FAQs for Early Care & Education Providers

What is developmental screening?

Developmental screening is a brief method completed by a parent or caregiver to quickly identify a child's progress through foundational early childhood developmental milestones. A child's development can be measured by how a child learns, speaks, moves, behaves and relates. Skills such as smiling, waving, and talking are developmental milestones. Results from developmental screenings indicate which children would benefit from a full evaluation and assessment.

Why do I need to know about developmental screening?

A proposed regulation will be drafted to require all licensed early care and education programs (child care centers and family child care home providers) to conduct developmental screening on children aged birth through five years. It is expected, the regulation will go into effect July 1, 2017. The initial cost for the developmental screening tool chosen by the child care facility will be covered by MSDE if the provider orders one of the MSDE recommended screening tools by December 31, 2015. These screenings are considered an important routine health and wellness initiative that may determine the need for further evaluation.

How does developmental screening differ from assessments and how do the tools for each differ?

Developmental screening is a process to quickly identify a child's progress through foundational early childhood developmental milestones. Assessment is usually a more in-depth process to determine if a child or groups of children are meeting specified outcomes/goals. Developmental Screening and Assessment Tools are designed to measure the outcomes specific to the tool. The tool should be used in accordance with its intended purpose.

What developmental screening tools can I use for my child care program?

With collaboration and input from stakeholders, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has generated a list of recommended screening tools that will meet the requirements of the developmental screening regulation. You can determine which tool from the recommended list would work best with your program.

The recommended list is as follows:

ASQ-3 for ages 1 month-66 months

Best Beginnings Developmental Screen 1-39 months

Brigance for ages 0-5 years

DIAL-4 or Speed DIAL-4 for ages 2 years 6 months-5 years 11 months

ESI-R for ages 3 Years-5 Years 11 months

Can I use a screening tool other than those on the recommended list of screening tools?

Only the recommended screening tools, will meet the requirements of the regulation. It is very important that the tool used be standardized. The recommended tools have adequate sensitivity and specificity, which is the ability of the tool to correctly identify children with developmental delays and children without developmental delays, respectively.

What if the child was already screened by a doctor who utilized a tool other than one on MSDE's recommended list?

Since doctors receive specialized and advanced training, MSDE will accept a validated screening score sheet conducted by the child's doctor at the time of enrollment. This form will need to be obtained by the parent/guardian and provided to the child care provider. The child care provider will then re-screen the child according to the schedule set forth in the regulation.

How did MSDE determine the list of recommended screening tools?

A team of geographically and professionally diverse Maryland stakeholders convened to prioritize and recommend developmental screening tools for statewide use that would meet the needs and diverse abilities of a changing statewide pool of professionals as well as unique regional needs within Maryland. These considerations included the:

- Reading ability required of the child care provider to use the tool as intended;
- Training time and costs, administration & scoring time and costs;
- Availability of languages other than English;
- Alignment to programs in Maryland currently conducting developmental screening;
- Option for both parental and provider input;
- Reported ages of children for which the screen was developed;
- Dependency/independence on the internet, based on statewide and provider access; and
- Characteristics of the Maryland child care profession and professional.

How often do I need to conduct developmental screenings?

Screening frequency is determined by the age of the child and takes place as follows:
- All children, Birth – Kindergarten entry, within 90 days of child's first day of attendance;
- Children, Birth – 36 months by: June 30th and December 31st of each year (two times in a 12 month calendar)
- Children 37 months – Kindergarten entry by December 31st of each year (One time in a 12 month calendar)

Is training required to conduct developmental screenings or meet the regulation?

Training will be required as part of a promulgated regulation on the screening process to ensure you understand the requirements of the new regulation, know how to implement the screening tool you selected for your program, and to help you learn best practices in partnering with and communicating results to families.

Specifically, the MSDE required training is entitled:

Developmental Screening Overview

Providers may also find it beneficial to take additional trainings on tool specific training on the recommended tool the provider chooses to use in their program. All approved trainings will have Core of Knowledge clock hours.

Who needs to take training?

- Child Care Center Infant/Toddler and Preschool Directors;
- Child Care Center Infant/Toddler and Preschool Teachers;
- Letter of Compliance Staff working with children 2-5 years;
- Approved Educational Program Staff; and
- Family Child Care Providers registered for children birth –age five.

Where do I find training?

