

Frequently Asked Questions: Early Childhood Screening

What is Early Childhood Screening?

Early Childhood Screening is a free program in Minnesota that checks how a child is developing and growing. Screening supports children as successful learners and promotes positive developmental outcomes. Screening may also lead to referrals for early learning opportunities.

When should I schedule an Early Childhood Screening?

The Early Childhood Screening program is available to children when they turn 3 years old. Students must complete this program before they start kindergarten or within 30 days of starting kindergarten or first grade. Although your child may be screened any time before kindergarten, it is best to do so between 3 and 4 years of age so any health or developmental concerns can be addressed as soon as possible. A comparable screening by a non-school provider, such as Head Start, Child & Teen Checkups or a health care provider, will also be accepted by school districts.

How do I schedule an Early Childhood Screening?

Local school districts provide Early Childhood Screening throughout the year. You may contact your school district for more information when your child turns 3. To find your school district, enter your address at gis.lcc.mn.gov/iMaps/schooldistricts.

What happens during an Early Childhood Screening?

Early Childhood Screening checks your child's health and development. Screening in school districts is usually done by a teacher and a nurse. Screening includes a review of height, weight, vision, hearing, immunizations, speech, social and emotional health and overall development. Screening is done based on the age of the child, so a 3-year-old is only asked for what is appropriate for their age.

How do I prepare for an Early Childhood Screening?

You should bring the names and phone numbers of your child's pediatrician, notes from health care providers and immunization records. You can also bring notes about:

- Things that your child does well
- Questions about your child's health
- Questions about your child's development, such as learning, walking or talking
- Questions about your child's seeing or hearing



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What if my child does not speak English?

If you or your child does not speak English, your district can provide an interpreter. When a child is learning two languages, it is better to screen in the language they hear most often. The screening may be done in both English and the child's home language with an interpreter.

What happens if the screener finds a concern?

There are a few options if the professional screener finds an area of concern in your child's development.

The screener and the parent may decide to refer your child for an evaluation by your local school district or medical clinic. The screener may also work with you to refer your child to other early childhood opportunities such as Head Start, School Readiness, Early Childhood Family Education, Early Learning Scholarships, prekindergarten programs, public health home visiting programs and other community resources.

Will screening result in a diagnosis for my child?

Screening does not result in a diagnosis for your child. If health or developmental concerns are raised during a screening, a parent and the screener may decide that further evaluation by a medical or educational professional is needed. Early access ensures that children and families receive instruction, services and supports so that they are successful in school.

Does a parent have a say in whether a child is referred to special education?

A parent perspective on how the child is developing is always included when discussing referral information. A referral to special education may be made by a parent or by an Early Childhood Screening staff. The Early Childhood Special Education team may then offer an evaluation by appropriate professionals to see if the child is eligible to receive free special education services. These services may be provided in a home, a child care or the child's school.

Can I decline the Early Childhood Screening?

Yes, if a parent declines or refuses to participate in the screening program for their child, the child does not need to complete the screening. Refer to Minnesota Statute 142D.091.

