

Introduction

Developmental and behavioral screening is a whole-population strategy to improve child health outcomes. Screening, together with routine developmental surveillance, provides an opportunity to monitor if a child is learning age-appropriate skills and to identify any developmental or behavioral concerns as soon as possible, enabling intervention during the most critical periods of development. When young children are not screened systematically, opportunities for early identification, intervention, and treatment may be delayed. Early identification of children at risk for developmental delays is an integral function of the primary care medical home. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) [recommends](#) conducting developmental surveillance at every health supervision visit and conducting general developmental screening using evidence-based tools at 9, 18, and 30 months, or whenever a concern is identified. In addition, autism-specific screening is recommended at ages 18 and 24 months, and social-emotional screening is recommended at regular intervals.

Preferred Tool List and Universal Developmental Screening Registry

In Vermont, primary care providers are required to use a standardized screening tool. Preferred screening tools are included in Vermont's developmental screening [registry](#), a statewide data collection and communication system for screening results. As part of the [Help Me Grow Vermont](#) system, the registry allows screening results to be securely shared between medical homes, early childhood educators, and other community service providers to improve early identification of risks and delays to ensure that children and families are linked to appropriate services and developmental supports. Preferred tools include:

- [Ages & Stages Questionnaires®](#), Third Edition (ASQ-3™)
- [Ages & Stages Questionnaires®](#): Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2™)
- [Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers](#), Revised with Follow-Up (M-CHAT-R/F)
- [The Survey of Wellbeing of Young Children \(SWYC\)](#), a cross-cutting tool may be included in the registry in future.

Bright Futures Periodicity Schedule and screening tool compendium

Please refer to the national [Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!](#) compendium of screening tools and Child Health Care Providers audience guide.

Developmental Screening is an ACO Quality Measure

Developmental screening is a Blueprint for Health Accountable Care Organization (ACO) quality measure that child health care providers can fulfill by using the registry. Participating practices and providers are encouraged to access and review developmental screenings completed by early childhood educators, by Children's Integrated Services (CIS) teams, or by another a community service provider, to inform their surveillance and screening activities during health supervision visits. Health care providers can use the registry to view a screen done by another provider, interpret and discuss the results with families, and then work with them to create a plan to address any needs that may have been identified. Medicaid will reimburse the child health provider for these activities. If a child does not receive a screen in an early childhood setting, child health providers proceed with screening according to AAP Bright Futures guidelines.

The Importance of Developmental Screening

Research and science have demonstrated that childhood experiences, positive or negative, can have a major impact on long term growth, development, and health. National statistics indicate that as many as one in four children through the age of five are at risk for a developmental, behavioral, or social delay. Many children with developmental delays and disabilities are not identified until after starting school.

As part of Healthy Vermonters 2030 and the Family and Child Health strategic plan, considerable work has occurred over the past decade in Vermont to advance developmental screening in medical home settings. According to data from Vermont's all-payer claims database, the Vermont Health Care Uniform Reporting and Evaluation System (VHCURES), the proportion of young children receiving at least one developmental screening in the first three years of life increased from 46.6% in 2015 to 59.2% in 2021.

What is Help Me Grow?

Help Me Grow Vermont is a free service that connects pregnant individuals and families with young children (through age eight) to community resources. Help Me Grow links families and children to the information and services they need to thrive and stays in touch to provide support before, during, and after they are connected.

Why Help Me Grow Matters

Experts agree, early detection and connection to services lead to the best outcomes for children with developmental or behavioral challenges. But, too often, children don't get connected to services they need at an early age when the benefit of those services is greatest. Many initiatives in Vermont provide services to young children, but families, health care providers, early childhood educators and others don't always know these programs exist or how to connect with them.

How Help Me Grow Works

Help Me Grow Vermont is powered by a resource grid of more than 3,000 programs and services across the state. This helps to ensure that families can plug into services and resources that can support their needs. Help Me Grow promotes developmental screening by hosting the ASQ Online system, free for all Vermont providers. The ASQ Online system will be integrated with Vermont's developmental screening registry to ensure all children have their developmental progress monitored through a coordinated, statewide system.

Help Me Grow Vermont is dedicated to ensuring that all children receive and benefit from intentional, coordinated, early attention to their social emotional growth and development.

Refer a Child or Family

Submit this [referral](#) form on behalf of a child or family to connect them to services. Help Me Grow staff will then contact the parent/caregiver and will also follow up with the referring provider (with parent permission).

Resources

To contact Help Me Grow, call 2-1-1 option 6, text HMGVT to 898211 or email info@helpmegrowvt.org. For the registry email AHS.VDHudsregistry@vermont.gov.