

# **Holding Developmental Conversations with Families**

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# Disclosures


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# Learning Objectives

- Increase awareness of parents' perspective when they have a child with developmental concerns
  - Identify steps and tips to holding developmental conversations with parents
  - Specify cultural considerations when holding developmental conversations
  - Utilize 2 communication techniques to improve developmental conversations with families, including parent-to-parent supports
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## Developmental Conversations

Developmental screening provides opportunities for providers to:

- Provide developmental guidance
  - Teach parents ways to support their child's development
  - Help parents move to action when their child has a developmental delay
  - Link children with early intervention
- 



# Parent Perspective: Tips for Pediatricians

## Help Me Grow LA:

- Helps families find services that can support their child's development.
- Helps families find resources and get services more quickly.
- Helps improve the coordination of programs and services in local communities.



# HMG LA Community & Family Engagement Council

- Why Parent Involvement in HMG LA? **"Nothing about us, without us"**
- About the HMG LA Community & Family Engagement Council:
  - **15 members** representing a diverse cross-section across LA County
  - Ensure **families & children** are at the heart of HMG LA efforts

## Current Members:

- **Ancelma Sanchez**, Parent Champion and Program Director at the Child Development Consortium of Los Angeles
- **Aziza Shepherd**, EdD, LMFT, MPA, Parent Champion, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the Ohana Center
- **Cathay Liu**, Parent & Member of the Chinese Parents Association for the Disabled
- **Daniel Delgadillo**, Parent Champion, Compliance Reviewer for Disability Rights California
- **Ereida Galda**, Parent and Grant Director, Westside Family Resource & Empowerment Center ESP Grant Director
- **Felicia Ford**, Parent Champion and Founder, Leap of Faith Family to Family Supports
- **Fran Goldfarb**, MA, Parent, MCHES, CPSP, and CDC LTSAE Ambassador
- **Karen Nutt**, Parent Champion, Self-Advocate and Director of Community Health and Policy, Reach Out
- **Kathia Morales**, Parent Champion and Community Advocate, Best Start Panorama City & Neighbors
- **Kathy Schreiner**, Community Advocate, Best Start Panorama City & Neighbors Volunteer
- **Levy Harper**, Parent Champion and Foster Parent, CEO of Harper Haven and Special Education Teacher, Antelope Valley School District
- **Linda Landry**, Parent, Activist, and Co-Chair of (Early Start) Family Resource Centers Network of Los Angeles County (FRCNLAC) and Family Resource Centers Network of California (FRCNCA)
- **Lisa Schoyer**, MFA, Parent, LACDMH Countywide Regional Center Liaisons Coordinator, and President of RASopathies Network
- **Samin Yoak**, Caregiver and Parent and Family Advocate, Pacific Asian Counseling Services
- **Socorro Pacheco**, Parent Champion, Early Education Family and Community Manager at Allies for Every Child

## Developmental Conversations are Critical



Conversation around screening & assessment is essential

- **Done well:** Builds trust; parents leave feeling comforted, more informed, empowered/motivated to take next steps in child's care
- **Done poorly:** Parents leave feeling discouraged, ignored, uncertain what to do next



# Tip #1: Really Listen



## Tip #1: Listen to our concerns

### Why?

- Closest to child's daily behavior
- Takes courage to share concerns
- Equity considerations – parents of color less likely to feel listened to or involved in decision making<sup>1</sup>

1. Bailey, D., Scarborough, A., & Hebbeler, K. (2003). Families' First Experiences with Early Intervention: National Early Intervention Longitudinal Study. NEILS Data Report



## Tip #2: Support Understanding

- **Check for understanding & rephrase** if needed
- **Provide key information in writing** (e.g. diagnoses, recommendations) to absorb at own pace

### Why?

- Absorbing new/complex information takes time, especially if experiencing strong emotions



## Tip #3: Offer Hope & Next Steps

- Focus on what families CAN do, not what their child CAN'T do
- Engage families as agents in their child's care (e.g. integrating medical interventions into daily routines)

### Why?

- Parents love and want to support their child
- Gives something to move towards



## Tip #4: Acknowledge the Child in the Room - Respect the Patient's Dignity

- **Include & address the child** instead of speaking about them like they're invisible/don't understand, no matter the child's language level

### Why?

- Children understand more than we realize
- Help us see our child as a child, not a medical condition(s) that needs to be fixed

## Tip #5: Be Mindful About Translation



### Tip #5: Be Mindful about Translation

- **Best Practice: Have an interpreter** when a family does not speak English
- **Know your limits** in trying to speak another language you're not fluent in
- **Translate written recommendations** when possible

#### Why?

- Ensures understanding; mistranslations can have real health consequences

## Tip #6: It's OK to Admit You Don't Know



### Tip #6: It's OK to Admit You Don't Know

Why?

