



“Learn the Signs. Act Early.”

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**IACC Meeting
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Purpose of the "Learn the Signs" Program

- To improve early identification of autism and other developmental disabilities so children and their families can get the services and support they need



3 years	skins affection for playmates
	uses four- to five-word sentences
2 years	points to object when named
	imitates adults (claps after adult claps)
	points to interesting objects
18 months	plays pretend (talks on toy phone)
	uses simple gestures (waves, bye-bye)
	makes sounds (such as "ma" and "ba")

It's time to change how we view a child's growth.

It's natural to measure your child's height and weight. But you should measure often when your child is growing, too.

From birth to 5 years, there are milestones your child should reach in terms of how she plays, learns, speaks, and acts. A delay in any of these areas could be a sign of a developmental problem, even autism. The good news is, the earlier it's recognized the more you can do to help your child reach her full potential. Talk with a doctor or nurse about your child's brain development.

www.cdc.gov/actearly

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

"Learn the Signs" Program Components



- ❑ Health education campaign
- ❑ Act Early Initiative
- ❑ Research and evaluation



"Learn the Signs" Program Component 1: Health Education Campaign

- ❑ Aims to change perceptions about the importance of identifying developmental concerns early
- ❑ Gives parents, professionals free tools to help track development
- ❑ Promotes awareness
- ❑ "Phase 2"
 - New materials
 - New strategies



Campaign Impact

- ❑ **Pediatricians aware of the campaign are***
 - More likely to have resources to educate parents about monitoring their child's development
 - More likely to discuss cognitive development with parents
 - More likely to be aware of resources for referral and treatment
 - Less likely to advocate a wait-and-see approach
- ❑ **Campaign helped to change how we view child development**
 - Height, weight, first words and steps no longer sufficient
 - How a child plays, learns, speaks, and acts equally important



*Daniel et al. Public Health 123 (2009) e11-e16

Free, Customizable Materials for your Program

□ New Materials

- Are research-based and parent-friendly
- Build on gold standard milestone lists from AAP
- Parents, early educators can use as monitoring tools
- Encourage parent-health care provider dialogue
- Available in English and Spanish

□ Useful for

- Any program that serves parents of young children and has interest or mandate in child development



www.CDC.gov/ActEarly
ActEarly@cdc.gov

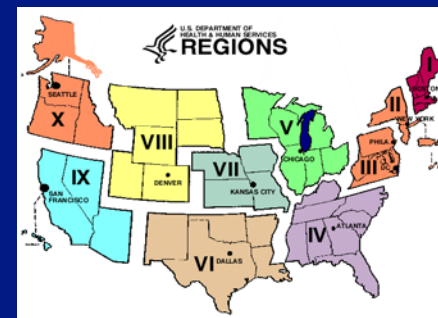
Strategic Approach

- ❑ To identify federal, state, and local partners
- ❑ Some are beginning to integrate “Learn the Signs”
 - WIC clinics
 - Head Start/Early Head Start resource centers
 - National Just in Time Parenting program, USDA Cooperative Extension
 - ACF Child Care Block Grant recipients
 - Discussions underway with many others, including new home visiting programs



"Learn the Signs" Program Component 2: Act Early Initiative

- ❑ Improves collaboration among early childhood systems in states
 - In collaboration with HRSA and AUCD
 - Act Early Summits convened key state stakeholders
 - Catalyst for states to develop plans for improving early identification
 - Supports state-level priority efforts such as awareness, screening, provider training



Act Early Initiative Results

- ❑ State team leader feedback from interviews, survey
 - Strengthened existing partnerships
 - Improved early identification
 - Established new partnerships
- ❑ Post-Summit Activities
 - Education and training
 - Public awareness
 - Policy change
- ❑ Most teams continue to meet



The screenshot shows the header of the 'Learn the Signs. Act Early.' website for Wisconsin. It includes the Wisconsin state logo, the text 'Learn the Signs. Act Early. in Wisconsin', and the logo for 'Wisconsin Regional Centers Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs'. Below the header is a central message: 'If you are concerned about your child's development, don't wait. Acting early can make a real difference!'. At the bottom, there are three colored boxes: an orange box for 'LEARN' (Where can I find more information about my child's development?), a yellow box for 'ACT EARLY' (What can I do if I'm concerned about my child's development?), and a blue box for 'CONNECT' (How can I find other community resources?).



Act Early Initiative Drives Campaign to State and Local Level

- ❑ Delaware provides customized materials to all pregnant women through home visiting programs and to new mothers
- ❑ Connecticut provides their customized materials to all child care centers in the state
- ❑ New York widely distributes materials to Early Childhood Coordinating Council, home visiting programs, Family Resource Centers, Family Childcare Association



Comments from Act Early Team Leaders

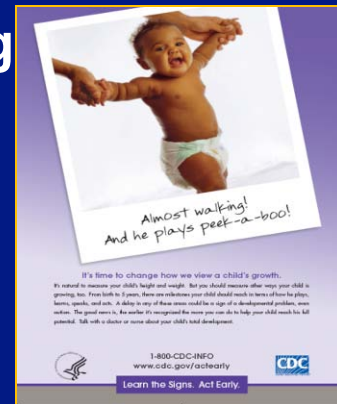
- "...before the summit we didn't really have a plan in our state. We didn't really have anything coordinated for children with autism. The summit gave us a purpose and brought us all together."
- "Since the summit the people on the governor's council have been more open to our recommendations. I think it's because we are giving them a clear idea of what we can accomplish."



"Learn the Signs" Program Component 3: Research and Evaluation

- Advance understanding of
 - Information needs of key campaign audiences
 - How to reach special populations
 - How to improve state systems

- Evaluation of campaign strategies
 - IAA with HRSA – supplemental CAAI funding
 - 4 projects (AK, MO, UT, WA)
 - Focus on feasibility, strategy effectiveness



Questions?

www.cdc.gov/ActEarly
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The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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