DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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DATE: July 1, 2020

TO: WIC Coordinators and LA Staff

FROM: Carole Kelnhofer, Training Coordinator

SUBJECT: Developmental Delays and WIC Resources - Topic of the Month

Did you know that 1 in 6 children have developmental delays or disabilities? Most begin before a baby is even born, and often the cause is unknown. Developmental delays can occur among any racial, ethnic, and social economic group. Children from low-income families are at even greater risk.

Early intervention can change the developmental pathway for these children and improve their ability to learn and grow. Children develop at their own pace, yet milestone expectations provide a general guide for parents and professionals to follow. Through monitoring of these age-based development milestones, we are able to assess if there may be a need for intervention.

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Developmental Milestone Tools

The WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program Online Implementation Guide is one option to support WIC staff in monitoring children's development milestones during their WIC visits. The simple messages and easy-to-use checklists can be used as a learning tool for staff to gain a better understanding of when a referral may be needed. The checklists can also be printed out for participants to discuss at a future well-child checkup with their family doctor or pediatrician.

Three Core Components

- **Environmental Graphics**: can be placed in the offices or waiting rooms, providing engaging graphics helps to introduce milestones to families;

- **Administering Checklists**: can offer parents the milestone checklist to complete at home; offers the benefit of parental education and understanding.

- **Making Referrals**: can use the checklist to have a better understanding of when to make appropriate referrals; a tool that can be used for staff development.

Another resource CDC offers is the CDC's Developmental Milestones website. The website resources are available in both English and Spanish, including the CDC's Milestone Tracker App that can be easily downloaded for iOS and Android devices. Additionally, staff and parents have access to FREE **"Learn the Signs. Act Early"** materials that can be either printed or ordered for home delivery.

Public Health Resources

The Family Home Visiting Program (FHV) offers the benefit of involving the parent in discussion and activities in their child's developmental progress. FHV is a voluntary program offered prenatally through the early years of a child's life. The program supports the social, emotional, health-related and parenting support information families need to thrive. Best of all, these programs are completely free!

The Follow Along Program can aid in parents' discovery of developmental delays. The program offers a way for parents to track their child's development by filling out questionnaires at intervals from birth to 36 months. The program provides tips, activities, referrals, and may include an at home visit. Participants can enroll online on the Follow Along Program page or call 1-800-728-5420.

The Help Me GROW program connects families to their local school district to receive the services and support they need in addressing concerns in a child's development. A referral online through Minnesota Help Me Grow- Refer a Child or by calling 1-866-693-GROW, can be completed by any parent, professional, or a family member.

Baby Behaviors

Conversations surrounding development can begin prenatally with the use of the Baby Behavior Prenatal Key Messages and the Baby Behaviors Training and Tools. With these valuable tools staff can begin to bring awareness to the topic of behavior and development by helping parents understand what to expect from their newborn. It is important for parents to understand "what is normal" while building a bond with their newborn as they are the first line of defense in detecting developmental delays.

Baby Behavior Tools

- Getting to Know Your Baby (Brochure)

- MN WIC Baby Behavior Education Clips (YouTube Link- 27 Total)

WIC's Role

WIC staff can engage parents in learning more about their child's development and empower families to take action. Parents/caregivers are a child's first teacher, and WIC can support them in having the tools they need to succeed. With tools that identify delays or disabilities, it makes it easier to connect parents to a timely appropriate referral and provide them with tips to support their child's health and development.

- Staff can learn more about Red Flags by Age for Referral of a Child to better assess a participant's need for referral and support.

- Staff can choose one of the many referrals/resources to offer to families, empowering them to be their own advocate for their child's developmental needs.

Participant Centered Services (PCS)

As with any WIC topic, it is extremely important to Ask Permission before engaging parents in topics that may be more sensitive. Handling Sensitive Topics such as a development delay or disability may be difficult for some parents and can make the discussion challenging. If a parent is resistant, allowing them to guide the discussion may make it easier to manage.

Asking About Sensitive Topics

- **Use open-ended questions;** "How do you feel about…"

- **Normalize the situation;** "Many parents experience…you are not alone."

- **Practice a non-judgement assessment!**

- **Ask permission before providing information;** "May I share what I have learned about…"

- **Be transparent about concerns;** "We are asking these question to help…"

- **Provide a range of options with recommendations;** such as a referral, webpage information, or free resource materials.

Remember, it is okay if the parent does not want to share or discuss their child's development. If this happens, move on. It may be helpful to express confidence in their ability to support their child with a phrase such as; "You're doing a great job helping Oliver learn." Wrap up by thanking them for their willingness to share and provide referrals or resources as discussed.

Counseling Remotely

Remote counseling presents a challenge with offering visuals to participants. Education Choice offers a variety of tools to connect with participants remotely. Staff can also use the information on this page to direct families to valuable resources online. The resources available on the My Minnesota WIC App are a fingertip away and offer a great variety of education tools.

TeleWIC using Vidyo is a way to interactively telecommunicate information to participants. For more information see the TeleWIC guide found on the Education Choice page and email your State WIC Consultant a list of staff names, email addresses, and phone numbers to get started.

Child nutrition and development go hand-in-hand. As WIC staff, we know the value of timely education and referrals. With the many tools developed to assist families we are able to support the growth and development of our most precious participants both face-to-face and remotely!

Putting it into Practice

Example scenario:

A participant arrives at the WIC clinic for a nutrition education visit. You have gone over nutrition topics related to age appropriate feeding and discussed the changing food package. Mom (Stephanie) has her 6 month old infant (Sarah) with her and is expressing some concerns about her infant's development. You heard her initial concerns and recognize this as an opportunity to delve further and to determine what resources for support you can offer.

Staff: Stephanie, first let me thank you for sharing your concerns about Sarah. May I ask if you have had a chance to share this concern with Sarah's pediatrician?

Stephanie: No, I haven't spoken to her yet. We missed the 6 month well child check and they are so booked out it will be another month before I can get for her next appointment.

Staff: That is frustrating, I am glad you were able to get the appointment rescheduled. What I hear you saying is Sarah is not trying to crawl yet and that concerns you, correct?

Stephanie: Yes, when I put her down she just moves from her back to her stomach. It depends on how I lay her but she really doesn't move much from there.

Staff: It's really great that you are getting her down to explore movement. Are there other things that you have noticed about Sarah that concerns you?

Stephanie: Well, not really. She has been fully breastfeeding but I tried sitting her in the highchair and she was able to stay up with support so I started cereal this week. It has only been a few days, but she is really liking it!

Staff: That's great, trying her first food is really exciting for both of you.

Stephanie: It is fun, I was worried she might not be ready yet since she isn't sitting up all by herself or moving forward on the ground, but she has been taking the cereal in so far.

Staff: I hear you, it can be scary when you are unsure. While you were out in the lobby, did you notice the posters taking about developmental milestones?

Stephanie: Oh yeah, I saw the CDC one, that is actually what got me thinking about what Sarah isn't doing.

Staff: That's exactly what the poster is there for, to get you thinking! Would you like me to print out the **CDC milestone checklist** for a 6 month old**?** It may help give you a better idea about what is normal activity at this age.

Stephanie: Does it take very long to complete?

Staff: Oh, it's a quick list and actually I will just send it home with you to fill out. That way you can bring it to share with Sarah's pediatrician at her next appointment.

Stephanie: Oh, that would be perfect. I always forget things I intend to talk about when I go to those appointments; this would help me to remember to bring up my concerns.

Staff: Absolutely, I can print it out for you. If you'd like I can also share a few free resources that you can access at home to learn more about development as Sarah continues to grow.

Stephanie: Wow that would be great.

Staff: Let me just grab the **CDC milestone checklist** from the printer so we don't forget that before you leave.

Stephanie: Sure.

Staff: I'm glad you are open to looking through the checklist and it's great that it will come in helpful when your take Sarah to the doctor.

Stephanie: I'm glad you suggested it. I guess I have just been comparing Sarah to my neighbor's child who is already crawling and he is 6 months too.

Staff: I think it is important to remember that every child develops at their own pace. This checklist does offer general guidance and also it is helpful to know when there are real red flags happening.

Stephanie: True, I think going forward it will is good idea for me to pay more attention to Sarah's own pace with development rather than comparing her to someone else.

Staff: I think it's normal to compare, it can be very misleading though. Let me share the free resources I was speaking about before. This one is the **Follow Along Program**, they can send questionnaires to your home at different stages to help track development. Here is a brochure that tells you how to sign up if you're interested. The other is the **CDC milestone app;** this one allows you to keep track of milestones right from your phone. This may make it easier for you to share any future concerns with your pediatrician without having to remember to bring anything extra along to the appointment.

Stephanie: Okay, that's helpful. Thank you!

Staff: You're welcome. I so glad that I could help. Your next visit with WIC will be the 9 month appointment where we take measurements for Sarah and discuss how breastfeeding is going for you. Remember to schedule that appointment ahead of time and if you have any concerns about development at that time we can discuss referral options as well.

References - Complete Listing of Hyperlinks

WIC Developmental Milestone Checklist Program Online Implementation Guide (https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/WICGuide/?deliveryName=USCDC_1054-DM13686)

CDC's Developmental Milestones (https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html)

CDC's Milestone Tracker App (https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones-app.html)

FREE **"Learn the Signs. Act Early"** materials (https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/freematerials.html#toolsfortrackingmilestones-2017)

Family Home Visiting Program (https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/fhv/index.html#SuccessStories)

Follow Along Program (https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childrenyouth/fap/index.html)

Help Me GROW (http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/GetHelpChild/WhyRefer/index.html)

Minnesota Help Me Grow- Refer a Child (http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/Refer/index.html)

Baby Behavior Prenatal Key Messages (https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/bb/messages.pdf)

Baby Behaviors Training and Tools (https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/training/bb/index.html)

Getting to Know Your Baby (https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/nutrition/babybehaviors/english.pdf)

[MN WIC Baby Behavior Education Clips](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnv1INVkmxmtYaMmowS5oBHnbgmps7Ai1)
(https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLnv1INVkmxmtYaMmowS5oBHnbgmps7Ai1)

[Red Flags by Age for Referral of a Child](http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/GetHelpChild/WhenRefer/RedFlags/index.html)
(http://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/GetHelpChild/WhenRefer/RedFlags/index.html)

[Asking Permission](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2015/topic/pcs10.pdf)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/wedupdate/moyr/2015/topic/pcs10.pdf)

[Handling Sensitive Topics](https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/webinars/oct2016_2.pdf)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/wic/localagency/training/pcs/skills/webinars/oct2016_2.pdf)

[Education Choice](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/edchoice/index.html)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/nutrition/edchoice/index.html)

[TeleWIC](https://calwic.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/WIC_VideoConferencing_Brief_fnl_pages.pdf) (https://calwic.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/WIC_VideoConferencing_Brief_fnl_pages.pdf)

[My Minnesota WIC App](https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/infosystem/hubert/mnwicapp/index.html)
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/localagency/infosystem/hubert/mnwicapp/index.html)