

Considerations for Referral

Child assessment in our agency is a strength based approach. Three guidelines to remember are:

1. Where is the child in his/her development?
2. What is the next developmental task they will move toward?
3. How can education staff and parents create an environment that facilitates this movement?

Along with these points, part of our role is to determine if a child is progressing within “normal” or “average” ranges. Some factors to consider in evaluating a child's development are cultural considerations, family values, environment outside of the classroom setting, and trauma and/or illness of the child or family members. All of these factors can impact a child's typical growth and development and need to be carefully considered.

Some children in our classrooms may be affected by a disability, identified or not. The role of education staff is to support the child and family if a significant disability, delay, or emotional issue is suspected in an area of development. This means we must develop a plan to deal with the concern to include the following:

1. Survey the results of screening, observation, assessment, and parent concerns input
2. Consult with team members
3. Discuss with parents
4. Document your process
5. Consider possible referral to ESD or mental health providers for services
6. Follow the written referral process

It is critical that this process be followed as soon as possible after you determine there may be a developmental concern. It is the family's decision, with our support, about how they wish to pursue services for their child. We are expected to be an advocate for them in their decision-making process. The family must be integrally involved in the referral/evaluation process and ultimately must determine what is best for their child. If you have any suspicions there may be a delay encourage and support the family in seeking evaluation and services. Follow policies regarding pre-referral checklist and internal referral, with parent's permission, when parents need assistance with the referral process.

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