



# Checklist for the Healthy Development of Infants & Toddlers in Foster Care



*BACKGROUND: From birth to age three, children experience the most rapid brain growth in their life. Brain growth and development that occur during this narrow window is heavily influenced by experiences and early relationships. These experiences and relationships lay the foundation for an infant or toddler's later learning, greatly influencing a child's chance at growing up to live a happy, healthy, and productive life. For more information, please visit Texans Care For Children on the web at [www.texanscareforchildren.org](http://www.texanscareforchildren.org).*

**Adapted from materials developed by the Permanent Judicial Commission on Justice For Children in New York, the following questions can elicit important information concerning the healthy development of infants and toddlers in foster care - an essential component of foster case review and permanency planning.**



## What are the **MEDICAL NEEDS** of this young child?

1. What health problems and risks are identified in the child's birth and medical records (e.g. low birth weight, prematurity, prenatal exposure to toxic substances)?
2. Does the young child have a medical home?
3. Are the child's immunizations complete and up-to-date?

### Common Medical Diagnoses Seen in Infants in Foster Care

- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Growth failure, failure to thrive
- Lead poisoning
- Hearing and vision problems
- Congenital infections-HIV, hepatitis and syphilis
- Shaken Baby Syndrome
- Respiratory illness



## What are the **DEVELOPMENTAL NEEDS** of this young child?

1. What are the young child's risks for developmental delay or disability?
2. Has the young child had a developmental screening/assessment?
3. Has the young infant been referred to the Early Intervention Program?

### Developmental Red Flags

- Premature birth
- Abuse or neglect
- Low-birth weight
- Prenatal exposure to substance abuse

✓ **What are the ATTACHMENT and EMOTIONAL NEEDS of this young child?**

1. Has the young child had a mental health assessment?
2. Does the young child exhibit any red flags for emotional health problems?
3. Has the young child demonstrated attachment to a caregiver?
4. Has concurrent planning been initiated?

Emotional Health Red Flags

- Chronic sleeping or feeding disturbances
- Excessive fussiness
- Incessant crying with little ability to be consoled
- Failure to thrive
- Multiple foster care placements

✓ **What challenges does this CAREGIVER face that could impact his or her capacity to parent this young child?**

1. What are the specific challenges faced by the caregiver in caring for this infant (e.g. addiction to drugs and/or alcohol, mental illness, cognitive limitations)?
2. What are the learning requirements for caregivers to meet the infant's needs?
3. What are specific illustrations of this caregiver's ability to meet the infant's needs?

Caregiver Capacity Red Flags

- Noncompliance with the child's scheduled health appointments and medication or therapeutic regimens
- Caregiver substance abuse and noncompliance with psychiatric treatment and medications
- Confirmed instances of child abuse or neglect
- Incomplete immunizations and a child's poor growth or arrested development

✓ **What RESOURCES are available to enhance this young child's healthy development and prospects for permanency?**

1. Does the young child have Medicaid, CHIP, or other health insurance?
2. Is the child receiving services under the Early Intervention Program?
3. Have the infant and caregiver been referred to Early Head Start or another quality early childhood program?



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