

Developmental Delay

What is Developmental Delay?

Developmental delay can occur when certain skills in a child do not appear in a time frame that is consistent for most children of their chronological age. Children develop at different rates and many children show sudden bursts in development rather than slow, steady growth. The diagnosis is given by a pediatrician who evaluates the child's development in five areas: physical development (fine motor skills, gross motor skills); cognitive development (intellectual abilities); communication development (speech and language); social or emotional development (social skills, emotional control); and adaptive development (self-care skills).

Characteristics of Developmental Delay Include:

Individuals with developmental delay may receive services in the following areas, based on their evaluation:

- Assistive technology (devices a child might need)
- Audiology or hearing services
- Speech and language services
- Counseling and training for a family
- Medical services
- Nursing services
- Nutritional services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services

Tips for Mentors:

- Talk to the family about the youth's developmental delay and determine what adjustments need to be made.
- Plan short, age-appropriate activities:
 - Know when to balance age appropriate vs. developmentally appropriate activities.
 - Give youth plenty of time to learn new skills.
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage desired behaviors.
- Breakdown longer, new tasks into small steps and provide assistance only as necessary.
- Ask the youth for their input and give choices when appropriate.

Sources:

1. University of Michigan Health Center <http://www.med.umich.edu/yourchild/topics/devdel.htm>

2. National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities
<http://nichcy.org/disability/specific/dd>
3. National Institute on Developmental Delays <http://www.nidd.org/>
4. Centers for Disease Control: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities>