

Warning Signs for Communication Delays in the First Three Years of Life

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This chart includes warning signs that a child’s delay is significant enough that he/she **may** be eligible for Michigan Mandatory Special Education (MMSE). This chart is **not** about typical development, nor is it intended to be a comprehensive list. Presence of any indicator in any age range should result in a referral to MMSE. If a child’s age falls between the age ranges, compare the child’s skills to the age level below them. Any missing skill would indicate an even greater delay and need for referral. If all skills are present, compare to the age to the right. If the child is close to the next age level and these skills are not emerging a referral would be appropriate. This chart should never replace information available to the field with respect to developmental milestones. This is not an evaluation tool, but guidance to support early identification of a specific speech and language disability.

By 12 months	By 15 months	By 18 months	By 24 months	By 30 months	by 36 months	Any age
<p>Does not smile and vocalize in response to a familiar person.</p> <p>Does not imitate simple gestures (e.g. reaching, clapping) and facial expression.</p> <p>Does not turn head when name is called.</p> <p>Does not make attempts to interact with adults by looking, reaching or vocalizing.</p> <p>Does not participate in simple social games by taking a turn (e.g. peek-a-boo, rolling a ball).</p> <p>Does not have shared attention (e.g. child looks from bird to caregiver then back at bird, wanting adult to look at it OR caregiver points at plane and child follows the point and looks at the plane).</p> <p>Does not babble and make sounds.</p>	<p>Does not copy simple sounds/sound combinations (moo, baba).</p> <p>Does not say <i>mama</i> and <i>dada</i> meaningfully.</p> <p>Does not use gestures to communicate (e.g. pointing, shaking head to indicate <i>no</i>, extending arm to show objects).</p> <p>Does not follow simple routine directions with gestures (e.g. “Give me ___” when adult holds out hand).</p> <p>Does not have at least 1-2 true words.</p>	<p>Does not say new words regularly.</p> <p>Does not point specifically at something to show others.</p> <p>Does not readily imitate words.</p> <p>Does not have 5 to 10 functional words.</p> <p>Does not understand the names of most common objects in their environment.</p> <p>Does not follow familiar directions (e.g. “Give the ball to Mom” without Mom holding out hand or someone pointing to Mom).</p>	<p>Does not use vocalizations with gestures to communicate.</p> <p>Does not have at least 25 words.</p> <p>Does not use m, b, p, t, d sounds in their speech.</p>	<p>Does not use 2 word phrases.</p> <p>Does not point to named pictures.</p>	<p>Speech cannot be understood at least 75% of the time.</p> <p>Does not copy 3 word phrases.</p>	<p>Loss of skill that the child once had.</p> <p>Frequent repetition of words or phrases but not used to get needs met or communicate with others (e.g. <i>diga diga</i> or phrases from movies).</p> <p>Documented medical condition known to impact speech and language development (i.e. cleft palate, hearing impairment, etc.).</p>