

EARLY STAGES OUTREACH: Social Service Providers

ABOUT EARLY STAGES

Early Stages is the District of Columbia Public Schools diagnostic center for children between the ages of 2 years 8 months and 5 years 10 months. Early Stages helps families and community-partners identify delays that a child may have and provide appropriate services to help address those delays. Early Stages provides free developmental screenings and evaluations for children who are residents of DC, wards of DC, or attend a school or daycare in DC. Our goal is to provide young children who may have a developmental delay or disability with a strong start to school.



RISK FACTORS AND EDUCATIONAL IMPACT

The first five years of a child's life are foundational years for brain development. Risk factors like housing instability, child maltreatment, poverty, and low parent education may contribute to the child's chronic exposure to toxic stress, negatively impacting their brain development. Although no single risk-factor predicts a delay, one or more may be a barrier to the child's development. Education is a vital protective factor for at-risk children. Our responsibility, in partnership with organizations around the District, is to respond to a child's needs by providing necessary supports.



YOUR ROLE AS A PROVIDER

Your relationship and contact with families places you in a unique position to help families access the services Early Stages provides. You can:

- **LEARN** more about the Early Stages process and services. We can attend a case management or staff meeting to give an overview of our services and answer questions about our process.
- **ENCOURAGE** families to learn about early childhood development and supportive activities by hosting a parent workshop provided by Early Stages.
- **REFER** children on your caseload for a developmental screening. Universal screening for children is an important safety net for them and their families (see more on back page).
- **EXPAND** the spectrum of services provided to families at your organization by being trained through Early Stages to complete developmental screenings.

If you have any questions or would like more information on how Early Stages can partner with you and support the families you serve, please contact your Child Find coordinator:

Rebeca Aulie: (202) 805-2884 or rebeca.aulie@dc.gov.

Tatum Byfield: (202) 779-1206 or tatum.byfield@dc.gov



THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

Regular developmental screening for children birth to age 5 is an important way to identify potential delays as early as possible. Children whose delays are identified before starting school gain precious time during which their developmental challenges can be addressed and often overcome through treatment and services.

Need more reasons to decide to screen your children?

Screening as a Safety Net – Some children with certain risk factors – such as housing instability, parental unemployment, trauma or abuse, or poor nutrition, among others – can be more likely to have a delay in their cognitive, language or emotional development. Regular developmental screening is an important safety net that can connect children and families to valuable evaluation services and improve educational outcomes.

Strengthening Relationships with Families– Because a parent’s involvement in the developmental screening process is so important, conducting routine screenings gives community partners and parents a built-in opportunity to have meaningful conversations and deepen their own partnership as it relates to supporting a child’s development and education.

Identify Areas of Strength – Developmental screenings not only flag potential developmental delays in children, they also highlight areas in which a child is developing well or excelling. Knowing a child’s strengths is greatly beneficial for parent and staff as well as knowing areas in which that child may need extra support.

Citywide Commitment to Universal Screening – DC’s Mayor and the Deputy Mayor for Education (DME) have emphasized early childhood education, school readiness, and improving the capacity of early childhood educators to conduct regular developmental screenings in the DME’s Performance Plan.

AAP Guidelines – The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) recommends regular developmental screening for young patients and considers the practice of screening in order to identify potential delays “critical to the well-being of children and their families.”

Early Stages offers staff trainings and parent workshops on early childhood development, including training on how to administer developmental screenings for young children. We can also provide a full screening kit and materials for your organization at no cost, so you can support your families and refer children for additional services.