

Screening and Services

Parents in the state of Minnesota are encouraged to have a developmental screening for their child by the age of 4. The state provides screening at this age because early detection of children's health and developmental problems can reduce the need for costly care later. But a parent who has a concern need not wait until their child is 4. Parents can, at any time, discuss their concerns with their health care provider. Parents can also contact their local Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) office to discuss any concerns they have about their child.

Screening Options

The state-sponsored screening will look at a child's communication skills, social and emotional development, motor development, general learning development, and physical development (vision, hearing, health, and sometimes dental). The screener will also ask the parent to describe the child's behavior. Through this process, the screener will be able to determine if a child needs a more in-depth evaluation. If a screener does suggest further evaluation, the parent must arrange the evaluation either through their schools district's ECSE program, or it may be arranged privately through their health care provider.

Getting Services

When the results of a screening show that a child would benefit from special education services, families can check to see if they qualify for services through the ECSE program. Children who are not yet in kindergarten may qualify for special education services if they show a pattern of behavior in one of these areas: 1) withdrawn, anxious; 2) thought process that causes unusual behavior, communication, or distorted relationships; or 3) aggressive, hyperactive, or impulsive. The pattern must negatively affect the child's social ability, and the child's functioning must be very different from children their same age.

For some families, the services provided through the school may not fully address the concerns, or the child may not qualify for school services even though very real problems exist. In that case, a parent will need to talk with their doctor and ask for a referral to a clinic that specializes in children's mental and behavioral health.

If a child does need services that are not provided by the school district, and the child's family cannot afford the services, families who are eligible can apply for some services through their county. For more information about county services, a parent can contact their county social services office or visit the Minnesota Department of Human Services website at www.dhs.state.mn.us.

Screening and Evaluation

A **Screening** is like taking a child's temperature—it lets the screener know there may be a concern but it doesn't determine what the concern is.

An **Evaluation** is like figuring out why there is a temperature—Is it a cold? Teething? Scarlet fever?

Source: Ed Frickson, Licensed Psychologist

Screening Information

- For information about ECSE services, call the Minnesota Department of Education at 651-582-8200 or go to www.education.state.mn.us

- For information about the Head Start program in your area, visit www.mnheadstart.org or call 218-728-1091

Information about Services

Early Childhood Services: A Directory of Services Available to Children with Disabilities in Minnesota lists many early childhood resources available in Minnesota.

To get a copy, call 651-215-8956 or 800-728-5420 or go to www.health.state.mn.us.divs/fh/mcshn/

