

HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD GROW AND THRIVE?



Mark developmental milestones.

The early years are an important time to support brain development. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million neural connections are formed every second. The more brain-building opportunities young children have in their first five years—like talking, reading, and singing with adults—the stronger their brain connections. **Adults don't need anything other than their positive relationships with children to build young brains.**

Young children learn to do many new things, like smiling, taking first steps, picking up a favorite toy, and more. These are called **developmental milestones** and usually happen at certain ages. As your child's first teacher, you can use **milestone checklists** to mark your child's milestones and celebrate the milestones they reach. Checklists are available at www.cdc.gov/actearly. You can also talk about your child's development with other adults in his or her life; they may have helpful observations to share about your child's milestones.

It's important to note your child's progress and ask your health care provider any questions you may have. **Developmental delays** may be noted when children do not reach milestones at the times we expect. The earlier you act on any concerns, the more your child may succeed in school and beyond.

Ask for regular, formal checks of your child's development.

While using milestone checklists is important, **a developmental screening**, which is a structured set of questions, looks even closer for any delays. The American Academy of Pediatrics says that health care providers should screen all children at their regular visits when they are **9 months, 18 months, and 24 or 30 months** old. Don't be afraid to ask your child's health care provider for a developmental screening.

The Mississippi State Department of Health's **First Steps Early Intervention Program** offers free screenings and services for children up to age 3 years. To learn more about **First Steps**, call toll-free **1-800-451-3903**. For children ages 3 years and older, school districts offer free screenings, called evaluations, even if your child does not yet go to school. Find your local school district by calling **601-359-2586**. For more information about where to get screenings and other developmental support, call **Help Me Grow** at **1-844-822-4MAC**.

Seek support.

Health care providers such as doctors, nurses, and therapists can review the results of developmental screenings and give you tips and advice for how to support your child's development at home. If a delay is found, don't panic; you are not alone. In fact, data shows that as many as **one out of six children could have a developmental delay**. If there are concerns, your health care providers may connect you with services for other support. These services can help your child become ready to start school. Children's of Mississippi's Center for the Advancement of Youth (CAY) offers developmental and behavioral health services for children. For information on what services are available for your family, contact CAY at **601-984-5236**. Ask your health care provider for a referral if you have concerns. You can also call **1-800-CDC-INFO** for more information on milestones, screenings, and services.

Who are we?

The **Child Health and Development Project: Mississippi Thrive! (CHDP)** is a joint project of the **University of Mississippi Medical Center's (UMMC) Center for the Advancement of Youth (CAY)** and the **Social Science Research Center (SSRC)** of **Mississippi State University (MSU)**. The CHDP is funded by the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA). Our goal is to **improve the developmental health of children** ages 0-5 in Mississippi.

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