

Considerations for Referral

Child assessment in our agency is a strength based approach. Three guidelines to remember are:

1. Where is the child in his/her development?
2. What is the next developmental task they will move toward?
3. How can education staff and parents create an environment that facilitates this movement?

Along with these points, part of our goal in determining if a child is not moving along in his/her development within what is considered to be "normal" or "average" range. Some factors to consider in evaluating a child's development are cultural considerations, family values, environment outside of the classroom setting and trauma and/or illness of the child or family members. All of these factors can impact a child's typical growth and development and need to be looked at carefully.

Some children in our classrooms may be affected by a disability, identified or not. As education staff, it is our job to support the child and family if significant disability, delay or emotional issue is suspected in an area of development. This means we must develop a plan to deal with the issue.

1. Survey the results of screening, observation and parent concerns.
2. Consult with team members.
3. Discuss with parents.
4. Document your process.
5. Consider possible referral to ESD or mental health providers for services.
6. Follow the written referral process.

It is critical that this process be followed as soon as possible after you determine there may be a developmental concern. It is the family's decision, with our support, about how they wish to pursue services for their child. We are expected to be an advocate for them in their decision-making process. Delay on our part can seriously impact the onset of evaluation and services for children. Though philosophically we may differ from special services providers, the family ultimately must determine what is best for their child, they are the experts. Be conservative in your determinations and generous in communication with parents and our program component specialists. If you have any suspicions there may be a delay or disability support and encourage the family in seeking evaluation and services. Follow policies regarding pre-referral checklist and internal referral, with parent's permission, when parents need help with referrals.