- Being honest about what you know & don't know increases trust
- Learn together - Parents may have the capacity to do a deep dive on their child's condition when you do not, especially for rare conditions

# Tip #7: You're Not Alone! Refer to Parent-to-Parent Support

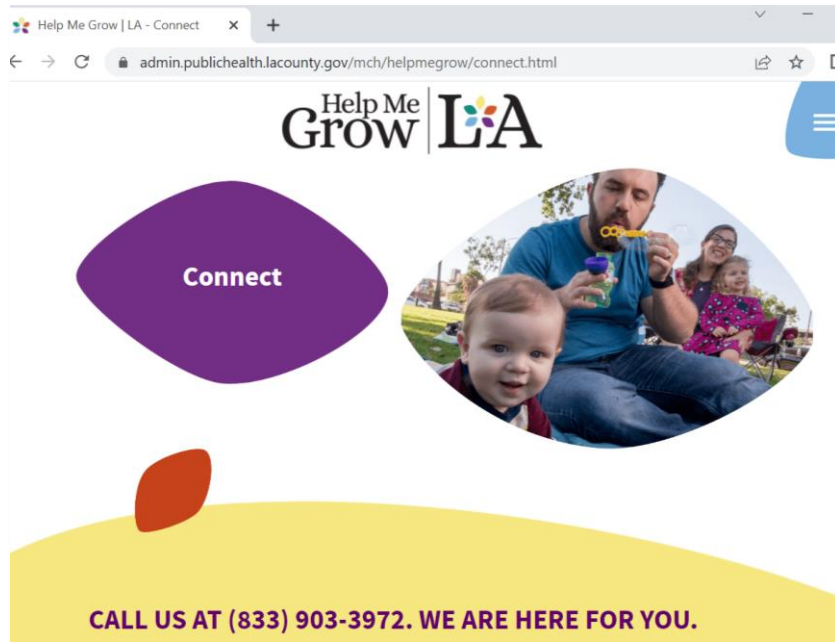


## Tip #7: You're Not Alone! Refer to Parent-to-Parent Support

### Why?

- Parent-to-parent supports such as DDS Family Resource Centers (FRCs) are a great resource for families trying to navigate services for their child, especially...
  - When families come from a different cultural background from you, speak a different language, or have complex circumstances
  - When you don't have capacity/time to dive deep into families' unique situation & needs

# Tip #8: When in Doubt, Contact Help Me Grow LA



## Tip #8: Unsure Where to Start? Contact Help Me Grow LA

- If you're not sure where to refer families or how to navigate eligibility for services, **Help Me Grow LA is here to help!** Call **(833) 903-3972** or visit [www.helpmegrowla.org](http://www.helpmegrowla.org)

### Why?

- Services' eligibility criteria are complicated and change over time
- Navigating services often takes not only knowledge, but also time, persistence and advocacy



# Tips Checklist

1. Listen to Parents' Concerns
2. Support Understanding
3. Offer Hope & Next Steps
4. Acknowledge the Child in the Room – Respect the Patient's Dignity
5. Be Mindful About Translation
6. It's OK to Admit You Don't Know
7. You're Not Alone! Refer to Parent-to-Parent Support
8. When in Doubt, Contact **Help Me Grow LA**

# Guidelines for Talking to Families

[www.firstsigns.org](http://www.firstsigns.org)



# Set the Stage

- Allow sufficient time for screening
- Strive for privacy and avoid distractions
- Start by pointing out something positive, especially something that supports the parent-child relationship. Examples:
  - “I noticed how your child turns to you for comfort.”
  - “Your child is so curious and alert.”
  - “I can see that you really know your child well.”
  - “You’ve worked so hard to get help for your child.”
  - “You’re so good at helping your child feel comfortable in this new environment.”

# Be Direct and Clear

- Remind the parent the purpose of the screening tool
  - “Just like we track your child’s weight and height, we also track their development. We ask all parents to fill out these questionnaires at this age.”
- Ask the parent if they have any questions about the screening tool
- Share the screening results, and share your observations
  - Begin with areas in which the child is developing typically or are strengths for the child
  - Then share any areas of concern (if applicable)
- Avoid using the words “pass,” “fail,” “normal,” “abnormal”
  - Instead, talk about strengths and areas where help may be needed

# Listen and Empathize

- Pause and encourage the parent to respond to what they heard
- Ask if this information fits the way they view their child
- If you have a concern, ask the parent if they are also concerned about this area, or if other family members have expressed concern
- Listen and be ready for any emotional responses
- If the parent is upset, respond with empathy but do not provide false reassurance:
  - “This is hard to hear”
  - “Even if you were also worried about your child’s language skills, it’s hard to hear me say it”
  - “This is a screening, not a diagnosis; it means that it’s important to get more information to see if there are services that would help your child continue to develop”
  - “You were hoping that I could reassure you; I’m concerned, but I also know there is help available”

