



## Learn the Signs. Act Early. Ambassadors

### Utilizing Learn the Signs, Act Early Materials in Your Work

Melissa Passarelli, MA  
Director of Programs, Docs for Tots  
New York State Act Early Ambassador

#### Acknowledgment

The Act Early Ambassador project is a collaborative effort of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and Association of University Centers on Disabilities (AUCD) to advance CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." program to improve early identification of developmental disabilities. The project is funded by CDC and HRSA.

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly)



# About Me

- Director of Programs, Docs for Tots  
[www.docsfortots.org](http://www.docsfortots.org)
  - Pediatrician-led nonprofit that focuses on improving outcomes prenatally-age 5
  - Bring together children's doctors and communities to promote practices, policies and investments in children from prenatal to five that foster children's healthy development and future success.
- Director, Help Me Grow – Long Island  
[www.helpmegrowny/long-island](http://www.helpmegrowny/long-island)
  - Partnership coordinated by Docs for Tots, based on national Help Me Grow model
  - Goal: Promote development, catch issues early and successfully link to services
- New York Act Early Ambassador for CDC's Learn the Signs, Act Early program  
[www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly)

A photograph of a baby taking its first steps on a grassy field. Two adults' hands are visible, one on each side of the baby, providing support as the baby walks towards the right.

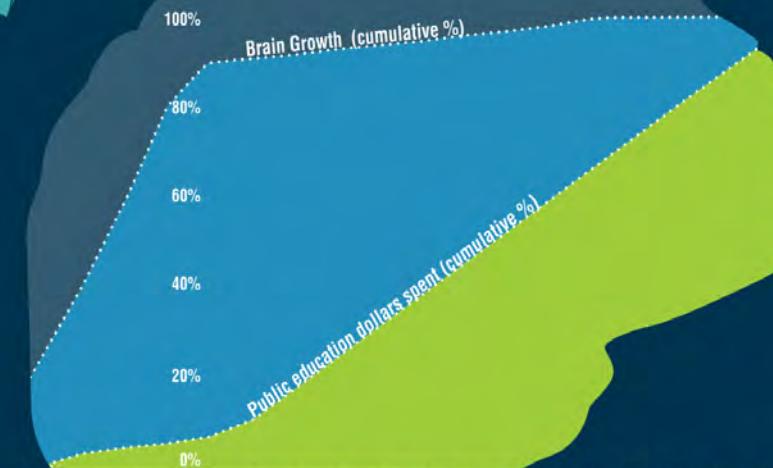
# What's the Problem?: Why the Early Years Matter

# Brain Architecture



- Brain development, like construction, follows an orderly process
- The strength of the foundation matters
- Construction is a process, not an event
- Just like with constructing a building, there are periods of intense activity

# Starting Smart



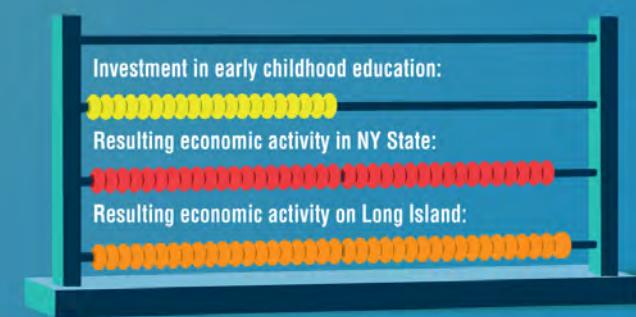
85% of brain development occurs before the age of 5, but only 14% of public education dollars are spent on early childhood education in the U.S.

Sources: America's Edge, Rand Corporation and the National Institute for Early Education Research

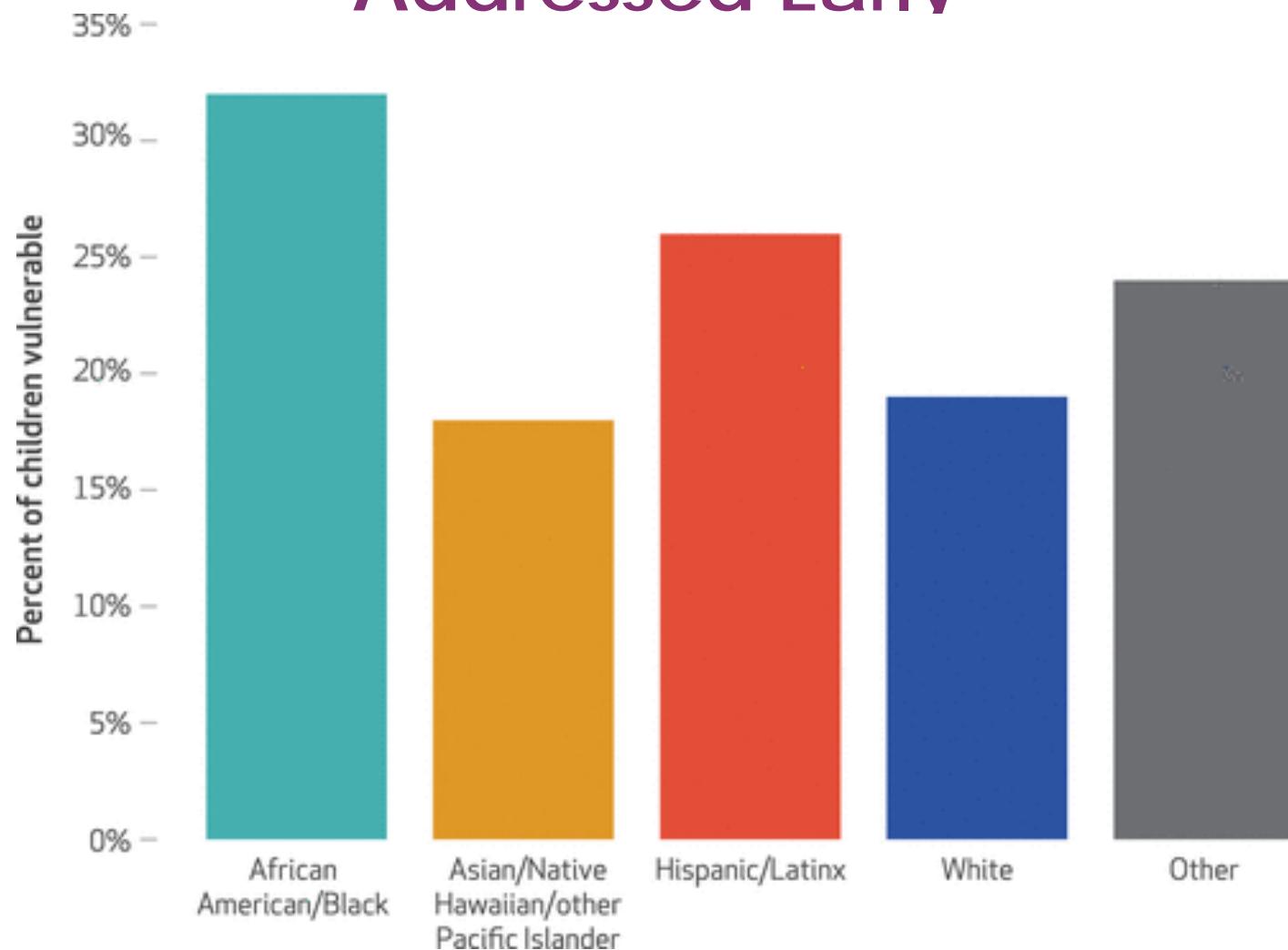
Every \$1 invested in early childhood education can save \$7 in the long-term through reduced costs associated with remedial education, criminal justice and welfare payments.



