

Follow Along Program

2018 Annual Update

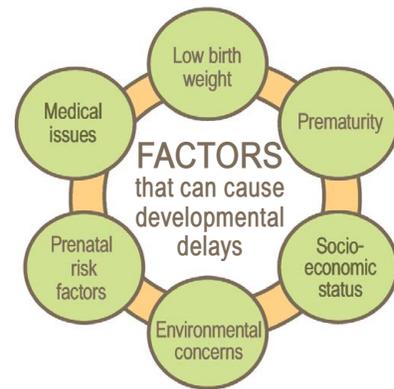


The Dakota County Follow Along Program began in 1998 and is a free, voluntary service that helps identify children, up to age three, who are at risk of delayed development. From 1998 to 2018, there were 5,714 children enrolled in the Follow Along Program. Of those children, 540 were referred to Help Me Grow for evaluation, and 66% qualified for early intervention services.

Early identification is the key to providing early intervention

Developmental and social-emotional delays can be subtle and can occur in children who appear to be developing typically.

The Follow Along Program uses validated screening tools to identify children with developmental and social-emotional delays before the children enter school. Intervention prior to kindergarten has important academic, social, and economic benefits.



The Follow Along Program identifies children with developmental and social-emotional delays

In 2018 Dakota County staff reviewed 3,634 birth certificates, and based on risk factors, contacted parents to offer the Follow Along Program.

Parents are also referred by staff from schools, community partners, and home visiting programs.

Families who decide to enroll in the Follow Along Program are sent Ages and Stages Questionnaires at key age milestones: 4, 8, 12, 16, 20, 24, 30, and 36 months.

The results of the questionnaires are shared with parents, and if there are concerns, a nurse or other professional contacts the parents to discuss options for further evaluation or early intervention services.

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3)

A screening tool used to identify a need for further assessment of infants and children in the developmental areas of communication, gross motor, fine motor, personal social, and problem solving.

- ▶ The 2018 ASQ-3 - total pass rate was 86%.

The Ages and Stages Questionnaire: Social Emotional (ASQ:SE)

Complements the ASQ-3 by addressing the social and emotional behavior of infants and children.

- ▶ The 2018 ASQ:SE - total pass rate was 97%.

The Dakota County Follow Along Program reached many families in 2018

- 596 children participated in the Follow along Program in 2018, including 224 newly-enrolled children.
- The Follow Along Program nurse intervened 673 times in 2018 with telephone consults or sent educational materials in response to concerns noted on the questionnaires.
- Follow Along Program staff referred families to other community resources, including Child and Teen Checkups, Head Start, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Women, Infants and Children(WIC) Program, and financial, medical, and dental services.



Michelle's Story

Michelle entered the Follow Along Program at 10 months old. At 16 months her mother wrote that she felt Michelle seemed a little behind in actual words and baby sign, but was not concerned and wanted to watch her progress. At 20 months the child scored in the monitor zone for communication. She was able to follow directions and learned signs easily. Her mother had concerns regarding her verbal communication, therefore the public health nurse (PHN) made a referral to Help Me Grow. Michelle did not qualify for services at that time, but staff recommended that the parent contact them again if she had concerns when Michelle turned 2 years old. Michelle failed communication on the 24 month ASQ. The PHN made another referral to Help Me Grow, and at this time she qualified for Early Intervention services due to a speech language impairment. Some social needs were also identified.

Feedback from Parents:

"Thank you to this program for contacting us and referring us to our district (Early intervention) services. We have seen such an amazing change and the staff are so wonderful. They come out weekly to work with our child and truly care about her. Thank you for the opportunity to participate and the follow up. You Rock!"

"It has been great having you as a support for our boys through the Follow Along Program. I can't say enough about how much I love that program and I always refer new parents to it."

The Follow Along Program provides an important link to Help Me Grow Services

The Follow Along Program nurse provided individualized follow-up for all children who had questionnaires with fail or monitor zone scores.

Of the 596 children who participated in Follow Along in 2018, 11 children were referred to Help Me Grow to recommend further assessment in 2018, with seven qualifying for services. Help Me Grow information was provided an additional 43 times to families.

The Follow Along Program nurse contacted parents who had children with very low birth weight infants or other conditions with high probability of developmental delays about the potential for their child to receive Help Me Grow services from birth.



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