

Parent Guide

Building a strong foundation
for school success.



FOR
CHILDREN
AGES

**BIRTH
TO
THREE**

You are important!

Whether you are a parent, guardian or caregiver, your child needs your help and support to be fully ready for school. This “Parent Guide,” created based on the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards, provides information about the standards and ways you can help your child develop.

WHAT IS SCHOOL READINESS?

Each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child’s success.

SCHOOL READINESS SCREENER

Kentucky schools use a common kindergarten entry screener to determine a child’s readiness for school in these developmental areas:

- Approaches to learning
- Health and physical well-being
- Language and communication development
- Social and emotional development
- Cognitive and general knowledge

Please note the screener will NOT be used to determine whether a child is eligible to attend kindergarten.

WHY DOES KENTUCKY SCREEN FOR SCHOOL READINESS?

- To inform school districts, parents, and communities about early learning
- To make informed policy decisions to support early learning experiences for young children
- To establish local goals for program improvement
- To begin collecting data for the Kindergarten through 3rd grade Program Evaluation



APPROACHES TO LEARNING

The way a child engages in learning experiences is referred to as their “Approaches to Learning.” It’s important to understand that:

- Every child learns differently.
- Each child’s approach to learning is unique.
- Some children may be reserved and thoughtful when first engaging in learning experiences while others eagerly join in new activities.

Research identifies Approaches to Learning as one of the most “powerful predictors of later success in school.” This means that young children who develop an early interest and joy in learning are likely to achieve future scholastic success.

THE 3 COMPONENTS OF APPROACHES TO LEARNING:

- Initiative and Curiosity – How curious is a child about learning? How does a child engage in and initiate learning experiences?
- Persistence and Attentiveness – How persistent is a child when engaging in activities? Does a child continue in tasks that are challenging or frustrating?
- Cooperation – Does a child play in groups or pairs based on interest?

EXAMPLES OF APPROACHES TO LEARNING USING THE 3 COMPONENTS:

- Jillian looks intently at the top of a “jack in the box” as the handle is turned by her big brother. (Initiative and Curiosity)
- Dakota tugs on his mother’s skirt when he wants to be picked up. (Persistence and Attentiveness)
- Philip takes turns using cups, bowls and spoons in the sand. (Cooperation)



Throughout this guide, you will see suggestions on how you can recognize and foster your child’s Approaches to Learning. Each page includes activities that you can do with your child to encourage learning in ways that will keep the child interested and engaged.

Cognitive

COGNITIVE STANDARD

Explores the environment to gain information.

Moving around and exploring helps your child to understand his/her world. It involves learning and problem solving.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Want to actively explore their environment through all of their senses.
- Are curious and like to investigate their surroundings.
- Learn through play and exploration.
- Watch and may try to imitate what they see and hear.
- Develop preferences for people and things.
- Begin to understand the purpose of objects and materials in their daily environment.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CHILD?

• Health and Safety

- Provide a safe and healthy environment to explore. Cover outlets, gate steps, and lock up dangerous materials.
- Provide safe and interesting materials to play with (pots and pans, rattles, shape sorters, blocks). Use materials that vary in texture, color, size, and shape, and that let your child fill, dump and sort.
- Limit television. Very young children learn from playing with real objects they can touch and explore. TV is not recommended for children under 24 months of age.

• Encourage Exploration

- Notice and comment as your child tries out new things, such as learning to crawl and stand.
- Learn from your child's interests. Provide materials that seem to interest your child. For toddlers, check out picture books from the library on topics of interest such as animals, toys and family members.

