

POINTERS FOR PARENTS

Early Childhood Developmental Milestones

(NAPSA)—During their child's early years, most parents are keenly aware of changes in physical development, such as height and weight. But there are also important milestones children should reach in terms of how they play, learn, speak and act. Smiling for the first time, making eye contact, and pointing are a few of these developmental milestones.

Parents need to know about developmental milestones—they are an important way to track a child's overall development. Also, the earlier a child with a developmental delay receives help, the better chance the child has to achieve his or her full potential.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), in collaboration with a coalition of national partners, recently launched a public awareness campaign, "*Learn the Signs. Act Early.*" The campaign is designed to educate parents about childhood development, including early warning signs of autism and other developmental disorders and promote early action among parents and health care professionals.

"By recognizing the signs of developmental disorders early, parents can seek effective treatments that can improve their child's future," said CDC Director Dr. Julie L. Gerberding.

As of now, about half of children with developmental disorders are not diagnosed until school age. Many signs of delay can be easy to see. For example, a two-year-old should be able to:

- Point to an object when asked
- Use two- to four-word sentences
- Follow simple instructions.

Every child is different and develops at his or her own pace,



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but most children reach major milestones within a certain range of time. Parents should learn the milestones, but recognize that their child might develop some skills earlier and some later than other children of the same age.

If parents suspect a delay, the first step is to consult the child's doctor or health care professional. Sometimes a parent's concern might be resolved by the passage of time, but in many cases taking a "wait-and-see" approach could delay opportunities to take helpful action.

If, after talking with a health care professional, parents still have concerns, they can seek a second opinion. They could ask a pediatrician specializing in child development or another qualified professional. Parents may also contact an early intervention agency or public school.

How To Find Out More

Parents and health care professionals can receive *free* materials, available in English and Spanish, as well as other resources and referral information by calling 1-800-CDC-INFO or visiting www.cdc.gov/ActEarly.