

# Learning Disabilities Association

## FACT SHEET

### Early Childhood

Early Childhood Committee  
February 1996

#### Evaluate Your Child's Pre-School Skills

Often it is the parents who first have concerns when their toddlers are not "on target" in their development. Sometimes delayed development is first detected in the doctor's office.

**Warning signs are just that... Warnings.** They don't necessarily mean there are problems, but they should be discussed with your pediatrician or family physician at your next visit. If your toddler is developing normally, your doctor will be able to reassure you.

Early intervention with a child who is behind in social, cognitive, fine motor, gross motor, and/or language development can make a world of difference. If you see some of these signs in your child, you may want to contact your school district, primary physician or the local, state or national LDA office for information. They can guide you on where to start in determining whether your child has a developmental delay.

Federal Law, the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), provides for a free and appropriate education for all children with disabilities. This includes early intervention for pre-school children who need special education services.

The Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) is a national non-profit volunteer organization whose members include individuals with learning disabilities, their families and professionals. There are state and local LDA chapters throughout the United States. For more information and to locate the LDA chapter nearest you, call or write:

LDA  
4156 Library Road  
Pittsburgh, PA 15234-1349  
(412) 341-1515

#### OTHER RESOURCES

##### **Your Local School District:**

Ask about their early childhood screening program and their early childhood education program.

##### **Your State Department of Education:**

Ask about your state's plan for early childhood intervention and special education.

##### **Your State's Parent Training and Information Center:**

Ask about what steps you should take to request an evaluation for your toddler.

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## E A R L Y   I N T E R V E N T I O N

Below are some common characteristics of preschoolers at risk of later possibly being identified as having learning disabilities. Use this list to determine whether professional help is appropriate.

**"He knocks into building blocks, bumps into doors, falls out of his chair and crashes into his playmates."**

- o inability to negotiate his body through his environment
- o poor depth perception
- o poor coordination
- o sitting in double jointed fashion
- o toe walking
- o lurches while walking

**"She's so smart yet has the attention span of a flea - she flits from one thing to another, and sometimes speaks like a broken record."**

- o distractibility
- o short attention span
- o impulsiveness (impulsivity)
- o hyperactivity
- o perseveration (doing the same thing over in the same way)

**"She can talk about topiary trees, but she can't pull up her zipper or draw a circle, and hates putting toys and puzzles together."**

- o poor motor coordination
- o difficulty coordinating hand-eye maneuvers
- o clumsiness

**"He understands everything I say to him, but he does not express himself well like his brother and sister"**

- o delayed speech
- o uses sounds/words out of sequence: home I ran, animals
- o limited vocabulary
- o inappropriate use of words
- o disorganized phrases

**"He look at everything but doesn't seem to see anything in particular. His hands seem to see better than his eyes."**

- o difficulty focusing
- o problems distinguishing shapes and colors
- o difficulty remembering what he sees
- o problems remembering the order of things he sees

|  |  |
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| o difficulty making sense of what he sees  |  |
| <b>"She's four years old but acts much younger."</b>   |  |
| o immature behavior / appearance   |  |
| o immature speech  |  |
| o immature coordination/movement   |  |
| o selects solitary play or younger playmates   |  |
| o immature choice and use of toys  |  |
| <b>"Her eyes look at me so intently, and she listens. But it just doesn't seem to get through."</b>                                    |  |
| o problems understanding what she hears  |  |
| o difficulty remembering what she hears  |  |
| o problems remembering sequences of sounds   |  |
| o difficulty following simple directions   |  |
| o overreaction to noise  |  |
| o does not enjoy being read to aloud   |  |
| <b>"He overreacts or underreacts to everything - it's like his emotion thermostat is malfunctioning."</b>                              |  |
| o indiscriminate or catastrophic reactions   |  |
| o laughing one moment, crying the next   |  |
| o very low or very high threshold of pain  |  |
| o dislike of being touched or cuddled  |  |
| o no reaction or overreaction to being touched   |  |
| <b>"He never seems to be 'put together' right, and yet I spend so much more time and energy helping him than I do the other kids."</b> |  |
| o disorganized movement  |  |
| o disorganized language  |  |
| o disorganized appearance  |  |

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