6. Accessing Services: Ages 3 and older
   a. Early Stages Information
      i. Early Stages Parent Guide
      ii. Early Stages FAQ
   b. Referral for Services/Request for Evaluation for children over age 5 by parent
As parents, you are the most important people in your child’s life. Children grow and change quickly during their first three years. Think of your child and how he or she is growing. You know your child best. Notice things like how and when your child smiles, sits up, walks, talks or holds a cup. What you are seeing is how your child is progressing through the different developmental stages.

When a child has a delay in development, services are available to you. The Early Stages Center is a coordinated effort to help families get these services. We are here to help provide strong beginnings and bright futures for your children.
Children develop abilities at similar points in time. These are milestones that help us mark a child’s progress. Although there is a wide range of what is “normal,” it may be helpful to talk about milestones if you are worried that your child may have a delay. Keep in mind that the age at which your child is expected to reach these milestones depends on the date he/she was supposed to be born—not his/her actual birthday. So, if your child was born early, he/she may reach these targets later than other children.

On the following pages, you will find a timeline of specific milestones and the ages at which most children reach them.

Not every child follows this timeline. Although your child might meet some targets after the expected age, it does not necessarily mean that he/she has a disability. However, if your child is having trouble meeting several of these milestones, or is especially behind in a few areas, he/she may need to be evaluated to see if they are eligible for services. The District of Columbia is required to identify all children with disabilities under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
By the end of their **FIRST MONTH**, most babies:

- Move arms and legs
- Bring hands near face
- Keep hands in tight fists
- Move head from side to side while lying on stomach
- See things 8 to 12 inches away
- Like to look at faces
- Like black-and-white patterns
- Hear very well
- Respond to sounds, including parents’ voices

By their **FIRST BIRTHDAY**, most babies:

- Crawl
- Pull self up to stand
- Walk holding onto furniture
- May walk few steps without help
- Grasp with fingers
- Say “dada” and “mama”
- Try to imitate words
- Respond to “no” and simple requests
- Use simple gestures, such as shaking head “no” and waving bye-bye
- Explore objects
- Begin to use objects (drinking from cup, brushing hair)
- Find hidden objects easily

By the end of their **SEVENTH MONTH**, most babies:

- Roll over stomach to back and back to stomach
- Sit up
- Reach for objects
- Move objects from one hand to the other
- Support weight on legs when held up
- See in color
- See at a distance
- Use voice to express feelings
- Respond to own name
- Babble
- Understand emotions by tone of voice
- Explore objects with hands and mouth
- Struggle to get objects that are out of reach
- Enjoy playing peek-a-boo
- Show an interest in mirrors

By their **SECOND BIRTHDAY**, most children:

- Walk alone
- Jump
- Pull toys behind them while walking
- Carry toys while walking
- Begin to run
- Kick a ball
- Climb on and off furniture
- Walk up and down stairs while holding on to support
- Scribble with crayon
- Begin to sort objects by shapes and colors
- Begin to play make-believe
- Imitate behavior of others
- Want to do things for themselves

By their **THIRD BIRTHDAY**, most children:

- Can do some things for themselves (like putting on clothes and feeding self)
- Enjoy playing imaginatively and with other kids
- Tell stories with 2 to 3 sentences
- Can be understood more than half the time
- Can name a friend
- Know whether they are a boy or a girl
- Build a tower of 6 to 8 cubes
- Throw a ball overhand
- Ride a bicycle
- Walk up stairs alternating feet
- Balance on 1 foot for 1 second
- Copy a circle
- Draw a person with 2 body parts (head and one other part)
- Are toilet trained during the daytime

By their **FOURTH BIRTHDAY**, most children:

- Play with other children
- Can follow family rules
- Play with favorite toys
- Listen to stories
- Engage in fantasy play
- Know first and last name
- Sing a song or say a poem from memory
- Know what to do if cold, tired or hungry
- Can be understood
- Name 4 colors
- Play board/card games
- Draw a person with 3 parts
- Hop on one foot
- Balance on one foot for 2 seconds
- Build a tower of 8 blocks
- Copy a cross
- Can eat by themselves
- Brush their teeth
- Can dress self