The Developmental Screening Overview will be offered online, free of charge through MPT's Thinkport website in 2015. Found at this website: http://www.thinkport.org/Career/course/ece.tp

Face-to-Face trainings on the Developmental Screening Overview and tool specific training will be offered through the MSDE's approved trainer's network. Found at this website: http://mdchildcare.org/mdcfc/for_providers/trcaldisclaimer.html

What are my requirements after the parent or I have conducted the developmental screening?

Most developmental screening tools require a scoring process. After the tool has been scored, decide whether the child is in the typically developing range or whether the score indicated any areas of concern for development.

If there are no areas of concern, enter the date the screening was conducted into the Enrollment and Attendance Reporting System (EARS—if you are using this system) and/or file the screen and screening results in the child's file. Maintain the child's confidentiality and re-screen the child in accordance with the schedule.

If the screening indicates one or more areas of concern, meet with the parents/guardians in private to discuss the score, and whether the parent would like a referral for the child to the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program, Child Find, Early Childhood Mental Health offices, or the child's pediatrician for a re-screen. Enter into EARS (if applicable), the date screening was conducted, the date of the conference with the parent/guardian(s), the date of referral, and if the child receives service, the type of service. In the child's file, file the screen, the score results, and referral form. It is always best practice to discuss score results and or concerns with the child's parents to learn about the child's development and promote healthy behavior and development.

What if the parent/guardian chooses not to have the child re-screened or referred for an evaluation by an expert?

The parent/guardian may decline a referral to have the child further evaluated by an expert. It is best practice to communicate any concerns regarding the child to the parent and establish positive communication with the family. If the parent is not ready to have the child referred, the provider should use their knowledge of developmentally appropriate practice to serve the child and his/her needs. The provider's responsibility is to screen, refer if necessary, maintain documentation and confidentiality and re-screen according to the schedule. It is the parent's responsibility to decide whether to pursue further evaluation and/or services.

How should I notify parents of this new regulation?

It is best to inform parents at the time of enrollment by including a section on developmental screening in your Parent Handbook. See Appendix A for sample language to use in your Parent Handbook. This language can also be used to notify parents already enrolled.

How should I conduct the screenings to meet the regulation in the first year of implementation?

It is a good idea to consider the screen as required documentation at the time of enrollment for any new students to your program. For children already enrolled, it is probably best to screen a classroom at a time within the time frame required by the regulation.

What if the parent or I have a concern for a child's development in between the required timeline to conduct screenings?

A screening can be conducted anytime outside the required documentation timeline. A referral can be made anytime there is a concern for the child by the parent or provider.

The score sheet showed an area of concern. We conferenced with the parent and referred the child for a full evaluation, but the child did not qualify for services. Why?

To qualify for services through Infants & Toddlers or preschool special education services (accessed through Child Find), the child must have a 25% delay, atypical development, or a physical or mental condition that puts the child at high-probability for developmental delay. In addition, to qualify for preschool special education services, the child's developmental delay or disability must have an educational impact. Some children while slightly delayed, do not meet the 25% threshold and therefore do not qualify for services. It is best in these instances to use your knowledge of appropriate child development practices to meet the needs of the child. Parents/guardians may also want to notify their child's doctor who can continue to monitor the child.

If the child only attends our program for Before/After Care, do we need to screen them?

Children attending a program on a Before/After Care only basis, are not required to be screened as typically they are either attending a public school system or a Head Start program where they will be screened.

Appendix A

DRAFT LANGUAGE FOR PARENT HANDBOOK OR PARENT NOTIFICATION

Dear Parents,

Maryland State Department of Education has implemented a new State regulation for all children in regulated care and early childhood educational programs. Once the regulation is in effect, all children up to kindergarten entry attending regulated care and early childhood educational programs will need to have a developmental screening conducted.

Developmental screening is used to celebrate a child's achievement as well as refer them for support and services when there is an area of concern. Developmental screenings, along with regular physical exams, hearing tests and vision tests, are important ways to monitor a child's growth and development. A child's development can be measured by how a child learns, speaks, moves, behaves and relates. Skills such as smiling, waving, and talking are developmental milestones. Results from developmental screenings indicate which children would benefit from a full evaluation and assessment. Children who receive early intervention services generally do better in the long term than those identified later. Upon completion of the screening, we will meet with you to discuss the findings and whether a referral to another agency for further evaluation is necessary.

Children aged birth-36 months will be required to have two screenings per year. Children aged 37 months-kindergarten entry will be required to have one screening per year.

Parents should consider this process as part of required documentation in order for the child to attend our or any other licensed child care program in the State.

The screening tool our program will use is called _____.

Our screening process will begin on _____.

Please contact us should you have any questions. Thank you. Program/Director Name