

Early Childhood Screening Guidelines for Interpreters

These guidelines are meant to provide an overview of the Minnesota Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) early childhood screening program for interpreters hired by districts. The program is offered to all children between the ages of 3 and the start of kindergarten or first grade. Screening is not a test and does not diagnose. Instead, screening helps to determine if children need further assessment or evaluation for health or developmental needs.

The central responsibility of any interpreter is to facilitate oral communication between individuals who speak in a language that others who are part of a conversation do not readily understand. It is important to be familiar with the [Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice for Educational Interpreters of Spoken Languages, 2025 Minnesota](#). The code reviews what interpreters should and should not do and ways of satisfying these ethical principles.

Phase one: Connect child and family to screener (nurse/teacher)

- Contact family the day before to confirm appointment
- In waiting room, introduce family to the screener
- Tell child directly that they will be playing games with the screener and interpreter
- Interpret for the screener who will explain the parts of the screening to the parent and child

Phase two: Parent guidance with screening documents

- The DCYF screening program posts translated forms in Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Russian, Vietnamese, Karen and Arabic
- Consent form (please do first)
- Release form is used to share information between the school, medical and other agencies; review list on form to see if child is in any preschool program or if they are receiving any special services.
- Registration form needs the first side completed only
- Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional
 - Explain questions, ask if parent has any social emotional or behavior concerns
 - Ask if there are any special concerns
 - The nurse/teacher will review the answers with the parent and interpreter
- Health and Developmental History
 - Ask if parent has any health concerns and review questions
 - Let the parent talk about concerns while you take notes on the form

Phase three: Screening with the developmental tool

Screening is not a teaching tool. There will be incorrect answers and behaviors. Please do not correct the child. We are trying to assess the child's current level of development in:

- Small muscle and large muscle development
- Cognitive or thinking skills
- Speech and language skills: Report any irregularities you notice in child's first language

When interpreting:

- We will seat ourselves in a triangle shape with child, interpreter and screener
- We will use turn-taking, not simultaneous interpreting
- Please look at the child, both when screener is talking and when the child is talking
- Look at the screener when you are interpreting the child's answers
- Please talk softly and gently and give the child an extra four or five seconds to respond
- Repeat the instruction or question only once; never lead or prompt for correct answer

Phase four: Summary interview with nurse/teacher and parents

- Parent/guardian will find out how their child is learning and growing
- Parent/guardian will talk with nurse about their child's health and make a plan together for any referrals
- Examples of referrals include vision, hearing at the clinic or speech at early childhood special education
- Parents will learn about free early learning opportunities for their child at the district and in community
- Parents will learn about other community programs available that support families

Phase five: Interpreters may be asked to assist with follow-up

- Interpreters may be asked to assist with follow-up phone calls in several weeks to see if the family needs assistance with making appointments for vision, hearing or other health concerns at a clinic, speech or early childhood special education, social emotional or early childhood mental health providers
- Interpreters may be asked to assist families to enroll in early learning programs such as Head Start, district prekindergarten, Early Childhood Family Education, public health home visiting or Early Learning Scholarships for high-quality child care

For interpreters who have been trained to administer the early childhood screening instruments for development or social emotional development, it is important to attend a DCYF/MDH live screening training or webinar offered twice annually. Information about these trainings, as well as recorded trainings, are posted on the [Early Childhood Screening: Information for Districts and Programs](#) page at DCYF. The page also offers translated screening brochures, frequently asked questions and a short video about the screening process in several languages.

Reviewed by MDE, MDH, DHS and adapted from the Minneapolis Interpreter Guide, December 2022