

Communicating Results with Families



Discussions concerning a child’s developmental progress should always be done in person or, alternately, over the telephone at a time convenient for parents. Parents should never receive information of this type by mail or e-mail. It often is helpful to role play with a trusted peer or supervisor before communicating about milestone checklists with parents. This Cheat Sheet can be a useful tool for organizing conversations with parents about developmental monitoring.

- 1. Start off the conversation by highlighting some of the child’s strengths. Name some developmental milestones the child has mastered, and say how excited you are to see his or her progress in those areas.**
- 2. Focus on specific developmental milestones in your conversation, without including any diagnostic labels. Even if you believe you can identify a specific disability in a child, it is never your role to make a diagnosis.**
- 3. Be clear about what your goal is for the conversation. Be honest, kind, and respectful in your tone. It is okay to say you may be overly concerned, and that it is always best to check with the child’s doctor.**
- 4. Make the conversation a two-way discussion. Pause a lot, giving the parent time to think and respond – Remember your active listening skills! Listen to and watch the parent to decide on how to proceed. Pay attention to tone of voice and body language.**
- 5. Remind the parent that you care for their child and you want to make sure that the child has every opportunity to be his or her very best.**

Encourage families to ask their child’s doctor about developmental screening or to call Help Me Grow North Texas (844-NTX-KIDS), especially if a milestone checklist brings up a concern. Parents can share their questions or concerns with their child’s doctor (offer them the [How to Talk with the Doctor](#) sheet) or the Help Me Grow Navigator.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children be screened using a formal, scientifically tested screening tool whenever there is a concern, along with routine screenings at 9, 18, and 24 or 30 months and autism screening at 18 and 24 months. If the family does not have a regular healthcare provider, Help Me Grow North Texas can help connect the family to a medical home.

Instead of this ...	Try this...
I think Jason is behind in his development. He can't do things other children can do at his age	I wanted to take a minute to talk with you about how well Jason is developing. I'd like to use the CDC checklist for developmental milestones. It's good for helping us understand his development and which milestones he's met, along with which ones he's still working on.
Jason doesn't know what to do with a toy phone or even a spoon, and he's not meeting other milestones. The checklist shows all the milestones he can't do.	Jason has made some real progress in his developmental milestones lately. I noticed he really likes to play alongside other children, and he is good at following simple instructions. There are some milestones he's still working on. Let's take a look, and you can fill me in on whether you've seen some of these at home, too.
Look at all these milestones Jason is missing on this checklist. That means that something is really wrong with his development. He's way behind the other kids in this room.	Does Jason turn and look at you when you call his name? I have noticed that he does not seem to respond to his name but continues to play with a truck, spinning the wheels around and around.
So that's the list. Take it to the doctor and see what she has to say about it. That's what I wanted to cover today.	Have you seen Jason do some of these milestones at home? PAUSE. Now that we've looked at the checklist, what are your thoughts? PAUSE. What do you think is a good idea to do next? PAUSE.
Jason is challenging; he's just not like the other kids. But I'm doing what I can with him.	I really love Jason and I am so happy to have him in my class. I want what's best for him, and that's why I wanted to talk to you about this. If we do have a concern, it's best to address it early. We can talk about this again in a month or so, and maybe by then you can let me know what your doctor's thoughts were.
He needs a referral.	A developmental screening can give us a complete snapshot of Jason's development, and it can also help determine whether he might benefit from extra support services. Help Me Grow North Texas offers developmental screenings for any child for free.
I know he's very young, but he still failed the Social/Emotional section and needs a referral.	He is young, but it's one of the best times to support your child's development. The earlier the better! Let's connect with Help Me Grow North Texas so that we can make sure he gets some early support.
He barely passed the Cognitive section of the checklist. He needs help.	According to the checklist, Jason seems to have a few milestones that he's still working towards. What would you like to do next? If you'd like, we can make a referral together to Help Me Grow North Texas.
You'll need to make a referral as soon as you leave. You have to call them yourself.	Since you're on board with contacting Help Me Grow, and we already have all the information we need here, would you like me to put in a referral and have them call you? Or would you like to call Help Me Grow together? We can make the referral and even send them the checklist.
He needs early intervention / special needs services.	After we connect you to Help Me Grow North Texas, a family navigator will answer any questions you have, listen to your concerns, offer a free developmental screening, and connect you to any resources that might be helpful for Jason and the whole family.
They will do a developmental screening on him to see if he is delayed, and to see if he needs any special services.	If a possible delay is identified in the developmental screening, he may be eligible for services to support his development and give you more support, ideas, and strategies. On the other hand, the screening could suggest there is no cause for concern, and you'll still be able to walk away with some really helpful strategies and information that will help him build on the skills he's already doing.