- Have conversations with your child. Children can learn words before they walk and talk.
 - Talk about the function of objects as you use them during the course of daily routines (cups, plates, cars, etc).
 - Take your infant or toddler on outings. Talk about the things you see at the grocery store and walking in the neighborhood.
 - Engage in activities that involve a sequence of events (peek-a-boo) to allow your child to anticipate
- #### • Provide Learning Opportunities
- Support your child's preference for a special toy (such as a blanket or stuffed animal). Let them talk about their special toy on outings with the family.
 - Allow the opportunity to play and repeat activities (knocking over the blocks or reading the same book several times).
 - Play games with your child (imitate sounds, peek-a-boo, pat-a-cake or I spy).
 - For toddlers, provide pretend play materials like telephones, play kitchens, and toy cars. Play along with them



APPROACHES TO LEARNING: INITIATIVE & CURIOSITY

Providing your child with many toys, floor time, and for infants – tummy time when they are awake – helps your child to be curious about how toys work and their surroundings.

Communication

COMMUNICATION STANDARD

Demonstrates communication skills for self-expression.

Listening and observing skills and responds to the communication of others; and interest and engagement in early literacy activities.

Your child's growing reading skill and interest in books, letters and sounds will help him/her become a better reader in elementary school.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING: PERSISTENCE AND ATTENTIVENESS

When you respond to your infant's eye contact, cry or babbling, you are gaining the trust and attentiveness of your infant.

When you have a "conversation" with your toddler, you are letting him/her know that they are important. The longer these "conversations" are, the more attentive your child becomes.



WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Learn about talking and communicating by interacting with their families and other people who take care of them. They learn from playing games (like peek-a-boo) with others and "talking" with them even before they are able to speak.
- Typically respond to language through making sounds (cooing and babbling) and eye contact. They express themselves in many ways: sounds, gestures, movement, and words.
- Learn from listening and often understand much more than they can express.
- Toddlers begin to use simple gestures and then words to express themselves (such as "bye-bye" and "mama"). Eventually, they begin to use phrases as a means of communication.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CHILD?

- **Encourage exploration:**
 - Respond to your child's attempts to communicate with you. Have conversations with your toddler about their day. Expand on your toddler's words by describing objects ("Let's play with the blue car") or events ("We are going for a walk in the neighborhood").
 - Talk about the stories that you read. Point to the pictures and describe them. For toddlers, ask them questions about the pictures or story.
 - Avoid baby talk. Limit using words that are stated incorrectly ("ba-ba" for bottle or "wa-wa" for water). This can be confusing for children learning new words.
 - Sing songs with your child. Most children love music with interesting words and repetition, like "Wheels-on-the-Bus."



- Make eye contact with your child during conversation.
- Use single words to label and describe objects.
- Cuddle your baby or toddler while you are reading with him/her.
- **Provide Learning Opportunities**
 - Talk to your child throughout the day. Talk about the things you see every day. Babies really like to listen to high voices and short sentences.
 - Be patient and listen to your child "talking" to you – whether through sounds, gestures, or words. Give them time to express their feelings or needs.
 - Read to your child. Allow babies and toddlers to interact with books in a variety of ways. Babies may like to chew on books so provide safe, soft books like bathtub books. For toddlers, provide more durable board books with lots of pictures and few words.
 - Read your child's cues. Talk when he/she is ready to listen and provide quiet time and time to rest when needed.
 - Repeat and expand on the words your child uses. Toddlers often use one word to represent an idea ("Ball" for "I want the ball"). You can add to their vocabulary by responding in full sentences ("Yes, you want the blue ball").
 - Use gestures (waving hand for goodbye) accompanied by words.
 - When your child is able, provide the opportunity to scribble. Use large crayons and plain paper. Talk about the work and display it in your home.

Creative Expression

CREATIVE EXPRESSION STANDARD

Demonstrates interest and participates in various forms of creative expression.

Your child's interest, enjoyment, and participation in musical and artistic activities are important to building language, in making decisions, and in communicating with others.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Babies and toddlers enjoy the natural beauty around them.
- Toddlers enjoy creating their own art using crayons, chalk and other materials.
- Toddlers enjoy participating in musical activities, such as listening, singing songs and dancing.
- Toddlers learn from pretending and "play acting" their experiences.
- Participating in art activities provides an opportunity to be creative and develop important thinking skills.
- Very young children show musical preferences and respond to music with their bodies (stomping their feet or "flying" like an airplane with their arms).

