

Developmental, Social-Emotional, and Autism Spectrum Disorder Screening in Early Childhood

CHILD AND TEEN CHECKUPS (C&TC) FACT SHEET FOR PRIMARY CARE PROVIDERS

C&TC Requirements

General

Developmental **surveillance** is required at all C&TC visits. Routine and periodic **screening**, using a recommended standardized instrument, is strongly recommended:

- **Developmental** screening at intervals recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP): at 9, 18, and 30 months of age and once 3-through 5 years of age.
- **Social-emotional** screening beginning at 6 months of age, continuing every 6 months through 2 years of age, then yearly.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)** screening at 18 and 24 months of age.

When surveillance or screening identifies developmental concerns, do not wait, refer for additional evaluation and intervention services. Any parent or caregiver concerns about development warrants further evaluation.

Personnel

Surveillance must be performed by a licensed health care provider: physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant, or by a registered or public health nurse (RN or PHN) who has completed the C&TC Comprehensive Screening training through the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH).

Screening personnel qualifications are instrument-specific; refer to each instrument's instruction manual for more information.

Documentation

Developmental **surveillance** must be documented in the C&TC visit record.

Screening documentation must include the

name of screening instrument(s) used, score(s), and screening result specific anticipatory guidance provided to parent or caregiver. Atypical screening results, documentation must include plan of care and appropriate referrals to local community service agencies.

For documentation examples, refer to the [C&TC Documentation Forms for Providers and Clinics \(www.dhs.state.mn.us\)](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us).

Procedure

Surveillance

Surveillance is an essential part of ongoing pediatric preventive care. It includes asking for parent or caregiver concerns about development, making accurate observations of the child's development, identifying risk and protective factors, and accurately documenting findings.

A history of a child's social-emotional and current functioning must be obtained, including:

- Identification of mental health needs or risks, including history of trauma,
- Family mental health history,
- Attention and behavioral concerns, and
- Social and relationship skills.

Screening Recommendations

Instruments

Separate instruments are needed for developmental and social-emotional screening. Clinic settings should refer to [C&TC Developmental - Social Emotional Screening \(www.health.state.mn.us\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us). Other programs that follow C&TC recommendations should refer to [All Instruments at a Glance \(www.health.state.mn.us\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us).

DEVELOPMENTAL, SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL, AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER SCREENING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD C&TC FACT SHEET

The [Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers Revised \(M-CHAT-R/F\)](#)

(www.mchatscreen.com) is a commonly used for ASD specific standardized screening instrument. Follow instrument scoring instructions to accurately determine whether the follow-up interview and referral is needed.

Timing and Frequency of Screening

It is generally not feasible to complete more than two screenings at a single well visit. Clinics should determine their standard screening protocols, aiming for a minimum of:

- 3 developmental screenings by age 3 years,
- 2 ASD-specific screenings by age 2 years,
- Social-emotional screening every 6-12 months.

Referral and Management

Review the screening results with the child's parent or caregiver. Ensuring prompt referral, evaluation, and treatment for concerns raised by surveillance, screening, or the parent, can improve a child's developmental path.

- A Comprehensive Medical Evaluation – Determines the cause and extent of any delay, and treatment options. A medical diagnosis is required for some supportive services and insurance coverage.
- Educational Evaluation – Early intervention screening and/or evaluation *as soon as concerns are identified*, refer either directly to the local school district or through Help Me Grow 866-693-GROW or [Help Me Grow \(www.HelpMeGrowMN.org\)](http://www.HelpMeGrowMN.org).
- Mental Health Evaluation - A qualified early childhood mental health professional can support families and young children with social-emotional concerns, and provide comprehensive evaluation for ASD, trauma, and more. Refer to the [map of Early Childhood Mental Health services by county \(www.dhs.state.mn.us\)](#) to find local providers.

Follow Up

Establish a process for follow up with the family after referral to ensure access to appropriate and effective services. With the parent's permission, communicate and coordinate with educational and other professionals. Close the loop by documenting referral results.

Resources

Minnesota Department of Human Services

- [C&TC Schedule of Age-Related Screening Standards \(www.dhs.state.mn.us\)](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us)
- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(MHCP\) Provider Manual - C&TC Section \(www.dhs.state.mn.us\)](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us)

Minnesota Department of Health

- [Child and Teen Checkups \(C&TC\) \(www.health.state.mn.us\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us)

Additional Resources

For children with milder concerns or whose parents decline referral, offer other [Developmental and Social-Emotional Screening Resources \(www.health.state.mn.us\)](#) and provide information on expected milestones from either the Help Me Grow or Learn the Signs Act Early website.

For children with ASD and related disorders, refer to the [Pathway to Services and Supports for Autism Spectrum Disorder \(ASD\) \(dhs.state.mn.us\)](#) to learn more.

- [Learn the Signs. Act Early. \(www.cdc.gov\)](http://www.cdc.gov)
- [Minnesota Autism Resource Portal \(mn.gov/autism\)](http://mn.gov/autism)

For More Information

The Child and Teen Checkups (C&TC) program is administered through a partnership between the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota Department of Health.

For questions about this fact sheet or to obtain this information in a different format, call 651-201-3650 or email health.childteencheckups@state.mn.us.

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