A recent report by *America's Edge* showed that for every \$1 invested in early education in New York State an additional \$1.86 is generated in economic activity. On Long Island, that number is \$1.92.

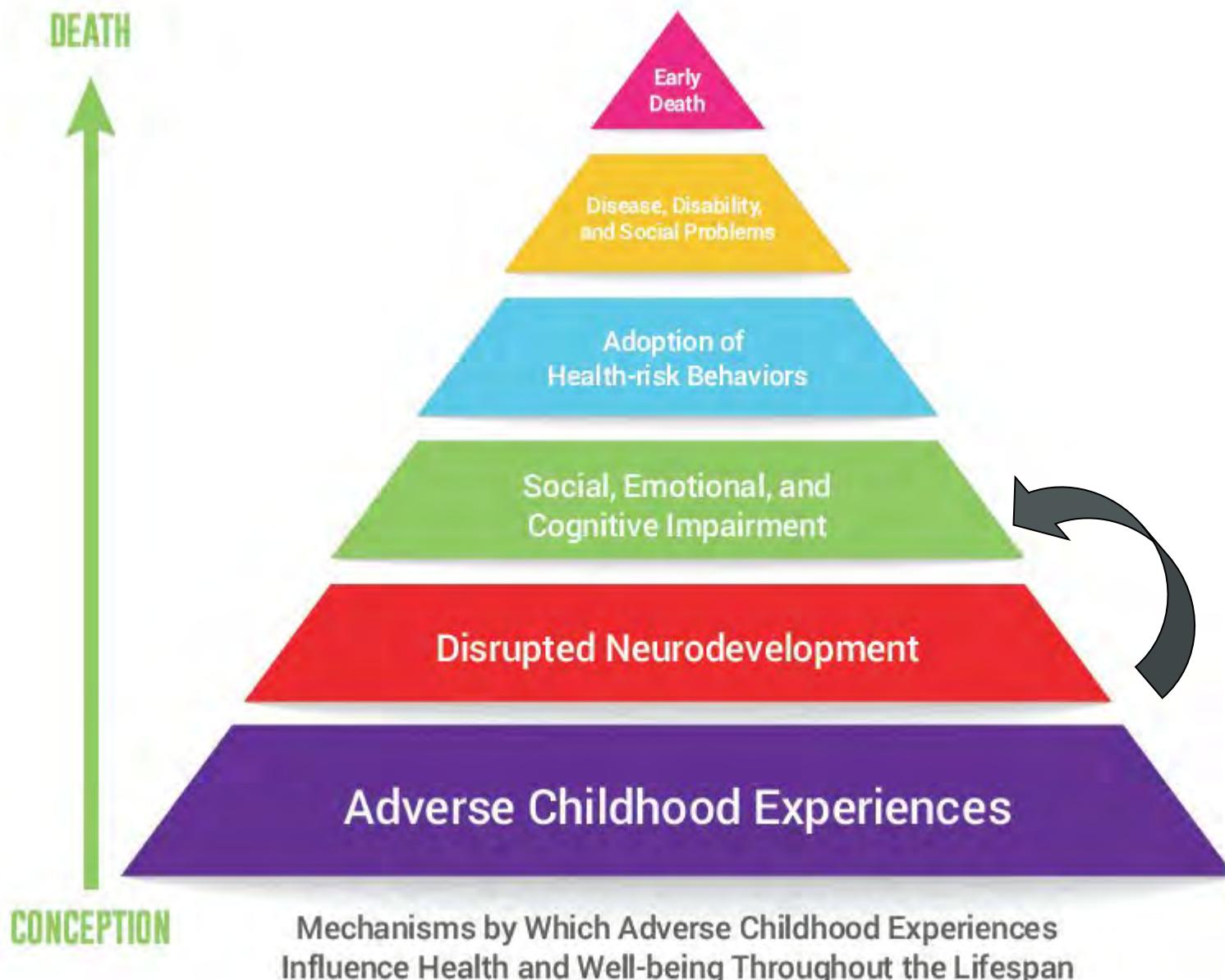


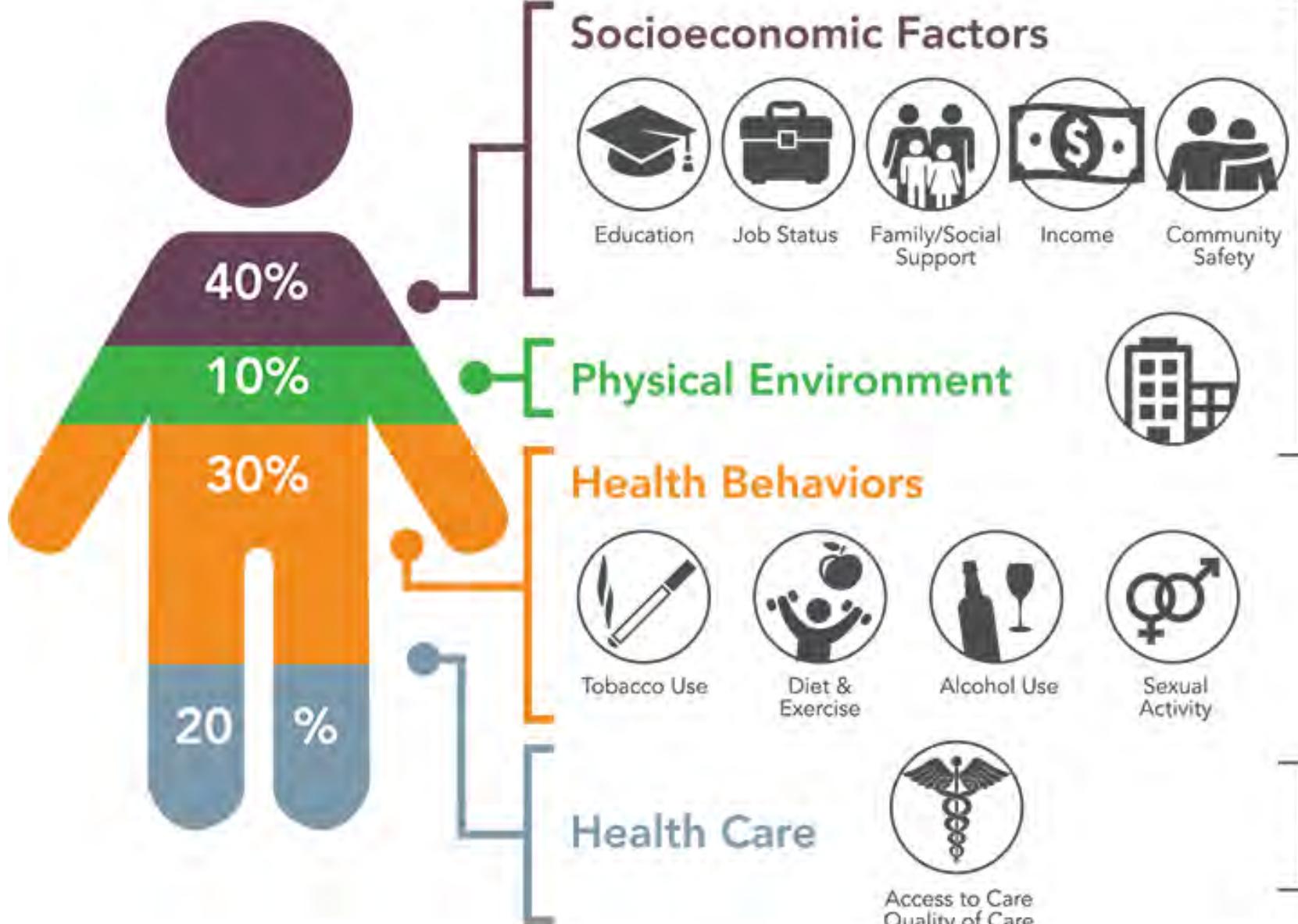
# Racial Inequities Start Early, and Must Be Addressed Early



Halfon, N., Aguilar, E., Stanley, L., Hotez, E., Block, E., & Janus, M. (2020). Measuring Equity From The Start: Disparities In The Health Development Of US Kindergartners. *Health Affairs*, 39(10), children's health. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1377/hlthaff.2020.00920>

# Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences





## Social and Emotional Competence

Children's early experiences of being nurtured and developing a *positive relationship* with caring adult *affects all aspects* of behavior and development.



## Knowledge of Parenting & Child Development

Children *thrive* when parents provide *not only affection*, but *also* respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence.



## Social Connections

Parents with a social network of *emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors* often find that it is *easier to care* for their children and themselves.



## 5 Protective Factors



## Concrete Support

Families who can meet their *own basic needs* for food, clothing, housing, and transportation—and who know how to access essential services such as childcare, health care, and mental health services to address family-specific needs—are *better able to ensure the safety and well-being of their children*.

## Resilience

Parents who can cope with the *stresses of everyday life*, as well an occasional crisis, have **resilience**; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to *bounce back* when things are not going well.



# You're Part of the Brain Construction Crew



- Our wellbeing is built just like a structure: it is influenced by what people around us do and what resources are available
- Many specialists and types of materials are required
- Structures can be threatened by spotty construction and unpredictable weather
- Construction is a process, not an event; ongoing work and maintenance are required!

# Why it Matters

- Many parents do not know about developmental> harder when there are a lot of other concerns to deal with
  - The children you serve are more likely to experience ACEs> more likely to have developmental or social emotional concerns
  - May not have as many protective factors
- 
- The more we can share messaging and information, the more likely parents are to hear it and implement it
  - It's on all of us to be an extra set of eyes in monitoring young children
  - You can provide knowledge of child development and foster emotional competence and resilience

# Learn the Signs, Act Early Campaign

---

- Research-based early childhood public health campaign from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
- Aims to improve early identification of children with developmental delays and disabilities by promoting developmental monitoring so children and families can get the services and support they need as early as possible
- Offers free tools to help parents and professionals track developmental milestones
- LTSAE for short!



