

# Best Practices for Utilizing Developmental Screenings in a Child Care Setting



Comprehensive developmental screening is a process that helps child care providers collaborate with parents to learn about, monitor, describe and discuss all domains (communication, gross motor, fine motor, problem solving and personal social) of a child's development.

The purpose of developmental screening is to

- Learn more about children's development
- Identify children who may have developmental delays or disabilities
- Guide decisions about referrals for further evaluation

Child care providers can develop an increased understanding of children's developmental needs by utilizing screening tools. These tools also offer a way to help parents learn about their child's development and what to expect next, encourage parents' involvement and maintain open, consistent communication with families.

## When should developmental screenings take place?

Screenings and interventions that are done at an early age, with the approval and collaboration of parents, can significantly improve outcomes for children. Therefore, periodic use of objective screening tools should be built into the child care program's routine.

Best practice recommends

- Three screenings in the first year of a child's life, at least one of which is social emotional
- Two screenings in the second year of life, including a social emotional specific screening between 15 and 18 months of age
- Annual developmental and social-emotional screenings after age two

Early childhood development is a dynamic process. Repeated screenings at specific intervals help provide a comprehensive picture of the child's development over time and help ensure challenges that develop get addressed as early as possible.

In addition to regular screenings, certain circumstances may indicate the need for an additional screening when

- Parents have a concern about their child's development
- A caregiver has a concern about the child's development
- A child has been exposed to domestic or community violence, substance abuse, and/or child abuse or neglect

## Who completes developmental screenings?

Appropriately trained individuals, such as child care providers, may conduct screenings with the approval of and in collaboration with parents. Screenings may also be completed by physicians, nurses, developmental specialists, and home visitors. Screenings are best done with a family member or caregiver who knows the child.

## Where should developmental screenings take place?

Screenings may take place in a number of settings, including child care settings. It is best to complete a screening in a place the child is familiar with such as their home or child care setting. A parent or caregiver should always be present during the screening.

## Sharing the results and follow up.

Screenings generally provide an accurate picture of a child's development, but they are only a snapshot. Results can be affected if the child is tired when being screened. Similarly the results are not predictive of how the child will develop in the future.

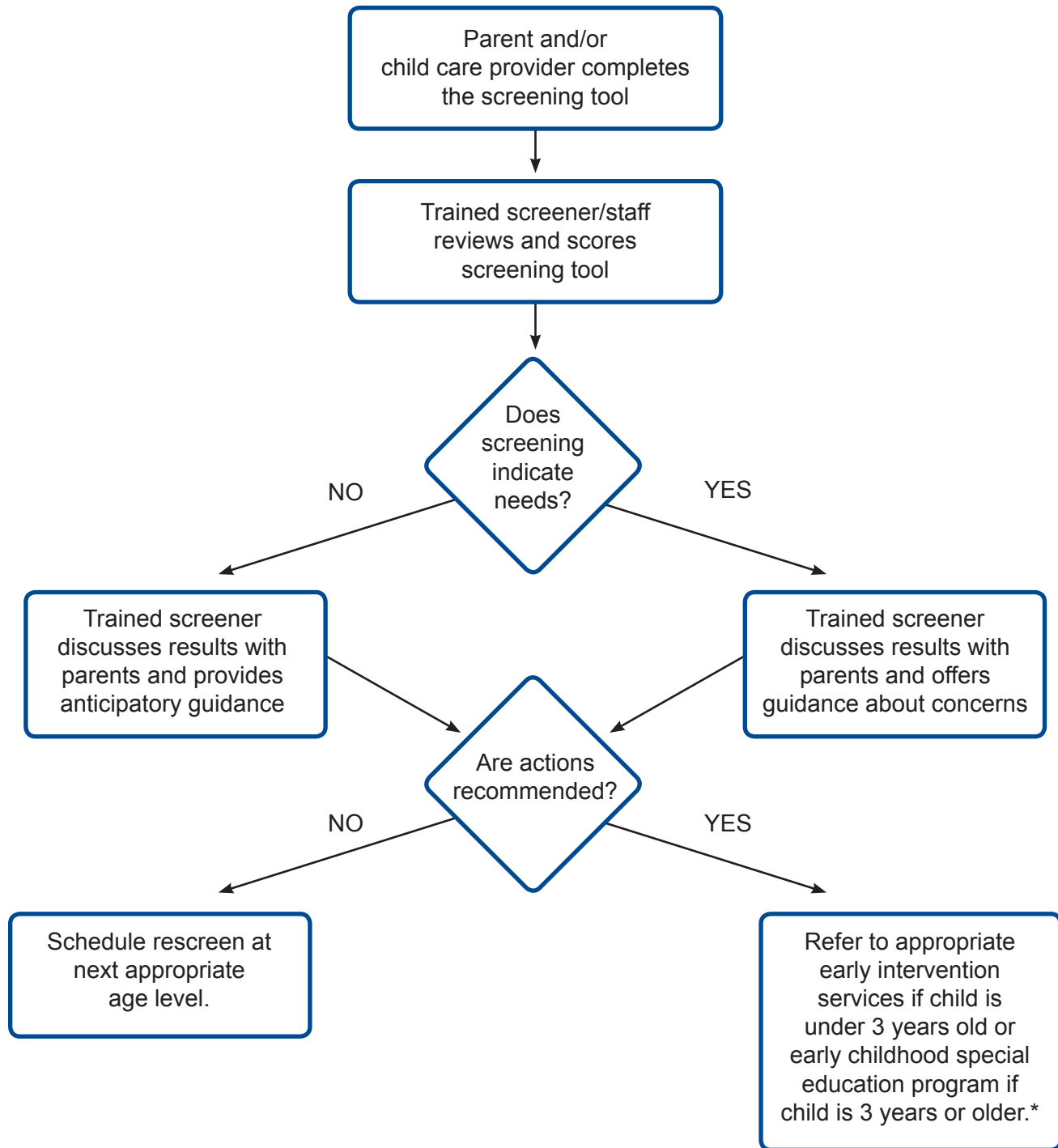
Screening results should be shared with parents in a clear, culturally sensitive and timely manner. The screener should start the discussion by asking the parents what they think about their child's growth and behavior, and continue the discussion by following up on any specific areas of concern that were identified during the screening process. If a screening identifies a concern, it is the parents who ultimately decide whether their child will receive any further evaluations.

As a child care provider, you can explain to the parent what the next steps are and what services may be available through ND Early Intervention. You can also reassure parents by letting them know that early intervention helps ensure the best possible outcomes for their child.

## Need more information?

If you would like more information about conducting screenings in your childcare facility or about screenings offered in your community, contact a Child Care Aware of North Dakota Inclusion Specialist at 701-934-5964.

# Child Care Developmental Screening Flow Chart



*\*If a parent chooses to not pursue early intervention services, a re-screening should be scheduled in 6 months to reinforce the importance of follow up.*

