



### **Digital and Online Awareness for Caregivers**

Children growing up today have only known a world in which they could connect to virtually anything using the internet.

The digital world is constantly evolving with new social media apps and devices, and often children and teens are the first to use them, leaving many parents and caregivers struggling to catch up.

While online, children can be exposed to cyberbullying, stalking, sexting, the promotion of hate, and other inappropriate individual or group conversations.

Children don't always consider the consequences of their choices, so caregivers must remain vigilant about online safety, and remind them that anything they share digitally such as photos, messages and other

content, cannot be erased once shared. Children's actions may negatively affect a peer, and may also cause problems when they apply for employment or college admission.

We must understand that all screen time is not equal. Playing video games for an hour is different from video-chatting with Grandma for an hour. Watching TV is different from writing a story on a computer. Discuss these differences with children when setting screen time rules at home.

While you may not be able to monitor all of your child's activities, there are things you can do to prevent cyberbullying and protect your child from the effects of harmful digital behavior.

Caregivers should consider a child's age, device being used, and previous online behavior when selecting software and setting rules. Websites or time limits useful for a 10-year-old

may not be appropriate for a teenager.

#### **Tips for setting online rules for your home:**

- Do not allow TVs, tablets, or other internet capable technologies in a child's room.
- Keep online devices in common areas where you can see what the child is looking at and how long they are spending online. Know your children's friends and the people who they interact with, both online and off. Pay attention to any gaming and apps your children are using, the sites they are visiting on the web, and what they are doing while online.
- Do not permit screen time during meals or before bedtime - Use these times to talk about your day instead.
- Establish rules about appropriate digital behavior, content, and apps.

- Monitor your child's actions on social media, and check their browsing history. Insist that they share user names and passwords for email and social media.
- Review and reset the location and privacy settings on your children's digital devices often, to prevent them from automatically sharing their location when using apps, sending messages, or sharing photos.
- Follow or "friend" your teen on social media sites or have another trusted adult do so, but be aware there are ways children can block certain online content from particular followers, and there is no substitute for opening a phone and looking at the content your child is sharing or engaging with.
- Talk with other caregivers and the children in your care, doing your own research to keep current on the latest apps, social media platforms, and digital slang used by children and teens.
- Caregivers who want to protect children from cyberbullying, harmful digital behavior, and exposure to adult content may use parental control and monitoring software to help them set up systems that feel less invasive.

### **Digital Parental Controls**

- There are many options for free apps available to help caregivers restrict content, block websites, or view their children's online activities without having to

look at their child's device every day. Many of these free software applications provide some features for free, but charge for more thorough monitoring.

- This software gives you the ability to block unwanted web content, limit the time they spend on screens, restrict the use of risky applications, and more, and offer ways to help keep kids safer on their computers and mobile devices.
- Check with other parents and caregivers to get recommendations about which parental controls work best. Some will work on your home WiFi network, others are an app you install on each device, while still others, such as Nintendo Parental Controls and Apple's Screen Time programs are free and are automatically installed and ready to use once you sign up as the parent for your child's device.

### **Screen time Recommendations from the American Academy of Pediatrics:**

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx>

### **Reference:**

<https://www.stopbullying.gov/cyberbullying/digital-awareness-for-parents>

### **How are your New Year's Resolutions coming along? Some great ideas for kids:**

-I will talk with a trusted adult when I need help, am scared, angry, stressed or faced with tough decisions.

-I will wear my seat belt every time I get in a car and never use a cell phone or text message while driving.

-I'll be nice to other kids. I'll be friendly to kids who need friends or who may have a hard time making friends.

-I'll never give out private information such as my name, address, school name or phone number on the Internet. Also, I'll never send a picture of myself to someone I chat with on the computer without asking my parent.

