



# Grandparenting

## Watching and Wondering: How to Identify Challenges in Your Grandchild's Development

If you are involved in the care of your young grandchild on a regular basis, you have the benefit of watching her development unfold. This also means you may be one of the first to notice that your grandchild may not be developing the skills she should be at a certain age. This can be a challenge because young children grow at their own pace and in their own way. Sometimes it can be hard to know if there is a problem. But if you do have concerns, here are some suggestions for what you can do.

- 1. Learn more about typical development from birth to 3 years.** This will help you know what skills children are expected to develop across the first 3 years. You can download developmental milestones charts from ZERO TO THREE at: [www.zerotothree.org/milestones](http://www.zerotothree.org/milestones).
- 2. Raise your concerns in a calm, supportive, and nonjudgmental way.** Avoid labels (“disabled” or “slow”). Recognize that it may be upsetting to your adult child to hear your concerns. Parents sometimes need time to think through this type of information. They may not be ready to act right away. Give parents the time they need, and let them know you are there to offer support.
- 3. Share information about development with your grandchild's parents.** If you are concerned that your grandchild has a delay, share your observations with his parents. You might show them the development chart and explain: “When I’m with Nolan, I’ve noticed that he is not babbling or pointing. This resource about children’s development says that toddlers his age are usually doing both of these things. I have been wondering if you see this too?”
- 4. If your grandchild's parents are open to suggestions, recommend that they consider taking these next steps.**
  - Talk to the child's health care provider.** Health care providers can do a developmental screening of the child to see how she is doing as compared to other children the same age. They can rule out medical causes for delays in development. Physicians can also refer the parents to community agencies that can help both child and family.
  - Reach out to the community early intervention agency.** Communities are legally required to evaluate children’s development and provide support or therapy to eligible children to address developmental delays. This is called “early intervention” and it is a service provided through federal legislation—Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Contact your county’s information line and ask for the telephone number of the Part C-Early Intervention program serving your county. Parents or guardians of children from birth to 3 years old can call their local early intervention program and request a free evaluation.
  - Contact your State Part C Coordinator.** You can also find early intervention contact information for every state through the National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center ([www.nectac.org/contact/ptccoord.asp](http://www.nectac.org/contact/ptccoord.asp)). Call or email your state coordinator to obtain contact information for your local early intervention program.



Authors:  
Rebecca Parlakian, M.Ed.  
Claire Lerner, LICSW

Photo credits:  
Top icon, Getty/images;  
side, iStockphoto