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CHILD?

• Encourage Exploration

- Talk about the natural beauty in your environment, such as flowers and trees.
- Draw your child's attention to art. Point out and discuss pictures in children's books.
- Sing songs throughout the day. Repeat familiar songs your child likes. Sing songs with movements ("Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes"). Dance and sing with your child.
- Dance with your infant and teach fun dances to your toddler (such as the Hokey-Pokey).
- Give your toddler opportunities to create and build things including crayons and paper, blocks, and paint.

• Provide Learning Opportunities

- Provide opportunities to use art materials – like large crayons, markers, plain paper, glue and sidewalk chalk. Talk about and praise your child's creations.
- Expose your child to a variety of different kinds of blocks; soft blocks for infants and wooden blocks for older toddlers. Encourage your child to build and create things.
- Play a broad range of music, including jazz, country and classical.
- Provide opportunities to play with musical instruments. Make your own instruments (like an old coffee can as a drum).
- Hold your baby or toddler in your arms and move with your child to music. Gently bounce your child in time to the rhythm.
- For toddlers, play pretend. Ask your child to play the mommy or daddy while you play the child.
- Provide pretend play toys such as telephones, dolls and hats.

APPROACHES TO LEARNING: INITIATIVE AND CURIOSITY

When your infant or toddler uses paint or markers on plain paper and you comment on how the colors changed when they overlapped, your child will try to make that happen again. Curiosity will be sparked



Physical/Motor Development

PHYSICAL/MOTOR DEVELOPMENT STANDARD

Demonstrates motor skills in daily activities and adaptive/self-care routines.

Your child's body uses large muscles to walk and run. Your child uses small muscles to draw with crayons or markers and cut paper with scissors or tear the paper with their hands.

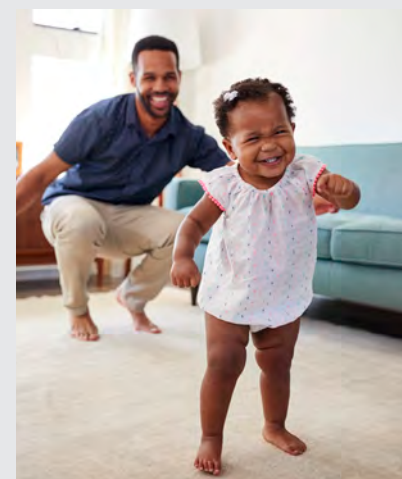
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Babies and toddlers grow steadily in height, weight, muscle strength and coordination, and head size.
- Babies and toddlers eagerly explore their surroundings using the large muscles in their body.
- Babies and toddlers gradually develop strength and coordination in the small muscles of their hands and fingers to grasp and handle objects.
- Babies and toddlers gain more and more ability to use their eyes, hands, and fingers together to reach out and take hold of objects they want.
- From about three months of age, babies put everything in their mouths. They are using hand-eye coordination as well as exploring with their other senses.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CHILD?

- **Health and Safety**
 - Feed your baby or toddler nutritious, age-appropriate liquid or solid food so his/her body will grow strong and healthy.
 - If possible, breastfeed for the first four to 12 months.
 - Check with your health care professional for advice on the right kinds of foods to give your child at various ages. Avoid foods with too much fat and sugars.
 - To ensure your baby or toddler's good health, provide plenty of water to drink throughout the day while avoiding sugary drinks and sodas.
 - Take your baby or toddler for regular medical check-ups and immunizations to promote healthy development and prevent illness.

- Use safety gates, electrical outlet plugs, and pads on sharp edges of furniture to prevent injuries.
- Remove small items that your child could pick up, put in the mouth, and cause choking. If an object fits inside a toilet paper tube, it is too small for your baby or toddler under the age of three years to have. Examples of dangerous food items are whole grapes, nuts, uncooked vegetable pieces, and whole hot dogs.