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1. 0-2 year milestones: March of Dimes (www.marchofdimes.com)
2. 3-4 year milestones: American Academy of Pediatrics (www.aap.org)
Early Stages is a District of Columbia Public Schools program for children 3 to 5 years old. We are here to help you identify any delays that your child may have and provide appropriate services to help address those delays. Children referred to the Early Stages Center will receive a full evaluation and treatment or services for a diagnosed delay. These services are available to all families that live in the District, whether your child goes to public school, private school, is home-schooled or has not yet entered the school system.

Any parent of a child between the ages of 3 and 5 who has a concern regarding how their child is walking, talking, playing, learning and behaving should come to the Center. The evaluation will determine if your child is eligible for treatment and services.

The Early Stages Center is located on the 4th floor of the Walker Jones Education Campus at 1125 New Jersey Avenue, NW. Free parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis. There will also be shuttle transportation provided from the Union Station Metro stop on the Red line and the Mt. Vernon Square-7th Street Convention Center stop on the Green and Yellow lines.

WHAT IS EARLY STAGES?
An evaluation looks at how your child is learning and growing to see if your child is eligible for early intervention services. The evaluation will occur only with your written permission. Evaluations look at these areas of development:

- **Cognitive:** Ability to learn and how he/she learns
- **Physical:** Ability to move, see and hear
- **Communication:** Ability to understand language
- **Social or Emotional:** Ability to relate with others
- **Adaptive Skills:** Ability to dress, eat and take care of himself/herself

After the evaluation you and the other members of the team will talk about what your child is doing and identify any concerns. If there are areas of delay, your child may be eligible for services. You have the choice to receive or refuse these services. You may refuse one or more of the services and still receive the other services you want.

Your input is important. If you need a sign language interpreter, one will be provided for you. If you do not speak English, an interpreter will be provided for you.
What to expect at the evaluation

As part of the evaluation, we will assign a Family Care Coordinator to help you through the entire process. The Family Care Coordinator will contact you before the evaluation and will serve as your mentor and contact person.

Should your child need any treatment or services, the Family Care Coordinator will help you look at possible schools and classrooms for your child. They will make sure all the papers get to the school where your child will receive treatment or services.

The evaluation will last about three hours. First, you will meet with a Family Care Coordinator to discuss your child. At this time, please feel free to ask questions or bring up any initial concerns you may have.

Second, your child will go through a few tests. He/she will start with hearing and vision screenings. Then, a special educator will play with your child. Other experts will look at certain skills while they are playing, such as speech and movement. You will have the chance to watch your child while he/she plays, either from behind a one-way mirror or on video.

Third, the evaluation team will meet with you to discuss their findings. We hope that you will discuss any questions or concerns during this conversation as well.

Who will conduct the evaluation?

A group of experienced specialists will conduct the evaluation and review your child’s needs. They include:

- **Hearing Specialist:** The hearing specialist will have either a Master’s or Doctoral degree in audiology.
- **Vision Specialist:** The vision specialist will have at least a Bachelor’s degree with a specialization in the area of vision rehabilitation therapy.
- **School Psychologist:** The psychologist will have a Doctoral degree in Psychology.
- **Special Educator:** The special educator will have at least a Bachelor’s degree with coursework in special education.
- **Occupational Therapist:** The occupational therapist will have a Bachelor’s, Master’s or Doctoral degree in occupational therapy.
- **Physical Therapist:** The physical therapist will have a Bachelor’s, Master’s or Clinical Doctoral degree in physical therapy.
- **Speech and Language Pathologist:** The speech and language pathologist will have a Master’s or Doctoral degree in speech and language.

What if I cannot find a babysitter to watch my other children?

Feel free to bring your other children to the Early Stages Center. We will watch them during the evaluation process. Please tell your Family Care Coordinator if you require this service.

What happens after the evaluation?

