Developmental Milestone Checklists with Cultural Sensitivity in Mind

Why Cultural Sensitivity Matters

Offering milestone checklists to families is an important part of supporting child development. HOW checklists are offered to families when talking about developmental milestones can make a big difference in the way they respond to their child's progress and any missed milestones.

Families come from many cultural backgrounds, each with unique beliefs, expectations, and communication styles. A culturally sensitive approach helps families feel:

Respected **Understood** **Empowered**

1. Start with Respect

Begin every conversation by showing genuine respect and interest in the family's experience.
Try Saying: "Tell me about some things your child is learning to do."
In Practice:

- Use incluisve language like "your child" when gender is not known.
- Recognize that families may have different cultural traditions or expectations about child development.

2. Be Curious, Not Judgmental

Approach each conversation with openness and curiosity, not judgement.
Try Saying: "What would you like to see your child learn next?"
In Practice:

- Listen more than you speak.
- Don't assume what is "normal" based on your own cultural background.
- Be patient if families are quiet or hesitant to ask or answer questions directly.

3. Offer, Don't Push

Frame the checklist as a helpful resource, not a requirement.
Try Saying: "We have a short checklist that shows families what their child may be learning to do now. Would you like to take a look?"
In Practice:

- Use plain language and avoid phrases like "should be doing this by now."
- Emphasize that while all children grown and learn at their own pace, some children do best with extra support.

4. Use Their Preferred Language

Use plain language, visuals, and materials in the family's preferred language.
In Practice:

- Use translated checklists when available.
- If you have time, use visuals, toys, or modeling to describe milestones or consider showing CDC's short milestones videos to give families a clear picture of what to look for.
- Avoid jargon and keep language simple and clear.

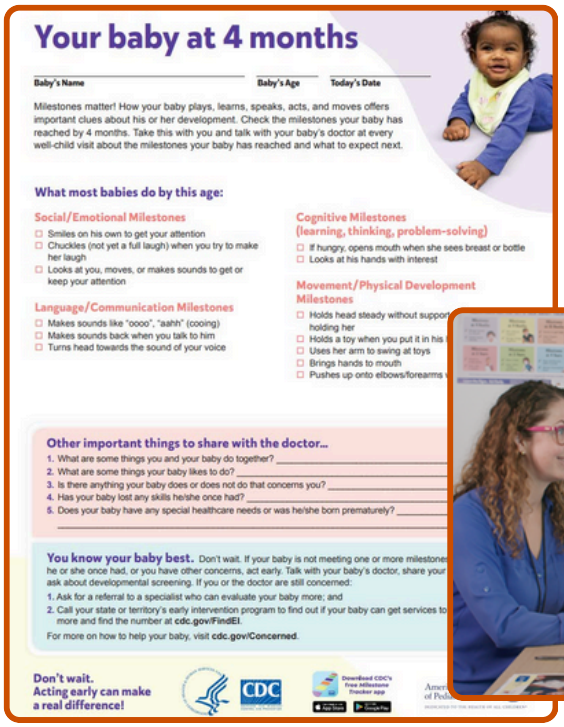
5. Acknowledge and Respect Differences

Be open to diverse views on child development.

Try Saying: *"Families may have different ideas about when kids do certain things, and that's okay. This checklist is just a guide."*

In Practice:

- Recognize that different cultures may put different levels of emphasize on different values, such as independence or group behavior.
- Instead of saying, "Most babies walk at 12 months," say: "Some children walk earlier and some a bit later, but this checklist helps us know what to look for around this time.."



CDC's Milestone Checklists

Access CDC's Milestone Checklists, available in 13 languages, at *www.cdc.gov/ActEarly/Materials.*

Helpful Reminder

Cultural sensitivity is not about saying everything perfectly; it's about being respectful, open, and willing to learn from families.

Your care and attention create a welcoming space where families feel seen and supported.

Additional Tips for Culturally Responsive Conversations

Honor Family Expertise

- Ask: *"What are you noticing about how your child plays or communicates?"*
- Validate cultural practices and routines.

Practice Cultural Humility

- Say: *"Every family has its own traditions. We're here to support what matters most to you."*

Watch for Nonverbal Cues

- Some families may avoid eye contact or may not feel comfortable asking questions right away.
- Smile, be warm, and provide space for quiet reflection or follow-up later.

Connect to Family Priorities

- Link development to things families value.
- Say: *"Talking and playing with your baby helps their brain grow, just like healthy food helps their body grow."*

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