• Encourage Exploration

- Compliment your child on the skills being learned. This will encourage your child to learn even more.
- Be patient when your baby playfully grabs your hair, eyeglasses, or earrings. Infants explore their new ability to grasp what they see with their small hand and finger muscles. Take off personal items that might attract curiosity.
- Let your child self-feed, even though it may be messy at first. Your child's hand-eye coordination improves with practice.

• Provide Learning Opportunities

- Provide a safe, clean, flat floor space for your child to freely squirm, roll over, crawl, and walk.
- Provide a few simple toys for gross motor play, such as lightweight balls and push-pull toys.
- Make sure your baby or toddler has interesting playthings to handle. Clean, safe household objects such as plastic sets of measuring cups, spoons, and mixing bowls are good examples.
- Give your toddler playthings that help their small muscle coordination such as shape-sorting toys, children's books with stiff cardboard pages, wooden puzzles with knobs, large crayons and paper for drawing, and plastic or wooden blocks to stack.
- Give your toddler simple clothing with easy fasteners that he/she can practice taking off and putting on.



APPROACHES TO LEARNING: COOPERATION

When your child helps put their own clothes on, he/she is not just cooperating with you but also using their large and small muscles to put on the clothes and button, zip, or snap.

Social/Emotional

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL STANDARD

Demonstrates trust and engages in social relationships; and sense of self.

Children's feelings about themselves, as well as developing relationships with others, will be very helpful in all other areas of their development.

THIS MEANS THAT INFANTS AND TODDLERS:

- Recognize and prefer the adults that care for them the most and may become upset when unfamiliar people approach them.
- Want to be with their primary caregivers and often go to them when they need emotional support.
- Develop relationships with other adults and children. They enjoy interacting and playing with them.
- Experience a wide array of feelings and emotions.
- Infants often express these through facial expressions and body movements. Toddlers may use words.
- Young children learn ways to calm themselves. Infants may use a pacifier while toddlers may have a special stuffed animal.
- Toddlers recognize their own accomplishments. For example, they may clap when they go to the potty by themselves.
- Toddlers begin to understand rules and will follow simple ones most of the time.

