

Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring Toolkit

Talking Points for Key Stakeholders

January 2024

HELP ME GROW
NATIONAL CENTER



Talking Points for Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring (FEDM)

Purpose and Background

This document¹ is intended for use by those hoping to connect with different early childhood stakeholders about family-engaged developmental monitoring (FEDM) as defined in [A Roadmap for Advancing Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring](#). Discussing a child's developmental progress, understanding the family's social and environmental conditions, and sharing information and activities are just some of the FEDM activities that can be employed across family and child-serving providers. This makes FEDM an accessible component of the framework for children's healthy development and family well-being. The bullets below include tailored talking points for helping align FEDM with current practices for some common early childhood stakeholders: early childhood educators, child health care providers, home visitors, and early childhood system leaders.

Early Childhood Educators

- Parental views on child development are unique to their own experience, home, and family culture. Listening and understanding the parent perspective allows a more holistic approach toward monitoring child development across all environments. This approach also helps build trusting relationships with families.
- By using an ongoing method of inquiry about development, early childhood providers can better understand the development of children within their home, school, and community. Upstream, preventative measures can be taken to decrease the risk of long-term problems across environments, which are more effective in promoting positive health outcomes than continual intervention-based models of support.
- FEDM works to ensure that a child will be screened and diagnosed earlier, promoting earlier access to supportive services for children in need when the impact is greatest. By connecting children to needed services sooner, we can promote long-term academic and social-emotional success and reduce the need for more intensive interventions later in their lives.

Child Health Care Providers

- Using FEDM allows for efficient use of time during well visits. When families know how to monitor their child's development, they can be effectively involved in their child's development and feel empowered to bring concerns to you.
- FEDM increases provider knowledge of how social drivers of health impact a family, such as economic status of the family unit and social context. FEDM allows families to provide anecdotal information that can inform a holistic view of the child. These factors greatly impact health outcomes of the child but may be missed through traditional screening.
- FEDM centers families as an important part of the care team, increasing trust between the provider and the family. When families trust their care provider, they can feel confident in asking questions and contributing to shared decision making around a plan of care.
- Centering family voice in developmental monitoring also leads to increased self-determination. Self-determination is the ethical standard in medicine and it can promote improved adherence to medical advice and treatment.

Home Visiting Providers

- Like home visiting services, FEDM is one of the components of a holistic approach to supporting family and child well-being throughout the lifespan. Both actively support family priorities, celebrate a child's developmental progress, and build an environment where developmental concerns can be identified as early as possible when the impact is greatest.
- Home visitors can use FEDM to co-create effective, comprehensive and approachable plans with families, as it can quickly elicit family goals and priorities for care beyond those related to child development.
- FEDM practices use a responsive, proactive, ongoing dialogue with the family to support successful connection to resources and services to promote both the family's well-being and the child's optimal development.
- FEDM enhances [protective factors](#) that reduce the likelihood of child abuse and neglect and promotes a family environment that fosters optimal child development. Engaging in activities that support development, reviewing strengths and concerns, and connecting families to meaningful support can help provide a wide array of benefits that extend beyond developmental monitoring in a child's earliest years of life.

System Leaders

- There is an ongoing need to expand the reach and responsiveness of screening and linkage services to better serve families. FEDM offers a path towards broader, more holistic, and more authentic engagement with families around their child's development that is driven by their wants and needs.
- Implementing FEDM in programmatic practices across the early childhood system can improve family-level outcomes by creating more opportunities for discussion, education, and addressing factors that impact child development. Data collection at the family level can also help track progress and concerns and lead to more timely referral and linkage when indicated.
- Measuring the day-to-day child and family-level actions and impacts of FEDM can help align data across the other components of early identification of developmental delays and disabilities. This holistic view can better show the overall impact of early identification processes at the individual and population levels.
- Connecting FEDM data to data on developmental promotion, screening, referral, and linkage can allow system leaders to recognize trends, better design system improvements, and advocate for policy changes to support all families.
- FEDM is an equity strategy. Systems practicing FEDM universally and intentionally create strategic linkages between the family's goals, concerns, needs, and the trusted community-based supports designed to serve them, recognizing their unique position to help support the well-being of all families, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) families.

Families

- FEDM is defined as an intentional partnership of families and providers working to highlight a child's developmental progress. This process helps identify opportunities for support and education for positive outcomes.
- The three essential attributes of FEDM include:
 1. Families are regarded as the expert on their child's development,
 2. Information is gathered to inform a holistic approach to the child's development, and
 3. Developmental progress and needs are discussed over time.
- Benefits to families include:
 - Having knowledge about the developmental milestones their child is likely to achieve at specific ages,
 - Having information, tools, and activities they can use to support their child's development,
 - Being aware of risk factors and understanding how their family's protective factors, such as their support systems, can offset potential risks,
 - Having the skills to identify a potential delay in milestone achievement and knowing to act early when there is a concern,
 - Having knowledge about where and who to turn to for resources and information that support their child and family's developmental needs, and
 - Being able to advocate for resources and services to support their child's development and well-being.
- There are many resources families can use and review with their health care provider as part of FEDM, including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) milestone checklists and Milestone Tracker app.

ⁱ This document was compiled by HMG National Center Policy & Communications Specialist Morgan Reiss and University of Connecticut MSW student Nicole Foster. Additional thanks to the CDC Act Early Ambassadors that contributed to this document, including:

- Janet Kilburn, Vermont
- Patricia Moore, California
- Deepa Srinivasavaradan, New Jersey