If the team finds that your child is not eligible for more testing or services, they will give you a list of other organizations that can assist you in supporting your child’s growth and development. If you have any more questions within the next 30 days, you should feel free to call us back. Your Family Care Coordinator will also check in with you after six months and after a year to see how your child is doing.

If the team finds that your child needs more testing or services, they will discuss their recommendations with you. They will talk with you about your child’s needs and recommend appropriate services. This is the first part of creating an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) that will provide your child the support he/she needs to succeed in school.

We will also provide you with information about how to remove your child from this process. Although the team of experts is trained to determine your child’s developmental needs, it is your right as a parent to refuse treatment.

Making an appointment at the Early Stages Center

There are three easy ways to get your child an appointment:

1. You may refer your child by calling the Early Stages Center at 202-698-8037 or visiting our website at www.earlystagesdc.org.

2. Another person who knows your child (such as a day care provider, doctor or family member) may also refer him/her through phone, fax or the online system. While we appreciate referrals from any party, an evaluation will not begin without the parent or guardian’s approval.

3. If your child is already involved in a special education program for infants and toddlers, your case manager will refer your child for testing if needed.

If you request an appointment through the online system, a staff member will call you by the next business day. During your first conversation, a staff member will ask for some basic information about your child, including some questions about your child’s development.
Early Stages’ services can include special education, behavioral intervention, developmental speech/language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, nutrition services, social work and psychological services. All of these services are designed to provide appropriate treatment and support to your child so that he/she can enter school prepared to learn and succeed. We know that you want what’s best for your child—so do we. Our goal is to help your child start school and life with a strong foundation for a bright future.

An Individualized Education Plan (IEP) will help your child meet his/her goals. The plans are created for children (3-21 years) with special needs. In clear terms, it will describe goals for your child related to their needs. It will also cover the types of services your child will receive. Finally, it will state how many hours he/she will spend receiving these services and supports.

As the parent, you have an important role in the creation of your child’s IEP. You understand his/her strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, you can contribute a great deal. You will receive the support that you need to participate, including transportation, childcare, interpreter services and pre-meeting briefings. You can also bring other people to help support you during the process.
The IEP team meeting

An IEP team meeting is a formal discussion. During the IEP meeting, your family and a group of specialists will make decisions about your child’s education. You and your family are important members of the IEP team and your active participation is essential.

At the meeting, you might establish for the first time whether your child has a special need. Or, you might learn whether he/she is eligible for special education. You will discuss what results you want him/her to achieve, and what treatment and services will be provided and in what amounts.

After the first meeting, the team will meet once a year to discuss your child’s progress and make any necessary changes. Before that time, your Family Care Coordinator will follow up with you to check in on your child’s progress. At the annual IEP meeting, you might decide that your child no longer requires special services. If so, you may decide to end the process. Every three years, the team will retest your child. However, as the parent, you may request testing at other times as well.

You must sign a consent form before special education and related services can begin. However, you may choose not to sign the IEP if you disagree with the provisions. You may also change your mind at any time and for any reason.

Who attends the IEP team meetings?

The group includes:

1. You
2. At least one regular education teacher (if your child is involved in regular education)
3. At least one special education teacher
4. A DCPS representative (usually your Family Care Coordinator)
5. An individual who can interpret test results
6. Other experts, if you approve
7. An interpreter, if you require one
8. Your child, if appropriate

After the IEP team meeting

Unless there is a special circumstance, your child’s educational plan will begin as soon as possible after the meeting.

You should receive a copy of the IEP documents and notice of the recommendations soon after the meeting. If you do not receive these papers or believe that the IEP has not been implemented properly, please call 202-698-8037.

What if my child isn’t enrolled in the public school system?

Your child is eligible to be evaluated whether he/she goes to a public school, private school in the District or is home-schooled.

However, once the evaluations are complete, there may be some differences depending on what type of school the child attends. Your child will be offered placement at your neighborhood public school with an IEP. If you decide to send your child to a different school, he/she may be eligible for an Individualized Services Plan (ISP).

