

SHALER AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT

Preschool and Young Children At-Risk for Developmental Delays

If a child is not learning a skill that other children are learning at the same age, that may be a “warning sign” that the child may be at risk for a developmental delay. Some general “warning signs” of possible delay include the following:

- **Behavioral Warning Signs**
 - Does not pay attention or stay focused on an activity for as long a time as other children of the same age
 - Focuses on unusual objects for long periods of time; enjoys this more than interacting with others
 - Avoids or rarely makes eye contact with others
 - Gets unusually frustrated when trying to do simple tasks that most children of the same age can do
 - Shows aggressive behaviors and acting out and appears to be very stubborn compared with other children
 - Displays violent behaviors on a daily basis
 - Stares into space, rocks body, or talks to self more often than other children of the same age
 - Does not seek love and approval from a caregiver or parent
- **Gross Motor Warning Signs**
 - Has stiff arms and/or legs
 - Has a floppy or limp body posture compared to other children of the same age
 - Uses one side of body more than the other
 - Has a very clumsy manner compared with other children of the same age
- **Vision Warning Signs**
 - Seems to have difficulty following objects or people with her/his eyes
 - Rubs eyes frequently
 - Turns, tilts or holds head in a strained or unusual position when trying to look at an object
 - Seems to have difficulty finding or picking up small objects dropped on the floor (after the age of 12 months)
 - Has difficulty focusing or making eye contact
 - Closes one eye when trying to look at distant objects
 - Eyes appear to be crossed or turned
 - Brings objects too close to eyes to see
 - One or both eyes appear abnormal in size or coloring
- **Hearing Warning Signs**
 - Talks in a very loud or very soft voice
 - Seems to have difficulty responding when called from across the room, even when it is for something interesting
 - Turns body so that the same ear is always turned toward sound
 - Has difficulty understanding what has been said or following directions after once she/he has turned 3 years of age
 - Doesn't startle to loud noises
 - Ears appear small or deformed
 - Fails to develop sounds or words that would be appropriate at her/his age
- **Language Warning Signs**
 - Does not recognize names of familiar people, objects, and body parts
 - Is not saying several single words (by 15 to 18 months)
 - Is not using simple phrases (by 18 to 24 months)
 - Is not using 4- to 5- word sentences (by 36 months)

Act 212, the Early Intervention Services System Act entitles young children experiencing developmental delays or physical or mental disabilities and their families as eligible for early intervention services. Also, at-risk children are eligible for screening and tracking. The Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare is responsible for providing services to infants and toddlers. For information contact Alliance for Infants, 2801 Custer Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15227, 412/885-6000. The Pennsylvania Department of Education is responsible for providing services to preschool children from ages three through five-years-old. For information, contact Project DART, 475 E. Waterfront Drive, Homestead, PA 15120, 412/394-5739.