# cdc.gov/actearly

- Audiences
  - Parents
  - Health Care Providers
  - Early Childhood Educators
  - WIC Providers
  - Home Visitors
- Materials ordering
- Professional trainings
- Research



# LTSOE and Screening = a Perfect Partnership!

- LTSOE focuses on expanding developmental monitoring, which families can (and should!) be doing throughout their child's early years
- LTSOE materials can be used to engage parents in their child's development
  - Understand what milestones to expect at each age
  - Learn tips and activities to promote these milestones
  - Provide messaging about acting early if these milestones aren't being met
- If you're already screening, they can help get parent buy-in to the process, and help ensure swift next steps



# LTSAE Materials

---

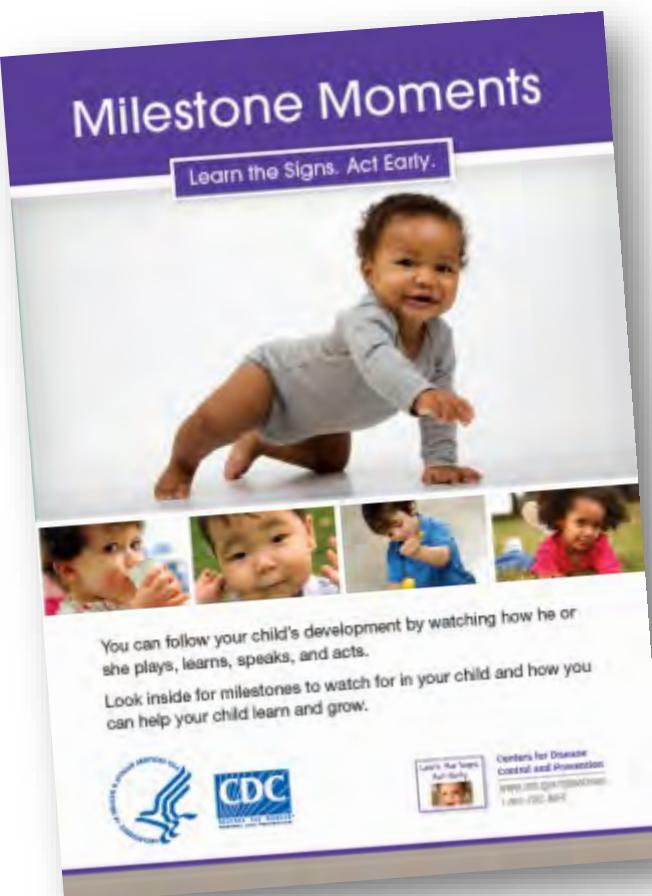
- All are available in English and Spanish to download
- Materials can be ordered for free in limited quantities based on what is available in the warehouse
- Materials can be adapted, translated, and customized to help health professionals, early care and education providers, and other service providers work with parents to track the development of the children they serve



# Materials



# Milestone Moments Booklet



## Your Child at 18 Months

What children do at this age



### Social/Emotional

- Likes to hand things to others as play
- May have temper tantrums
- May be afraid of strangers
- Shows affection to familiar people
- Plays simple pretend, such as feeding a doll
- May cling to caregivers in new situations
- Points to show others something interesting
- Explores alone but with parent close by

### Language/Communication

- Says several single words
- Says and shakes head "no"
- Points to show someone what he wants

Talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.



### How you can help your child's development

- Provide a safe, loving environment. It's important to be consistent and predictable.
- Praise good behaviors more than you punish bad behaviors (use only very brief time outs).
- Describe her emotions. For example, say, "You are happy when we read this book."
- Encourage pretend play.
- Encourage empathy. For example, when he sees a child who is sad, encourage him to hug or pat the other child.
- Read books and talk about the pictures using simple words.
- Copy your child's words.
- Use words that describe feelings and emotions.
- Use simple, clear phrases.
- Ask simple questions.

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

# Milestones Brochure

Select milestones at a glance for ages 6 months to 4 years

**Your Child's Early Development is a Journey**

Check off the milestones your child has reached and share your child's progress with the doctor at every visit.

**6 MONTHS**

- Copies sounds
- Begins to sit without support
- Likes to play with others, especially parents
- Responds to own name
- Strings vowels together when babbling ("ah," "eh," "oh")
- Uses simple gestures such as shaking head for "no" or waving bye-bye
- Copies gestures
- Responds to simple spoken requests

**12 MONTHS**

- Says "mama" and "dada"
- Pulls up to stand

**18 MONTHS (1½ YEARS)**

- Says sentences with 2 to 4 words
- Gets excited when with other children
- Says several single words
- Walks alone
- Knows what ordinary things are for; for example, telephone, brush, spoon
- Plays simple pretend, such as feeding a doll
- Points to show others something interesting

**2 YEARS**

- Follows simple instructions
- Kicks a ball
- Points to things or pictures when they're named

**3 YEARS**

- Copies adults and friends (like running when other children run)
- Climbs well
- Converses on a conversation using 2 to 3 sentences
- Hops and stands on one foot for up to 2 seconds
- Play, make believe with dolls, animals and people
- Show affection for friends without prompting

**4 YEARS**

- Would rather play with other children than alone
- Tells stories
- Draws a person with 2 to 4 body parts
- Plays cooperatively

These are just a few of many important milestones to look for. For more complete checklists by age visit [www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

**Learn the Signs. Act Early.**

**Track Your Child's Developmental Milestones**

For more information about your child's development and what to do if you have a concern, visit:

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly)

OR CALL:  
1-800-CDC-INFO

Your child's early development is a journey. Use this map of milestones to know what to look for along the way.

