

Addressing Vision and Hearing Concerns in Infants and Toddlers: A Three-Pronged Approach for Washington State

Hearing: The current standard of care for screening young children’s hearing is the use of objective tools such as otoacoustic emissions (OAE) testing. We recommend that early childhood programs purchase this equipment. Contact us for more information, or to schedule an ECHO training to prepare your staff and program to use the equipment. (See www.kidshearing.org)

Vision: We recommend that infants aged 6 – 12 months be referred for an “InfantSee” vision screening. (See www.infantsee.org to find a participating doctor near you.)

The Three-Pronged Approach is a tool recommended for programs that do not yet have OAE equipment, and for infants/toddlers not eligible for an InfantSee vision screening.

Using professionally recognized criteria, Washington Sensory Disabilities Services has designed the Three-Pronged Approach to educate early childhood service providers about high risk factors for vision and hearing problems, and for use as a tool to document parent concerns, observable infant behaviors and developmental skills. The purpose of gathering this information is to determine the need for further diagnostic evaluation of a child’s vision and hearing status, and to provide evidence that these areas have been addressed. *The overarching goal is to identify hearing and vision problems as early as possible to lessen their impact on a child’s development.*

INSTRUCTIONS

The Three-Pronged Approach blends with routine gathering of information from parents as well as from your observations of the infant/toddler. If you have access to a child’s medical reports, these, too, can alert you to possible reasons for concern regarding hearing and/or vision. This packet contains four basic forms and one supplemental form:

1. Parent Interview (I) – Interview questions that may be embedded into initial intake procedures.

Medical/Family History Review Supplement - Checklist of family history and medical factors that put a child at higher risk of having a hearing loss and/or visual impairment. In ESIT programs, the FRC might complete this form for selected children.

2. Developmental Skills Checklist (II) - Checklists of developmental skills related to vision and hearing for you to complete as you assess the child during first visits.

3. Observations (III) - Checklists of what to look for in a child’s appearance and behaviors.

Summary Form - Information obtained from the three prongs (and medical review, if appropriate) is transferred to this form.

The summary form documents one of two possible screening outcomes:

(1) A systematic approach has determined no need for concern regarding the child’s vision or hearing at the present time.

OR

(2) There is a concern, and a plan for follow up is recorded. The parents may take this form to their primary care physician to request further evaluation of the child’s vision or hearing.

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