



Strong Start Factsheet

Strong Start is the District of Columbia's early intervention program that is administered through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). The program provides coordinated services and supports for infants and toddlers under age three who have been diagnosed with developmental delays or disabilities. **Strong Start** currently serves about 400 children in the District of Columbia.

From birth, children experience physical changes but they also learn new abilities, also known as "developmental milestones." Most children reach these milestones at a certain age. Below are answers to questions about **Strong Start** and the developmental growth of infants and toddlers.

What is a developmental delay?

As children grow and develop, they exhibit different skills such as taking a first step, talking for the first time, or waving goodbye. These skills are known as developmental milestones. A child that does not reach these milestones at the same time as other children the same age may have a developmental delay.

How can I tell if my child is progressing as he/she should?

If you have concerns about your child's development, you should ask your child's health care provider and call **Strong Start** at **(202) 727-3665** to schedule a free screening.

Can't I just wait for my child to "catch up"?

In most cases, children with developmental delays do not "catch up" or "grow out of it" on their own. By waiting, you could be missing critical opportunities for your child to receive the help he or she needs. Studies have found that children who receive early intervention services are often able to reach developmental milestones and continue to preschool without requiring specialized education.

How do Strong Start services help?

The program offers a range of services to address specific developmental challenges and develops a written plan for treatment and coaching—which is known as the **Individualized Family Services Plan (IFSP)**. These services include:

- Free initial screening and evaluation
- Speech, physical, and occupational therapies
- Hearing and vision services
- Service Coordination
- Family support and education
- Special instruction
- Mental health services, if needed

Who can refer a child to Strong Start?

Anyone can refer a child to **Strong Start** including parents, caregivers, family members, friends, physicians, hospitals, Medicaid, child care staff, and social workers.

How will our family pay for the services?

Services such as screening, evaluations, and service coordination are provided to families at no cost. Additional services can be paid for by private health insurance, Medicaid, and, in some instances, **Strong Start**. A sliding-fee scale is used to help families who need financial assistance.

What if I have more questions?

For more information call **(202) 727-3665** or visit **www.strongstartdc.com**.