For parents of children from birth to 4 years

Developmental milestones adapted from Caring for Your Baby and Young Child: Birth to Age 5 (AAP, 2009) and Bright Futures: Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents (AAP, 2008).

For more information about your child's development and what to do if you have a concern, visit:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities  
1-800-CDC-BRF5

CDC  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

[www.cdc.gov/ActEarly](http://www.cdc.gov/ActEarly)

# Milestone Checklists

**Your Baby at 9 Months**

Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Child's Age \_\_\_\_\_ Today's Date \_\_\_\_\_

How your child plays, learns, speaks, and acts offers important clues about your child's development. Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age.

Check the milestones your child has reached by the end of 9 months. Take this with you and talk with your child's doctor at every visit about the milestones your child has reached and what to expect next.

**What Most Babies Do at this Age:**

**Social/Emotional**

- May be afraid of strangers
- May be clingy with familiar adults
- Has favorite toys

**Language/Communication**

- Understands "no"
- Makes a lot of different sounds like "mamamama" and "bababababa"
- Copies sounds and gestures of others
- Uses fingers to point at things

**Cognitive (learning, thinking, problem-solving)**

- Watches the path of something as it falls
- Looks for things he sees you hide
- Plays peek-a-boo
- Puts things in her mouth
- Moves things smoothly from one hand to the other
- Picks up things like cereal o's between thumb and index finger

**Movement/Physical Development**

- Stands, holding on
- Can get into sitting position
- Sits without support
- Pulls to stand
- Crawls

**Act Early by Talking to Your Child's Doctor if Your Child:**

- Doesn't bear weight on legs with support
- Doesn't sit with help
- Doesn't babble ("mama", "baba", "dada")
- Doesn't play any games involving back-and-forth play
- Doesn't respond to own name
- Doesn't seem to recognize familiar people
- Doesn't look where you point
- Doesn't transfer toys from one hand to the other

Tell your child's doctor or nurse if you notice any of these signs of possible developmental delay for this age, and talk with someone in your community who is familiar with services for young children in your area, such as your state's public early intervention program. For more information, go to [www.cdc.gov/concerned](http://www.cdc.gov/concerned) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children be screened for general development at the 9-month visit. Ask your child's doctor about your child's developmental screening.

Adapted from CARING FOR YOUR BABY AND YOUNG CHILD: BIRTH TO AGE 5, Fifth Edition, edited by Steven Shibley and Tamra Bernier Atkinson © 1991, 1993, 1998, 2004, 2009 by the American Academy of Pediatrics and RECOMMENDED SCREENING GUIDELINES FOR HEALTH SUPERVISION OF INFANTS, CHILDREN, AND ADOLESCENTS, Third Edition, edited by Alan R. Fleischman, Judith M. Johnson, and Paula M. Duncan, 2008, Elk Grove Village, IL: American Academy of Pediatrics. This milestone checklist is not a substitute for a standardized, validated developmental screening tool.

[www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly) | 1-800-CDC-INFO

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- Complete checklists address
  - Four domains of development
  - Developmental "red flags"
- How to use
  - Distribute to families at every well-child visit
- Can be printed with Spanish translation on reverse

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

# Children's Books

- 3 different ages: 1YO, 2YO, 3YO
- In English and Spanish
- Include tips for caregivers on developmental milestones

Learn the Signs. Act Early.

# Baby's Busy Day

Being One is So Much Fun!



Baby wakes.  
Pulls up tall.  
Baby points...

Parents, look for the to learn what to expect from your baby by age 1, and the for how you can help.

Bouncy ball!



**MILESTONE**

Points to show someone what he wants

**TIP**

Talk about what your baby wants when he points at something.

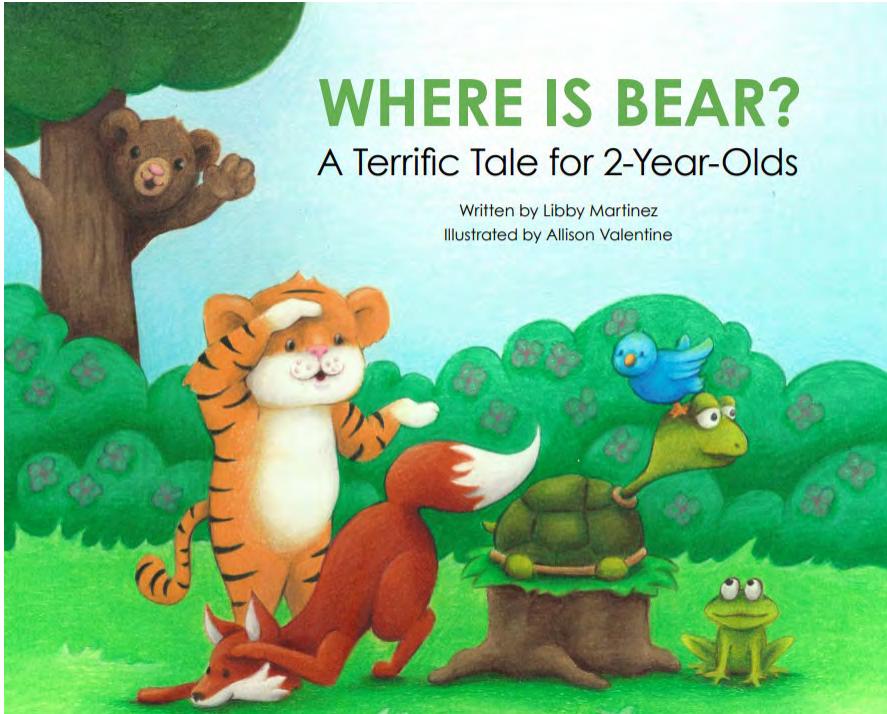


# WHERE IS BEAR?

A Terrific Tale for 2-Year-Olds

Written by Libby Martinez

Illustrated by Allison Valentine



Bear and Tiger are 2 years old.  
They are friends.