IEPs are only for children enrolled in public school. ISPs, however, are similar. The ISP indicates the services the student may receive when he/she attends a private school or home school. These services may be less than the services your child would receive in a DCPS placement, but are still a crucial support in helping your child prepare for school and realize their potential.
We want to provide your child with what they need for a strong start to school. Your child may need medical care in addition to the services they can receive through Early Stages. District of Columbia Public Schools works with the Department of Health Care Finance to make sure that children receive services they need. We want to help you coordinate these services.

DC Healthy Families is a program that you can enroll your family in to receive free medical care. To qualify, your family cannot make more than a certain amount per year. If you think you may be eligible, call 1-888-557-1116 or visit www.dhcf.dc.gov and click on DC Healthy Families to find out how to apply.
Free Medical Care

HealthCheck check-ups are free from birth up to 21 years of age if you have Medicaid/DC Healthy Families. If your doctor finds any problems during a check-up, you have a right to treatment. Get your child a complete physical examination at the ages below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infancy</th>
<th>Early Childhood</th>
<th>Late Childhood</th>
<th>Teen/Young Adult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 1 Month</td>
<td>• 15 Months</td>
<td>• 5 Years</td>
<td>Annually (each year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 2 Months</td>
<td>• 18 Months</td>
<td>• 6 Years</td>
<td>from ages 11 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 4 Months</td>
<td>• 24 Months</td>
<td>• 8 Years</td>
<td>through 20 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 6 Months</td>
<td>• 3 Years</td>
<td>• 10 Years</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 9 Months</td>
<td>• 4 Years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Immunizations

HealthCheck check-ups include important free immunizations to help prevent many serious diseases. Your health care provider will help you make sure your child receives these shots.

What other medical services are available?

In addition to routine care, many specialized services are available should you or your child need them. Call your doctor to make an appointment for services including:

- Vision and Hearing Check-ups
- Mental Health Screening and Services
- Sickle Cell Anemia Tests
- Health Education
- Eyeglasses/Hearing Aids
- Lead Assessments/Blood Lead Tests (at 12 and 24 months, and at any time a child is found to be at risk)
- Sexually Transmitted Disease Test and Treatments
- Substance Abuse Counseling or Referral
- Prenatal Care

Free Dental Services

HealthCheck also provides free dental services to children up to 21 years of age. Your child may be eligible for many services, including:

- Oral Exam
- Basic Dental Treatment
- X-Rays
- Oral Hygiene Instruction
- Dental Sealants
- Fluoride Treatment
- Limited Orthodontic Services
- Filling and Tooth Extraction

Call your Dentist or Managed Care Organization to schedule a HealthCheck Dental Exam. If you do not have a dentist, or if you have questions or concerns, call the Dental Health Line at 1-866-758-6807.

How do I start receiving these services?

- Pregnant women or new moms not in a Managed Care Organization, call 1-800-MOM-BABY (1-800-666-2229) for referrals.
- To get your new baby a Medicaid Card, call your Social Services worker at 202-724-5506.
- For questions about enrollment in a Managed Care Organization, call 202-639-4030.
- For questions about transportation to your HealthCheck visits, call your Managed Care Provider. If you are not in a Managed Care Organization, call the Medical Transportation Management (MTM) line at 1-866-796-0601.
- Once you are enrolled, make an appointment for a check-up with your doctor or clinic. Be sure to bring your Medicaid/Managed Care Card to each appointment.
About the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

In 1986 Congress passed a law to improve early intervention and services for children with disabilities. This law is now known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under IDEA, the District of Columbia is required to identify all children with disabilities from birth to 21 years of age. IDEA contains guidelines for states to follow in providing services to families with infants and toddlers with disabilities. By identifying children with disabilities, the District of Columbia can provide them with the support and services they need to reach their full potential.

This happens in two ways:

1. The Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) identifies infants from birth to 3 years of age.

2. The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and DC Public Charter Schools identify children between the ages of 3 and 21. This includes DC children who do not attend public school and out-of-state children who attend private schools in the District.

