE *Milestone Tracker* App
- What to do when there is a concern
- Positive parenting tips, and more

N. Sample Social Media Posts

ASPHN and CDC have developed sample social media posts specific for WIC. WIC programs can adapt any of these for use in their state. They are all available on [ASPHN’s “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” website](#). [Access sample social media posts](#).

O. Introduction to Child Development for WIC Staff Training Module

An “Introduction to Child Development for WIC Staff” training module for WIC staff is available for any WIC staff to complete. This is a 30–40-minute module that provides WIC staff with the basics of child development and how to encourage developmental monitoring with WIC participants.

The interactive training is available in English here: <https://asphn.org/courses/introduction-to-learn-the-signs-actearly-program/> and Spanish here: <https://asphn.org/courses/introduccion-al-desarrollo-de-la-ninez-temprana-de-los-cdcs/>

Developmental Milestone Checklist Program for **WIC**

Implementation Guide



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