

# Developmental Screening Tools Fact Sheet: Nipissing District Developmental Screen

In 1993, a group of early intervention professionals became concerned about the number of children who were being identified with developmental delays after age three. This professional committee from northern Ontario included speech language pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, nurses, teachers, social workers and parent-infant therapists. In 2006, after extensive testing and upgrading, Nipissing District Developmental Screen signed a licensing agreement with the Ministry of Children and Youth Services to offer this screening tool at no cost to all residents of Ontario.



**The Nipissing District Developmental Screen (NDDS) is managed by a not-for-profit organization committed to:**

- Providing a simple, affordable screening tool that assists in the early identification of delays.
- Providing suggestions and activities that foster age appropriate development.
- Offering support and education on the use of the NDDS
- Making the NDDS available to diverse populations.

## **What is The Nipissing District Developmental Screen?**

A “Developmental Screen” is a checklist that looks at common skills in eight areas of child development and at what age they occur. This checklist is not a formal assessment tool but a “criterion based tool”, which compares a child to a set of standards, not to other children. It is meant to be a quick survey to determine any developmental area that may require extra help for daily programming or early intervention. This tool examines thirteen key developmental stages: 1 & 2 months, 4 months, 6 months, 9 months, 12 months, 15 months, 18 months, 2 years, 30 months, 3 years, 4 years, 5 years and 6 years.

Both parents and teachers may fill out this checklist. When sharing the tool with parents, it might be helpful to explain that: “this is a quick and easy checklist for skills that are observed in children of this age.” “It requires yes or no answers and will help us to see how your child is developing and if we need to adjust our programming to support your child’s overall development”.

## **Why do we screen children’s development?**

The primary reason to administer developmental screens is to identify children who may need extra help to acquire age-appropriate skills. The screens help parents and early childhood educators to:

- Learn about the child’s development
- Recognize the child’s skills and abilities
- Identify developmental areas that may need extra attention
- Plan intervention strategies, including referrals to qualified professionals, if required
- Promote early identification



**Child Development areas that are covered:**

- Gross motor (large muscle)
- Fine motor (small muscle)
- Vision
- Hearing
- Communication, speech and language
- Social-emotional
- Self-help skills
- Cognitive skills

**Is the NDDS appropriate for different cultures?**

The test items are sensitive to cultural values in child rearing and allow for alternate experiences. Some items have been marked with an asterisk to indicate the item may not be common to all cultures. In some situations, developmental differences may be just reflecting the culturally based experiences that the child has had, rather than indicating a delay. Discussion with the family may provide a teaching opportunity, but not necessarily a referral. The Screens are currently available in English, French, Spanish, Chinese and Vietnamese. Speech and language skills are specific to a child's first language. Caution must be taken when interpreting "no" responses when the screening tool is not in the child's first language. This tool allows the flexibility to choose more culturally relevant examples and situations.

**How to use the screening tool**

The NDDS has 2 sections; the developmental screen section and the activities for your child section.

The developmental screen asks about 20 questions for parents or teachers to answer with a yes or no. If a child is identified with more than 2 "no" answers, additional assessment may be required. If you have any questions about administering the tool, or identifying areas of concern, please contact the CMAS Special Needs Consultant.

The "activities for your baby/child" section is intended to provide parents, teachers or caregivers with information and activities to enhance the child's development. Each activity is coded with a symbol to represent an area of development.

The Nipissing District Developmental Screening Tool is available at [www.ndds.ca](http://www.ndds.ca). This checklist is free to families in Ontario and can be downloaded by registering on the website.

**Resources:**

[www.ndds.ca](http://www.ndds.ca)



17 Fairmeadow Avenue, Suite 211, Toronto, ON M2P 1W6 — Tel. 416.395.5027 | Fax. 416.395.5190 | [www.cmascanada.ca](http://www.cmascanada.ca)  
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