Once the District identifies these children and evaluates their needs, it can then provide the appropriate services for each child.
Common Phrases and Acronyms

ADD: Attention Deficit Disorder
ADHD: Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
AT (Assistive Technology): This includes any product used to increase, maintain or improve functional capabilities of individuals with disabilities.
BD: Behavior Disorder
Cognitive Development: Thinking, understanding and problem solving.
CP: Cerebral Palsy
D/B: Deaf/Blindness
DA: Developmental Age
DD: Developmental Delay
Due Process: The legal procedures or steps available to protect the student’s educational rights.
ED: Emotional Disturbance or Emotional Disorder
El: Early Intervention
Eligibility: The criteria used to determine if a child qualifies for early intervention or special education and related services.
ESY (Extended School Year): Services provided under Part B when school is not typically in session, such as during the summer.
FAPE: Free Appropriate Public Education
Goals: Broad, general target areas of skill development written by the IFSP or IEP team.
IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): The federal law that provides the regulations for early intervention, special education and related services for children from birth through age 21. Part B outlines services for children ages 3 through 21, and Part C outlines services for children from birth to age 3 and their families.
IEP (Individualized Education Plan): A written education plan designed to meet the individual special education and related service needs of a child with a disability.
IEP Meeting: A meeting to develop a written plan designed to meet the individual needs of an infant or toddler.
IFSP (Individualized Family Service Plan): A written plan designed to meet the individual needs of an infant or toddler and his/her family.
LD: Learning Disability

LEA (Local Education Agency): The local school district.
LRE (Least Restrictive Environment): To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities are educated with children without disabilities as required by IDEA.
MD: Multiple Disabilities
MR: Mental Retardation
OT: Occupational Therapy or Occupational Therapist
Part B: Part of IDEA that regulates educational services to children with disabilities ages 3 through 21.
Part C: Part of IDEA that regulates services to children with disabilities from birth to age 3.
Physical Development: Movement, gross and fine motor.
Placement: Describes the services and supports for a child who qualifies for Part B.
Procedural Safeguards: All rights that are guaranteed to the parent and child with a disability under IDEA.
PT: Physical Therapy or Physical Therapist
Referral: A written request for a child to be individually tested to determine whether he/she has an educational disability and needs specially designed instruction and related services.
Related Services: Supportive services required under Part B of the IDEA to assist children with disabilities to participate in education or, in the case of preschool-aged children, developmentally appropriate activities. Related services for a child are discussed during the IEP meeting. Examples of related services include assistive technology, occupational therapy and speech language services. When a child qualifies for special education services under Part B of IDEA, the IEP team decides what related services are appropriate and necessary for the child, regardless of the identified areas of delay.
Section 619 of Part B of IDEA: The federal regulations for special education and related services for children ages 3 through 5.
Service Delivery: The manner or setting in which special education and related services will be provided to the child and family.
SLP: Speech-Language Pathologist
Special Education: Specially designed instruction, at no cost to the parents, to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability.
TBI: Traumatic Brain Injury
VI: Visual Impairment
Recommended Readings

For Your Child

Amigos en Escuela/Friends at School by Rochelle Bunnett
Available in both Spanish and English, Friends at School illustrates how children of different abilities can work and play together at school.

A Rainbow of Friends by P.K. Hallinan
This book encourages children to accept one another’s differences.

Timothy Goes to School by Rosemary Wells
The story centers around a raccoon named Timothy who has to overcome his insecurities.

Big Brother Dustin by Alden R. Carter
This book is about a boy named Dustin. Dustin has Down syndrome and is about to become a big brother.

Happy Birthday Jason by Jean Cuthill
This book teaches children that even if they have a learning disability, they are not so different from their non-LD friends.

Keith Edward’s Different Day by Karin Melberg Schwier
The main character, Keith Edward, learns that it is okay to be different.

For You

Teaching the Young Child with Motor Delays: A Guide for Parents and Professionals by Marci J. Hanson and Susan R. Harris

When Your Child Has a Disability: The Complete Sourcebook of Daily and Medical Care, Revised Edition by Mark L. Batshaw

The Child with Special Needs: Encouraging Intellectual and Emotional Growth by Stanley I. Greenspan, M.D. and Serena Wieder, PhD


Special Children, Challenged Parents: The Struggles and Rewards of Raising a Child with a Disability by Robert A. Naseef

We understand that this may be a confusing and emotional process. We hope that this brochure has been helpful in informing you about Early Stages and our services.

