

Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring Toolkit

A Short Summary of Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring in Action

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NATIONAL CENTER



FAMILY-ENGAGED DEVELOPMENTAL MONITORING

Family-engaged developmental monitoring (FEDM) is defined as an intentional partnership of families and providers working to highlight a child's developmental progress and identify opportunities for support and education for positive outcomes.

ESSENTIAL ATTRIBUTES OF FAMILY-ENGAGED DEVELOPMENTAL MONITORING

- 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
- 3 Developmental progress and needs are discussed over time

The ultimate **vision** is an early childhood system that incorporates the following shared values, ideas, and actions in order to support positive developmental outcomes for all children:

- Families are the driving force in their child's development
- Providers who interact with families with young children can engage in FEDM
- FEDM is the cornerstone of the five components of the framework for children's healthy development and family well-being
- Social drivers of health and protective factors play an integral role in developmental outcomes, and therefore, should be considered part of FEDM, as well as all other components of children's healthy development and family well-being
- Data on FEDM can support children and their families on the individual-level as well as inform population-level data and system improvement. Collecting this data may require changing policies and providing funding support to change billing codes and processes, train staff, and update data systems
- Data obtained through FEDM should be uniformly linked to the other components of the framework (developmental promotion, screening, referral, and linkage to services). Data collected across programs and states can allow for improved national understanding of - and response to - the current assets and needs of families with young children
- Supported by this data, investments should be made to ensure that early childhood systems provide culturally appropriate support (education, tools, activities, services) to families in order to promote optimal developmental outcomes

How do we achieve this vision?

A FRAMEWORK FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

Family-engaged developmental monitoring is one component of a framework for children's healthy development and family well-being.

Five components of the framework:

1. Developmental promotion
2. **Family-engaged developmental monitoring**
3. Developmental and autism screening
4. Referral for services
5. Receipt of services

This framework is grounded in research and literature on developmental systems and family-centered practices. It centers families as leaders in their own child's development and recognizes that early identification of developmental delays and disabilities is part of an approach that prioritizes promoting positive developmental outcomes.

DIVING DEEPER INTO FAMILY-ENGAGED DEVELOPMENTAL MONITORING

Three Essential Attributes

Family-engaged developmental monitoring (FEDM) is an intentional partnership of families and providers combining their knowledge to better understand a child's developmental path, including celebrating progress and identifying opportunities for support and education.

From birth, and on a regular and ongoing basis, providers engage families in conversations around their child's developmental progress, well-being, and factors that impact it, such as *social drivers of health*. During these conversations, families share information about their child's achievements, identify potential concerns or factors that might impact their child's development, and may advocate for additional resources in support of their child and family.

These ongoing and regular conversations lend helpful context for understanding the factors of a child's life that influence their development, while providing increased opportunities for *early identification* and connection to resources families may seek.

1

Families are regarded as the expert in their child's development

2

Information is gathered to form a holistic approach to the child's development

3

Developmental progress and needs are discussed over time




Distinct from traditional monitoring and screening

- Typically, **developmental surveillance** is a practice by the medical field to elicit and attend to families' opinions and concerns about their child's development as part of their ongoing interactions during service delivery.
- In non-clinical settings and when communicating with parents, the term **developmental monitoring** is more common, referring generally to the observation and tracking of developmental milestones as a child grows.
- The practice of **developmental screening** is used to detect when a child is not developing along a normal trajectory and uses validated tools to identify children who should be referred to more intensive diagnosis or treatment.
- The concept of **family-engaged developmental monitoring** expands on all three of these terms and intentionally includes the phrase "**family-engaged**" to center families as key partners in the process. Family-engaged developmental monitoring takes a more holistic perspective, not just seeking to identify needs and concerns, but **affirms a family-driven, asset-based approach that recognizes what is going well** and identifies families' priorities for their children. When family-engaged developmental monitoring is practiced in complement to systematized processes such as screening, referral, and linkage, **families are supported over time and more able to utilize their power** to observe and identify concerns and advocate on behalf of their priorities, goals, and needs.

FAMILY-ENGAGED DEVELOPMENTAL MONITORING

In Action

Attributes of Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring

<p>Family Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families share observations and opinions about child's skills/behavior • Families voice what healthy development means to them or what they feel their child needs right now 	 <p>Families are regarded as the expert on their child's development</p>	<p>Provider Strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers elicit family goals, questions, and concerns routinely • Providers ask family opinion of their child's development • Providers identify parent priorities - for growth and support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families learn about factors that support or hinder development • Families gather perspectives from multiple adults or programs who interact with their children 	 <p>Information is gathered to inform a holistic approach to the child's development</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers gather information about family strengths, risk factors, etc. • Providers ask about other program/provider insights from families directly or from other providers who support them
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families note and reflect on their children's development over time (tools can be helpful!) • Families share how long any risk factors or concerns have been present • Families revisit questions or progress with the same provider 	 <p>Development is discussed over time</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providers ask families how their child's development or their own concerns have changed over time • Providers re-engage with the family to revisit questions, concerns, and developmental progress

The Impact of Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring

What are the benefits for families?

Partnership between families and providers is key to FEDM. Early childhood theory and research evidence that when families engage in developmental monitoring of their child with the support of trusted providers and resources they are:

1. Aware of risk factors and understand how their family's protective factors, such as their support systems, can offset potential risks
2. Equipped with information, tools, and activities they can use to foster an environment that helps their child learn and develop
3. Knowledgeable about the developmental milestones their child is likely to achieve at specific ages
4. Skilled in identifying a potential delay in milestone achievement and taking actions when there might be areas of concern
5. Knowledgeable about where and who to turn to for resources and information that support their child's developmental needs
6. Able to advocate for resources and services from which their child may benefit

The Impact of Family-Engaged Developmental Monitoring

What are the benefits for professionals working with families?

When the myriad providers that serve families with young children participate in FEDM, they take an active stance in:

- Eliciting relevant information directly from families on a child's developmental progress, concerns, and family priorities
- Documenting meaningful information for individual family support
- Utilizing those data points captured through ongoing engagement to inform service delivery (by their own program or in collaboration with fellow service providers)

Partnering with families to follow a child's development vastly improves the provider's ability to work effectively with the family, build strong relationships, and demonstrate respect for culture and viewpoints. It also increases the ability to identify concerns as early as possible and provide the most appropriate, valuable, and impactful referrals and services.

Are you a provider interested in developing your FEDM skills?

[Take this Assessment](#)

What are the benefits to communities?

ADVANCES EQUITY



When families are centered in the prioritization, decision-making, and selection of services for their children, this expands early identification to be more inclusive and culturally appropriate.



FEDM does not rely solely on methods or standardized measures that may not resonate with a family given cultural and historical context, so FEDM can be more culturally informed than screening, evaluation, and referral to traditional early intervention services.



FEDM recognizes the community-based programs that historically and regularly interact with BIPOC families and their unique positionality as trusted community partners to help support children's healthy development and family well-being.



Systems practicing FEDM intentionally create strategic linkages between a family's goals, concerns, and needs and the trusted community-based supports designed to serve them.

IMPROVES SYSTEMS OF REFERRAL AND LINKAGE



FEDM has the potential to improve the quality and success of developmental screening and connection to relevant referrals and services.



Connecting FEDM data to data on developmental promotion, screening, referral, and linkage can shine light on trends, guide system improvements, and inform policy changes.

Interested in considering how your community can develop its commitment to FEDM?

[Take this Assessment](#)