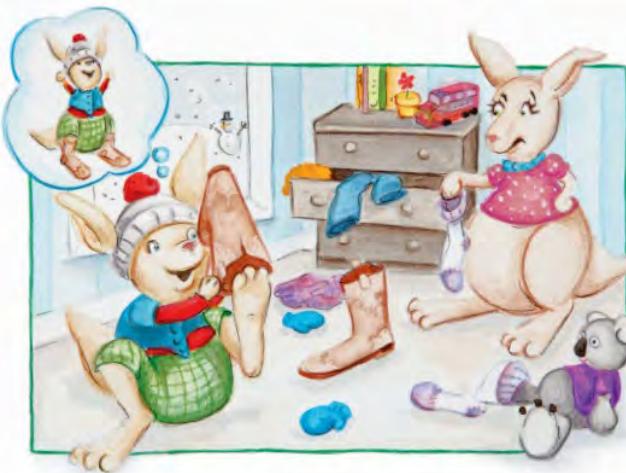
Parents: look for the leaf  to learn important developmental milestones to look for in your child by age 2!



MILESTONE MOMENT  
By age 2, most children follow simple instructions.

# Amazing Me

It's Busy Being 3!



Every day when I wake up, the first thing I do is get dressed.  
I can put on my clothes all by myself, and I do an **AMAZING** job.

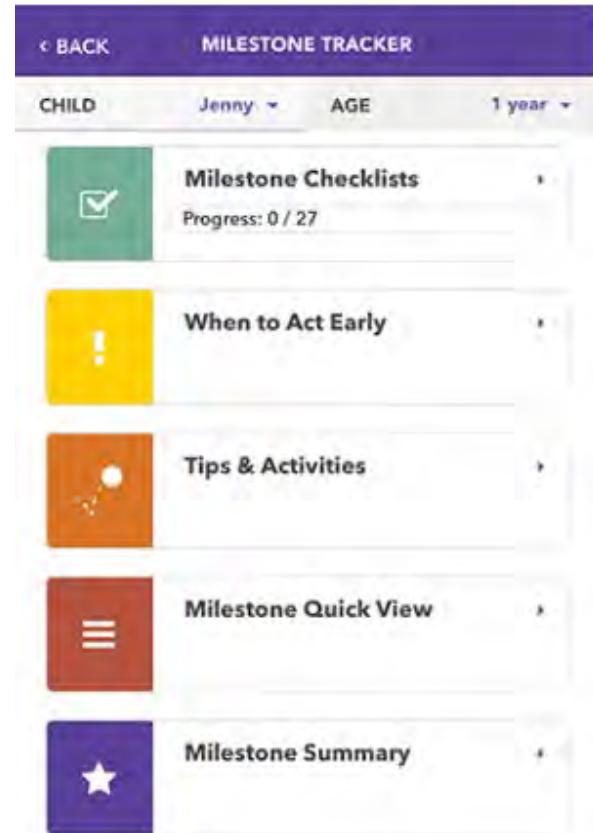
"It's too cold to wear shorts when it's snowing outside, and you shouldn't wear your cowboy boots without socks," says my mom.



Milestone Moment: Joey shows he can do more and more things on his own by dressing himself.

# Milestone Tracker App

- Available in English and Spanish for iOS and Android
- Can add multiple children
- Milestones tracker including photos and videos to help understand
- Tips and Activities
- Track appointments



Learn the Signs. Act Early.

# Talking Points for Families

Your child's early years are so important. Tracking how your little one plays, learns, speaks, acts, and moves helps you support their development.

You can use these materials in the following ways:

- Follow your child's development as they grow, using the Milestones Booklet and the Growth Chart!
- Complete the Milestone checklists in English and Spanish for children ages 2 months through 5 years;
  - The ability to adjust the checklist age if your child was born prematurely;
  - Tips and activities that can help your child's development;
  - Information on what to do if you have a concern about your child's development



# LTSAE and Head Start

---

- Provide guidance and resources to parents when discussing development
- Work with parents to become better observers of their child's development and encourage them to take action on a developmental concern
- Meet Head Start Program Performance Standards
  - Complement and support developmental screening
- Meet Head Start training requirements
  - Earn .1 CEU with *Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns* online training



# Other Ways to Engage Families in their Child's Development

Talk, read, sing!

