

To parents of young children ages birth to 5 years:
Have you ever...

...missed or rescheduled your child's doctor visits because of a stressful family situation or transportation issue?

...been concerned about your child's learning, development or behavior?

...had a family concern and not known where to go for help?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, you're not alone. Most parents have concerns at some point during their child's life. Talking with your child's doctor can help. Doctors who are part of Iowa's **1st Five** network of medical professionals, may refer you to our **1st Five** care coordinators ~ experts in linking local resources to parental concerns.

What's more, **1st Five** care coordination services are free, voluntary and confidential. If you're not sure where to turn to for help in your community, chances are **1st Five** knows just the place to get your child and family the support you deserve.



Healthy mental development
in the first five years

1st Five builds a support system between families, medical practices, the local child health center and a variety of community-based services.

The **1st Five** Healthy Mental Development Initiative is an Iowa Department of Public Health program that has been funded by the state legislature since 2006.

To learn more about **1st Five**, contact the **1st Five** state coordinator at:
1-800-383-3826



**Supporting Your Child's
Healthy Mental Development
in the First Five Years**

Parents want their children to grow into well-adjusted, happy and healthy, productive adults. The best place to begin this lifelong goal is when children are very young.

Emotional development in young children is as important as physical and brain development.

In the first years of life, children develop the social and emotional abilities to become self-confident, trusting, curious, skilled with language and sensitive to others.

Even very young children develop skills to soothe themselves, share and play, and listen and follow directions. **Parents and primary caregivers are the #1 influence on a child's healthy emotional development.**

If you have any concerns about your child's ability to...

- Appropriately control and express emotions
- Form close relationships with children and adults
- Explore and learn from their environments

~ **then talk to your doctor.**

Why is Healthy Emotional Development So Important?

When young children do not reach milestones related to social, emotional and mental development, they are at higher risk for school failure, juvenile delinquency and other problems. Early intervention is key to preventing problems in later life.

While 15-18% of school-aged children have a developmental or behavioral disability, **less than half are identified before starting school.** If not identified early, these children are at risk for school failure.



What Can Parents Do to Support Their Child's Development?

~ **Take your child to the doctor for regular check-ups.**

- Be prepared to share your child's health history.
- Share any concerns about your child's learning, behavior or development.
- Learn what to expect next in your child's development.
- Ask questions if you don't understand something.
- To help you remember, write down any concerns you have before your child's check-up.
- Ask for a developmental screen, like the Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ). These are recommended for 9 month, 18 month and 3 year olds.

Parenting can be challenging and it is normal to need help some times. Your child's doctor and/or local health center are family-friendly places that provide helpful resources.

Take good care of yourself too. Seek help for stressful situations. Even very young children are affected by family stress and parental depression.

Remember, early experiences will shape the way children think, feel and behave for the rest of their lives.