

Developmental Delay

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Developmental delay refers to the delay in one or more areas of a child's development when compared to atypical development in children. It may be a term used until a more specific diagnosis is made by a doctor until the exact nature of the delay is known. The significance of the delay can only be determined by observing the child's development over a period of time.

The different areas of development that may be delayed include:

- Gross motor development
- Fine motor development
- Speech and language development
- Cognitive development
- Social and emotional development

A transient developmental delay may be caused by or related to premature birth, physical illness, immaturity, lack of learning opportunities or prolonged hospitalisation.

A persistent developmental delay is most likely to be related to problems in understanding and learning, moving, communication, hearing or seeing. Assessments are required to determine what area or areas are affected.

Effects on Developmental Areas

Social and Emotional

- Separation anxiety may be experienced
- May require assistance with self help tasks including feeding, toileting and dressing
- May have a delay in social skill development
- May exhibit inappropriate behaviours towards other children such as touching and hugging (considered inappropriate due to timing, response, etc.)

Motor and Physical Development

- May have delays in gross or fine motor skill development
- May have low muscle tone
- May bump into things or fall down frequently
- May lack stamina and be listless or tire easily

Language and Communication Development

- May have difficulty speaking
- May not understand or use appropriate forms of communication due difficulty
- May have difficulty in making or expressing choices

Cognitive

- May have learning difficulties
- May have difficulty in understanding verbal directions
- May be easily distracted by noise and visual stimuli
- May have difficulty understanding concepts of turn taking, sharing, how to enter into play situations etc.

Sensory development

- May lack sensory integration
- May be tactile intolerant

Development Delay Inclusion Strategies

Each child diagnosed with **Developmental Delay** will be different and individual. It is important to gain information from the parents as to what characteristics of Developmental Delay their child displays. It is important to work closely with the parents as well as any additional support specialists e.g. therapists who may be involved with the child. It is also important to gain an understanding from the parent as to what is the most important aspect of their child attending your service. What is it that parents hope to gain from using your service? The following inclusion strategies are just some examples which may be applied to support the inclusion process. This list is only the start and it is dependant on a variety of factors such as environment, length of time child is in care, child's interest, likes, dislikes and skills already achieved. The strategies are divided into developmental areas however some strategies overlap and assist in a variety of developmental areas. Encourage staff to ask parents about the strategies they use.

Social development

- Use strategies to assist children separating from parent e.g. set a routine in saying goodbye, finding a book to read.
- Value and acknowledge child's efforts.
- Let other children know what child is doing to reinforce the concept of him being part of the group. Do this with all children e.g. "Look Jack is doing a puzzle as well"

Physical development

- Plan physical activities for times when child is most energetic.
- Provide simple obstacle courses that the child is capable of completing to experience success.
- Provide finger plays to encourage the use of both hands in a controlled manner as well as developing fine motor skills.
- Plan for fine motor developmental tasks with adaptive equipment such as a non slip mat under the drawing paper, thick crayons or thick handled paint brushes that are easy to grasp.

Language

- Utilise the use of large clear pictures to reinforce what you are saying.
- Para-phrase back what the child has said.
- Clarify types of communication methods the child may use e.g. Makaton.
- Label areas in the room with words and pictures.
- Use sequencing cards to support children's learning of how to predict what comes next and associate events.
- Provide puppets/pictures as an extra prop when using finger plays and songs.
- Reduce the amount of instructions in one statement to allow time for the child to gain an understanding of what is been said e.g. "Hold the puppet up high" rather than "hold the puppet up high and wave it around so that all the children can see it". Once child understands to "hold the puppet up high" you can then add "Good, now all the children can see it".
- Ascertain from parents words that are familiar with the child e.g. family words that represent aspects of child life, and use these in your program.

Cognitive

- Encourage use of a bright, easily recognisable bag for the child to be able to recognise his hook/locker.
- Plan experiences that are relevant to the child's world.
- Gain information from parents about child's likes, interests and dislikes and incorporate these in your program.
- Break tasks down to smaller steps e.g. placing one puzzle piece in a time rather than expecting the puzzle to be completed.
- Allow the child time to complete tasks and practice skills at own pace.
- Acknowledge level of achievement e.g. "You have placed that piece in the puzzle, well done." rather than just "Good boy".

Reference

Aspen Reference Group

Caregiver Education Guide for Children with Developmental Disabilities. Aspen Publication 1997 ISBN 0834210347

Branelly Kylie

Ideas for inclusion & Programming Tips. Book 1. CARATA 2000. ISBN 187 674 304 2

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