Please feel free to contact Early Stages at 202-698-8037 or www.earlystagesdc.org if you have any questions or concerns. We are here to help you through every step of the process.
What is Early Stages?

Early Stages is a DC Public Schools diagnostic center for children between the ages of 2 years 8 months and 5 years 10 months. We help identify any delays that your child may have and we arrange services to address them.

We can serve any child who goes to a DC public school, is home-schooled or has not yet entered the school system. Please call us if your child attends a charter school. We will help you find the right person to talk to. If your child is in a DC private school or in a DC childcare center, we can work with you, even if you live outside of DC. All of our services are **FREE**.

When should I call Early Stages?

If you are concerned about how your child is walking, talking, playing, learning, or behaving, don’t wait to see if they will grow out of it. The experts at our family-friendly center will work with you to identify your child’s strengths as well as areas where they might need extra help. The first five years of a child’s life are the most important to their development. The earlier a child receives services, the more likely it is that their needs will be reduced or even eliminated as they get older.

What services can Early Stages provide?

All children referred to Early Stages receive a developmental screening. If necessary, your child will receive a more in-depth evaluation and services. Some of the services that Early Stages can recommend include specialized instruction, speech/language therapy, physical therapy, occupational therapy, psychological services, and behavioral support services.

What happens if my child needs an evaluation?

Your family is assigned a Family Care Coordinator, who will walk you through our process from start to finish. They will contact you before the evaluation to make sure you understand the process and what will happen. On the day of your visit, your child will work with a team of specialists who will use play activities to evaluate your child. They will take the time to help your child feel comfortable and you will be able to watch the entire evaluation.
Who decides what services my child will receive?

You and members of the evaluation staff will make all decisions together as a team. You may also invite other people you want involved. This team determines what services your child may need and the right school site at which to receive them. The Family Care Coordinator will work with the placement specialist to determine which school will best support your child’s needs, and will make sure all the paperwork gets to the school.

Where are the Early Stages Centers?

The Early Stages Center at Walker Jones Education Campus is located at 1125 New Jersey Avenue NW. The 96 bus stops right in front, and the nearest Metrorail stops are Union Station on the red line and Mt. Vernon Square-7th Street Convention Center on the green and yellow lines. Free 3 hour street parking is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Early Stages Center at Minnesota Avenue is located at 4058 Minnesota Avenue NE. The center is right next to the Minnesota Avenue Metrorail station on the orange line, which is served by several bus routes. Parking is available in the neighborhood and in the Metro parking lot (this requires a SmarTrip card).

How does a family get started with Early Stages?

1. You can contact the center directly.

2. A child care provider, teacher, doctor, or other professional who knows your child may contact the center with a concern. In these cases, we will contact you. We can only begin the process with your permission.

What is the best way to contact Early Stages?

The best way is the way that is easiest for you!

- Phone: 202-698-8037
- Fax: 202-654-6079
- Email: referral@earlystagesdc.org
- Online Form: www.earlystagesdc.org
- Or stop by one of our centers in person

If your child is younger than 2 years 8 months, please contact Strong Start, the DC Early Intervention Program, at (202) 727-3665.
February _____, 2013

Atasha James, Principal
MC Terrell Elementary School
3301 Wheeler Rd. SE
Washington, DC 20032

Dear Ms. James,

I am the grandmother and legal guardian of Sean Smith, a student at your school. I am writing to request special education evaluations for Sean. I am very concerned because I have received many reports that he is having trouble paying attention and his class performance is declining. I am concerned that he is not learning what he is supposed to be learning because of his behavior and attention problems.

I can be reached at (202) 555-5555 to set up a meeting. I would like to meet as soon as possible.

Sincerely,

Lisa Smith
Mother of Sean Smith