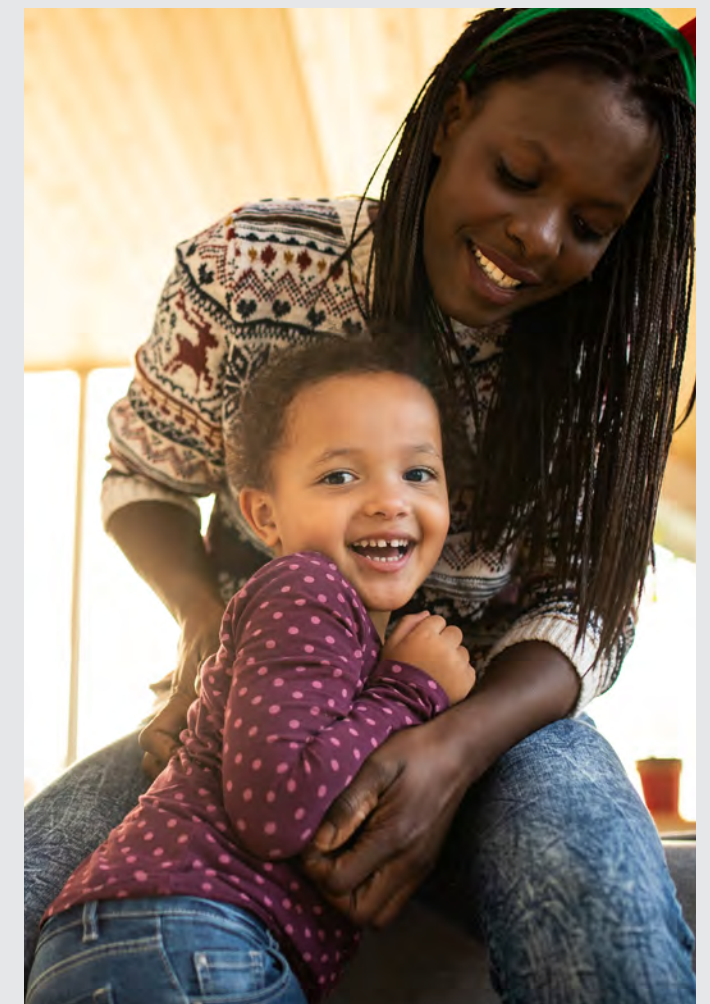


APPROACHES TO LEARNING: PERSISTENCE AND ATTENTIVENESS

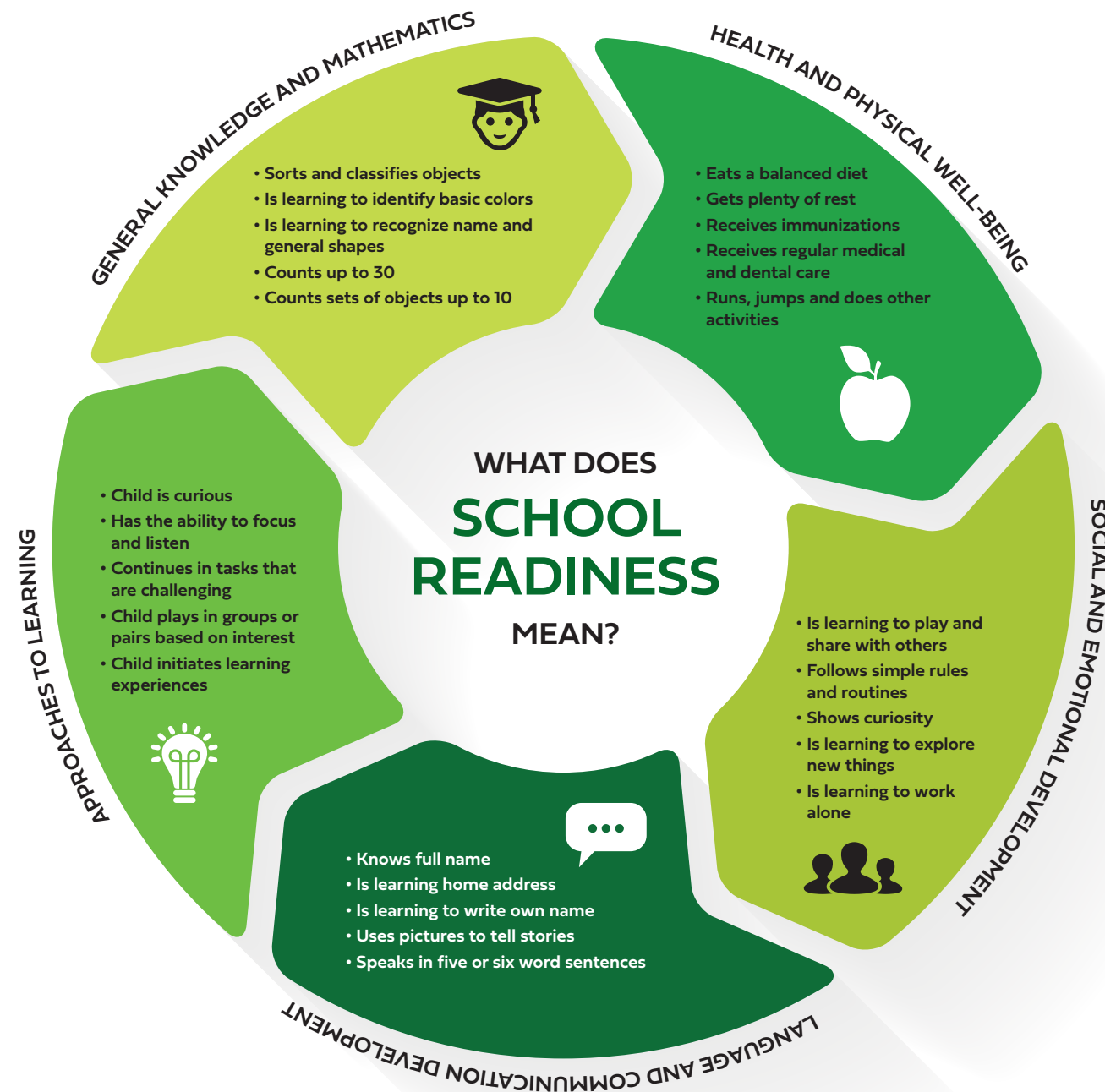
Responding to your child's gestures allows your child to be persistent in their communicating of their wants and needs.

WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU CAN DO WITH YOUR CHILD?

- **Encourage Exploration**
 - Calm your child if upset by an unfamiliar person. Use soft tones and provide reassurance that everything is okay.
 - Be sure to provide guidance (gentle hands) and adequate supervision during play times with other children.
 - Ask your infant or toddler questions about themselves ("Where's your nose?") and encourage a response.
 - Encourage your child to express feelings. Provide the words to label emotions ("You are mad!").
 - Acknowledge your child's accomplishments ("Wow, look at that tower!") and celebrate successes.
 - Give toddlers simple choices ("Do you want to wear the red shirt or the blue one?").
- **Provide Learning Opportunities**
 - Be soothing when your infant cries. Do not be afraid of spoiling infants – they need your attention.
 - Encourage your toddler to try new things. Let your child know that you will be there when needed.
 - Provide opportunities to interact with other children and assist in doing so.
 - Be sure that any type of out-of-home child care experience is of high quality.
 - Support your child's efforts to calm down. Provide special stuffed animals or toys when you are leaving to help maintain calm.
 - Provide simple, straightforward safety rules (such as "feet on the floor"). Too many rules can be confusing and frustrating to a young child.



School Readiness in Kentucky



School readiness means that each child enters school ready to engage in and benefit from early learning experiences that best promote the child’s success and ability to be Ready to Grow, Ready to Learn & Ready to Succeed.

The skills listed in the diagram on the left are helpful for children to know before entering Kindergarten. The indicators included represent the hopes and aspirations for incoming students, not the expectations. Kentucky recognizes that children develop and learn at different rates and times. Not every child will master all of the skills and behaviors listed prior to Kindergarten. These skills and behaviors are NOT USED to determine school eligibility. In Kentucky, all children who meet the legal age requirement are entitled to enter public school.

Families, early care and education providers, schools, and community partners must work together to provide developmental experiences that promote growth and learning, to ensure that all children enter school eager and excited to learn. The purpose of this definition is to give parents, child care and preschool, and communities an overview of the expectations of schools for incoming students and to help families and communities prepare children for school. In addition, a readiness profile provides teachers, child care providers, and parents a tool to better inform them on the specific strengths and needs of each individual child.

In 2003, Kentucky released the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards. These standards were developed to help early childhood programs across the state understand appropriate expectations for young children from birth to age five. Using the standards as a guide, programs can improve the quality of their services by providing children with appropriate experiences that support their overall growth and development.

The development of the Early Childhood Standards led to the creation of this document that was originally submitted to the Kentucky Department of Education by a subgroup of the Kentucky Early Childhood Standards Workgroup. This Parent Guide is designed to support families in understanding and using the document, Building a Strong Foundation for School Success: Kentucky’s Early Childhood Standards (Summer, 2003).

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A complete and detailed list of the early childhood standards can be found at <http://kidsnow.ky.gov>

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If you have concerns about your child's development, contact First Steps at (800) 442-0087 or TTY (502) 564-5777. For more information about this publication or to request additional copies, please contact the Governor's Office of Early Childhood at (502) 782-0200.

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