# Provide Recommendations and Referrals

- Emphasize the importance of **early intervention**:
  - “Most concerns or delays around language, play and interaction will not go away on their own. They can get worse over time if there is no intervention”
  - “Most children respond well to early intervention; many improve with help and are better prepared for school”
  - “It’s important to get the help now while your child is young and developing quickly”
- Provide information in writing:
  - Summary of screening results
  - Referral letter with the specific referral made
  - CDC Milestones Moments booklet/app and/or ASQ Activity Sheets
- Provide an earlier follow-up appointment if there was an area of concern or a referral made

# Developmental Screening & Referral Toolkit

**EARLY SCREENING,  
BETTER OUTCOMES:  
Developmental  
Screening & Referral  
Toolkit for Pediatric  
Medical Clinics**



- Implementation Steps
- Provider training resources
- Lessons from the Field
- Resources for navigating the service system

<https://www.first5la.org/early-screening-better-outcomes-developmental-screening-referral-toolkits/>

**Developed by**  
University of Southern California  
University Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities  
at Children's Hospital Los Angeles  
& First 5 LA

# Cultural Considerations





# Successful linkages of Latinx families with early intervention services

- We interviewed 63 Latinx parents who had a screening at an FQHC, were found to have possible delays, and were referred for early intervention evaluation.
- 91% found eligible for EI and 92% receiving services
- > 90% were satisfied with screening, developmental guidance, and access to services.
- 88% said the person providing EI services spoke their home language

Quebles, I., Perrigo, J. I., Bravo, R., Patel Gera, M., Poulsen, M. K. Wheeler, B. Y., & Williams, M. E. (2022). **Latinx mothers' experiences with linkage to early intervention.** *Infants and Young Children*, 35(3), 189-204.

# Cultural Considerations

- Listen to parents' explanation regarding why the child has a delay; provide a gentle re-frame if needed
  - Reassure them that they have not caused the delay
- Discuss services and interventions
  - Reassure parents that they are in charge; they can accept or decline any suggested intervention
  - Early intervention services can be provided in the home
  - Early intervention services are provided at no charge to the family
  - Early intervention providers do not report to immigration
- Be open to hearing about alternative interventions and alternative healing practices

# Screening Bilingual or non-English-speaking Children



# Bilingual Development

Cognitive Benefits

Academic Benefits

Personal Benefits

Societal Benefits

# Myths and Facts About Bilingualism



# Myth 1

- Bilingual children's language will be delayed



# Fact

- Language milestones are the same for bilingual and monolingual children
  - Classic study of 25 Spanish-English bilinguals and 35 from monolingual homes
  - Language milestones were tracked from ages 8 to 30 months
  - Combining vocabulary in both languages, bilinguals had same vocabulary as monolinguals

**If a bilingual child is not reaching typical milestones: seek help! It's not because they are being exposed to 2 languages.**

# Myth 2

- Children are confused by exposure to two languages





# Fact

Some children may show cross-linguistic influence: rules from the more dominant language may get applied incorrectly in the less dominant language. Code-switching between languages is common.

- This is a typical part of bilingual language development
- Children are good at figuring out when/with whom they should use which language

**Code-switching/code mixing is not a sign of confusion or delay.**

# Myth 3

- Children with developmental delays or autism will have more delays if exposed to two languages



# Fact

- Children do not show **additional** delays when exposed to more than one language.
- Studies of children with autism, Down syndrome, and specific language impairment:
  - No difference in language development in bilingual vs monolingual children

**Even if a child has delays, exposure to more than one language is not harmful.**

# Encourage Parents to Speak their Native Language

Advising parents to switch to a non-native language in the home can:

- Negatively impact family relationships as language is strongly connected with family culture
- Cause communication breakdowns
- Lead to parental stress
- Lead to parents providing a less rich language model to their child

# Resources on Bilingualism

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association website: [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org)
  - The Advantages of Being Bilingual
  - Teaching Your Child Two Languages
  - Becoming Bilingual/El Nino Bilingue
- Paradis, J., Genesee, F. & Crago, M. B. (2010). *Dual Language Development and Disorders: A Handbook on Bilingualism and Second Language Learning*, 2nd Edition.
- Head Start materials on The Importance of Home Language series: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/importance-home-language-series>
- Bilingualism: Frequently Asked Questions: [www.literacytrust.org.uk](http://www.literacytrust.org.uk)
- Center for Applied Linguistics
- Wharton, Robert H., Levine, Karen, Miller, E., Breslau, Joshua, & Greenspan, Stanley (2000). Children with special needs in bilingual families: A developmental approach to language recommendations. *ICDL Clinical Practice Guidelines*. The Unicorn Children's Foundation: ICDL Press, 141-151.



Thank you!