### **Home Safety: Top 5 Tips to Protect Your Baby**

1. A firm mattress and fitted sheet are all you need for your baby's crib. Remove blankets and toys.

2. Learn to use your child's car seat the right way.

3. Make sure you have both a working smoke alarm and a carbon monoxide alarm on every level of your home, and in all sleeping areas. Test the alarms monthly to make sure they are working.

4. Place your baby's crib and other furniture away from windows and blinds. Your baby is safer without any strings or cords within reach.

5. Set your water heater to 120 degrees to avoid scalds.

# How's Your Baby?

## Early Childhood Intervention Developmental Checklist



TEXAS

Health and Human  
Services

Early Childhood  
Intervention

[hhs.texas.gov/eci](https://hhs.texas.gov/eci)

### Do you have questions about how your child is growing and developing?

Every child is different and learns at his or her own pace. It's important to notice when your child begins to learn new skills to see if he is on target. Use this checklist to see how your child is doing. If you notice your child is not on target, talk with your child's doctor, or contact Early Childhood Intervention. To find the ECI program in your area, visit the Program search page at [citysearch.hhsc.state.tx.us](https://citysearch.hhsc.state.tx.us) or call **877-787-8999**.

### Did you know?

ECI serves families with children birth to 36 months with developmental delays or disabilities.

ECI professionals partner with families to help their children grow, learn and stay healthy.

ECI provides services to families of all income levels and in every Texas county.

### Check List

#### 3-6 month old babies

- Follow moving toys or faces with their eyes
- Startle at loud or new sounds
- Wiggle and kick with their legs and arms
- Lift their head and shoulders while on stomach
- Smile back at parents or other family members
- Make sounds, like gurgling, cooing or sucking sounds

#### 6-9 month old babies

- Explore toys with hands and mouth
- Roll over front-to-back and back-to-front
- Squeal and babble different sounds
- Sit by leaning on their hands
- Turn their heads to voices and respond to their names
- Know family members and seek their attention
- Enjoy playing "peek-a-boo"

#### 9-12 month old babies

- Copy hand movements like "patty cake," or "bye-bye"
- Pick up crumbs or other small things with their thumb and a finger
- Move toys from one hand to the other hand
- Crawl on hands and knees
- Sit without help
- Repeat sounds like "baba," "dada," "mama"
- Cry when their mother or father leaves

#### 12-15 month old babies

- Pull themselves up to a standing position
- Walk by holding onto furniture
- Drink from a cup with your help
- Wave bye-bye
- Say "mama" and "dada" and one other word
- Point to objects they want
- Can find a toy hidden under a cloth

#### 15-18 month old babies

- Use at least three words besides "mama" and "dada"
- Like to look at pictures in a book
- Hold a crayon in their fist
- Hand toys to you when asked
- Point to pictures or objects you name
- Walk without help
- Dump contents out of a box

#### 18-21 month old toddlers

- Like to pull and push things while walking
- Use pointing and words together to tell you what they want
- Pull off shoes and socks
- Feed themselves with their fingers
- Can point to one body part when asked
- Use at least 10 words and repeat words you say

#### 21-24 month old toddlers

- Point and use words to get your attention
- Like to pretend-play (talk on toy phone)
- Put together a two or three piece picture puzzle
- Like to throw balls
- Like to play alone with toys for a short time
- Say "No" a lot
- Like to copy what others do

#### 24-30 month old toddlers

- Use 2 to 3 words together, like "No, Mommy" or "More cookies"
- Use and understand at least 50 words
- Feed themselves with a spoon
- Enjoy being around and watching other toddlers
- Show affection to family members and pets
- Run short distances without falling
- Pretend play with more than one step (Feed a doll, then pat and hug it.)
- Show lots of feelings (joy, anger, sadness)

## 30-36 month old toddlers

- Throw a ball overhand
- Comfort another child who is crying
- Walk on tiptoes
- Combine 2 ideas in a sentence (“I want an apple and a banana.”)
- Help to clean up
- Ask for help when needed
- Combine 2 toys in pretend play (Uses a stuffed bear as the driver of a toy car.)
- Use at least 100 words

## Red Flags

Below is a list of behaviors or red flags that can keep your child from learning. If they happen often, call ECI.