Apps

- CDC's Milestone Tracker
- Vroom

Bright by Text

- Text messaging service for tips and resources
- Text "HMG" to 274448

Sesame Street

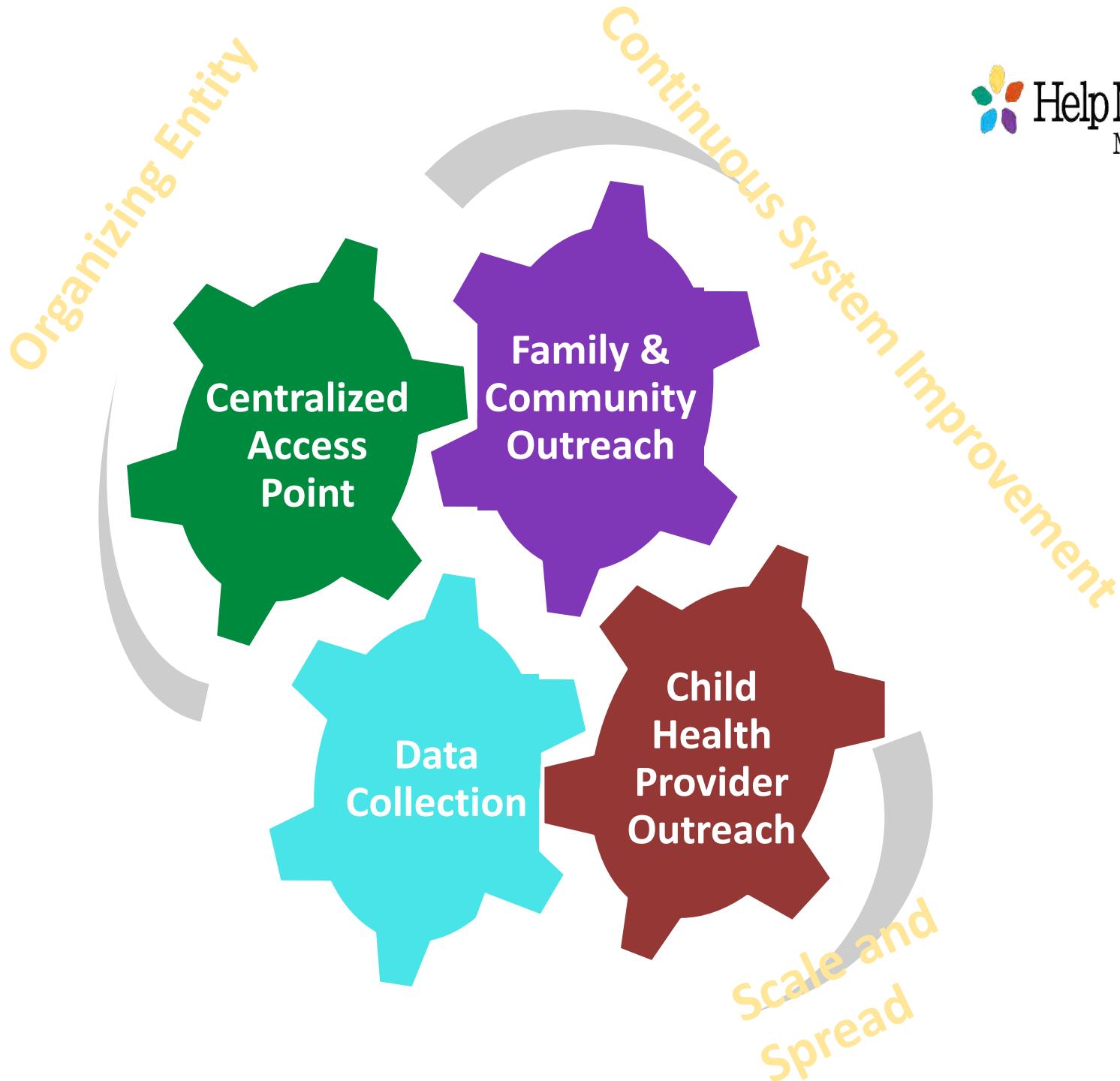
- Sesame Workshop:  
[www.sesameworkshop.org](http://www.sesameworkshop.org)
- Caring for Each Other (COVID-19 specific resources):  
<https://www.sesamestreet.org/caring>

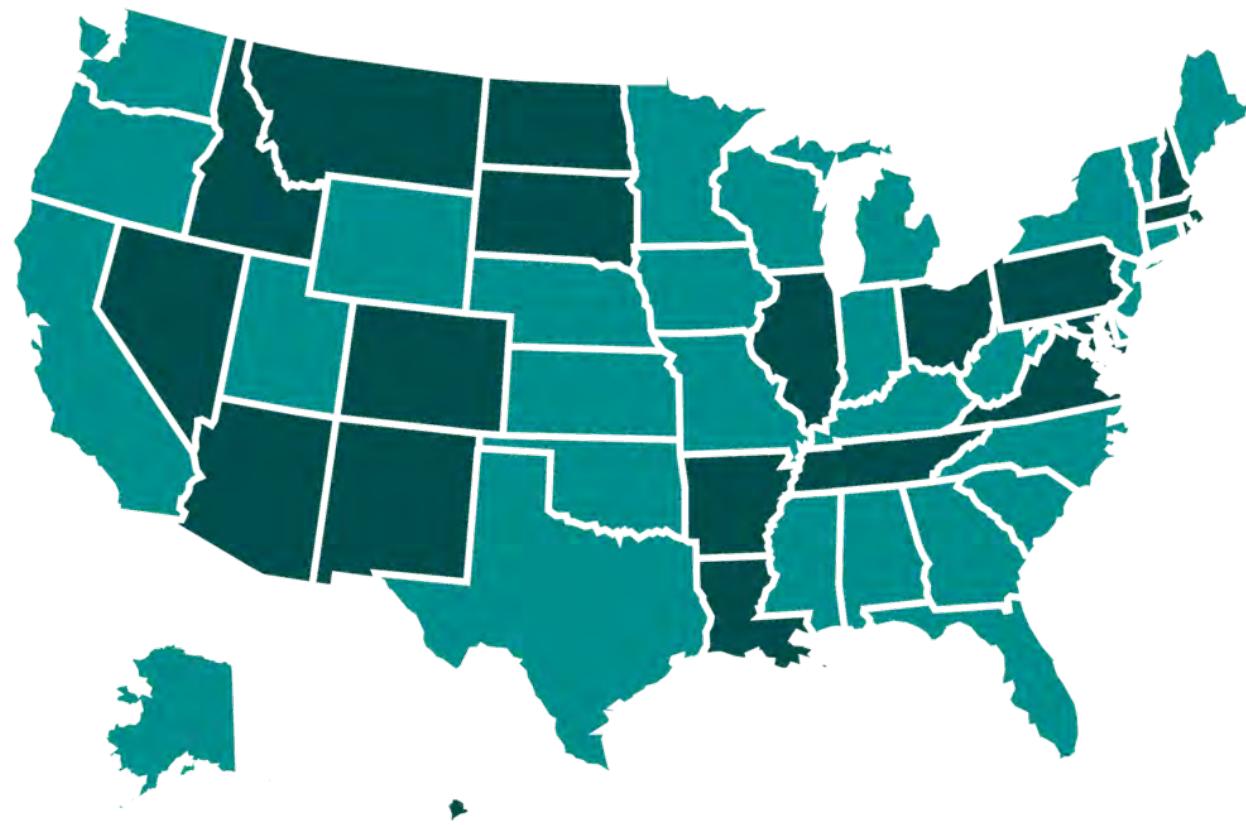


**HELP ME  
GROW**  
**LONG ISLAND**  
THE EARLY YEARS MATTER

# *Help Me Grow*

- A system model for improving access to existing resources and services for young children
- Builds collaboration across sectors, including child health care, early care and education, family support





