

# EARLY IDENTIFICATION OF SPECIAL NEEDS IS IMPORTANT!



Parenting a child with special needs is challenging for anyone—let alone for newcomer parents who are juggling the demands of settling in to a new country, learning a new language, attending classes and managing life at home.

Newcomer parents of children with special needs sometimes feel alone, unsure of who they can trust. They may also be unaware of the supports, services, information and tools that are available (in most communities), which can not only benefit the child and parent, but also strengthen the capacity of your Care for Newcomer Children (CNC) program.

## WHAT IS EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT?

Early identification is about understanding typical child development and recognizing difficulties quickly so that newcomer children and families can be connected to services as soon as possible. In this way, they can get the support they need before issues become more ingrained, long-term problems.

## WHY IS EARLY IDENTIFICATION AND SUPPORT SO IMPORTANT?

The first three years of life are a critical period for healthy child development. This early period of life has a significant effect on the wiring and sculpting of the brain. Research shows that experience-based brain development in the early years of life has long-term effects on health, learning and behaviour.

Early identification and support promotes better outcomes. Generally, the earlier a child is connected to services and support, the bigger the impact. It is also important to recognize that:

- Preschool services are limited and waitlists can be long.
- Services beyond preschool years are often reduced.
- Some services require a formal diagnosis or identification for children to access services and support.

For more information, see [\*How to Talk to Parents When a Child Needs Extra Support\*](#) and [\*How to Connect Families with Special Needs Support\*](#).

## 4 BENEFITS OF EARLY IDENTIFICATION & SUPPORT

1. Improves and enhances development for a child with special needs and helps to better prepare them for school.
2. Provides information and assistance to support and empower parents and families of children with special needs.
3. Lays the foundation that will improve the life of the child and offer greater opportunities.
4. Provides your settlement and CNC teams with support, information and tools to better understand and support newcomer children with special needs and their parents!

Visit [cmascanada.ca](https://cmascanada.ca) for more resources to support your work with newcomer families