## Baby

- Cannot bend arms or legs
- Does not smile, move or look at you when you talk or play with her
- Does not want to be held
- Does not make sounds by 3 months
- Does not babble by 6 months

## Toddler

- Has tantrums that last 20 minutes or longer
- Breaks things on purpose

- Hurts or bites other people
- Does not look at you when you call her name
- Does not play with toys
- Flaps hands, rocks or sways over and over
- Does not point at objects he wants
- Has no words by 12 months

## Any Age

- Fusses or cries a lot, even when not tired or hungry
- Has trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Does not notice people
- Is unhappy most of the time
- Any loss of speech or babbling, or social skills

***Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a statewide program with Texas Health and Human Services for families with children birth to 36 months, with developmental delays or disabilities. For more information, visit [hhs.texas.gov/eci](https://hhs.texas.gov/eci)***

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## Resources

- Tips and Information about upcoming Kinship Caregiver Groups - Facebook Page for Kinship Caregivers: [www.facebook.com/TexasKinshipCaregivers](https://www.facebook.com/TexasKinshipCaregivers)
- Qualifying for and setting up appointments for WIC: [Texas WIC](https://www.texas.gov/wic)
- IRS Adoption Credit Info: <https://www.irs.gov/taxtopics/tc607>
- Smoke Alarm help and Fire Prevention <https://www.tdi.texas.gov/fire/fmalmarmprograms.html>
- The Texas Veterans Portal connects veterans, their families, and caregivers to the benefits and services earned through their military service. Thank you to all who have served our country! <https://veterans.portal.texas.gov/>
- Available Services for Youth and Young Adults in Foster Care [www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Youth\\_and\\_Young\\_Adults/default.asp](https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Youth_and_Young_Adults/default.asp)

- Medicaid – STAR Health provides a full-range of Medicaid covered medical and behavioral health services for children in DFPS care. One of the benefits is transportation. Visit the HHS website to learn how to use this service. <https://hhs.texas.gov/services/questions-about-your-benefits#star>

## PARENTING RESOURCES

- **Texas Parent to Parent** - A statewide organization with local chapters for parents and caregivers providing care for children and youth with disabilities. They have up-to-date information on Medicaid changes, transition planning, best practices for your child's education, and access to local resources. The organization offers a variety of statewide conferences and workshops to parents, free or with stipends available. [www.Txp2p.org](http://www.Txp2p.org)
- Resources and links for Parenting help [www.helpandhope.org](http://www.helpandhope.org)

- Reading Success tips and worksheets  
[www.sightandsoundreading.com/](http://www.sightandsoundreading.com/)
- Information about DFPS Kinship Care  
[www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption\\_and\\_Foster\\_Care/Kinship\\_Care/](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Adoption_and_Foster_Care/Kinship_Care/)
- Child Safety Questions and Answers  
[www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Child\\_Safety/default.asp](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/default.asp)
- Summer Camp Information  
<http://www.campsusa.org/resources/>
- YMCA Camps  
<http://www.ymca.net/find-a-y-camp/>
- Boys & Girls Clubs of America  
<https://www.bgca.org>

## Kinship Support Groups

Regional Kinship Support Groups (KSG) provide regional/local opportunities for kinship caregivers with open CPS cases to obtain greater insight of the CPS system. The KSG is a venue where kinship caregivers who have successfully exited the CPS system share their experiences, knowledge of the system, procedures, etc. with kinship caregivers currently involved with CPS. If you are interested in attending a support group, contact your Kinship Development Worker to see if there is a local group near you.



Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or people with disabilities at  
(800) 252-5400 or [www.txabusehotline.org](http://www.txabusehotline.org).