[www.helpmegrownational.org](http://www.helpmegrownational.org)

# Help Me Grow in New York

## Greater Rochester Area

## Long Island

- Nassau County
- Suffolk County

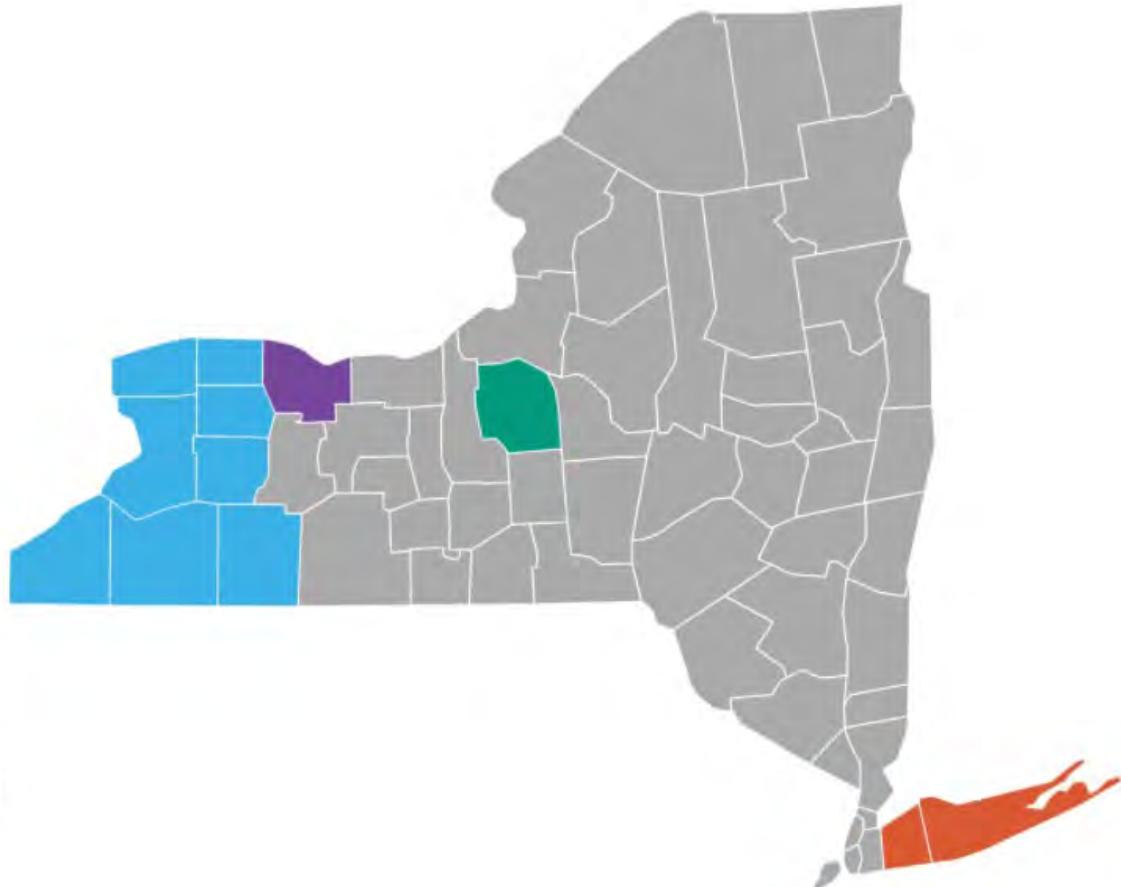
## Onondaga County

## Western New York

- Allegany County
- Cattaraugus County
- Chautauqua County
- Erie County
- Genesee County
- Niagara County
- Orleans County
- Wyoming County

## Rest of New York State

If your county is in grey, Help Me Grow is not yet available in your county. Learn more about [211](#) for help finding child development and support services in your area.



[www.helpmegrowny.org](http://www.helpmegrowny.org)

# Help Me Grow – Long Island



Officially launched in January 2018



Not a program or non-profit, but a system coordinated by Docs for Tots in partnership with/overseen by representatives from a number of services that care about young children and their families



Free, virtual, ongoing care coordination for families with young children



Free developmental screening training and materials for providers



Collaboration across sectors

# Partnering in Your Community

- **For communities with Help Me Grow:**
  - Using as a referral resource
  - Partnering to use the ASQ Online system
- **For communities without Help Me Grow:**
  - Sharing screening results with physicians or other providers
  - Linking families to other resources, and helping ensure that they successfully connect



For more information about child development and to order  
Learn the Signs. Act Early. materials

[www.cdc.gov/actearly](http://www.cdc.gov/actearly)

1-800-CDC-INFO

[ActEarly@cdc.gov](mailto:ActEarly@cdc.gov)

Melissa Passarelli, MA  
Director of Programs, Docs for Tots  
New York State Act Early Ambassador

[Melissa@docsfortots.org](mailto:Melissa@docsfortots.org)

#### Disclaimer

The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention or the Health Resources and Services Administration.

