**Red Flags School-aged Guide**

Supporting conversations and service engagement for children with neurodevelopmental concerns

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**What is the Red Flags School-aged guide?**

The **Red Flags School-aged Guide** is a health resource for professionals (including general practitioners, child health nurses, allied health professionals and educators) to support conversations with families about developmental concerns in school-aged children and enable timely and targeted referrals. This guide will:

- Assist with identification of the impact of developmental concerns on a young person’s day-to-day functioning.
- Assist with decision making for the most appropriate service to engage, based on the young person’s presenting concerns.

The **Red Flags Early Identification Guide** is also available for children under six.

**Tips for using this guide**

- It is recommended that this resource be used to support a conversation between parents/carers and a professional who understands typical development of a school-aged child.
- Red flag icons indicate an area of concern.
- Question mark icons are used to prompt further conversations.
- A single red flag is not always an indication for concern or referral.
- An orange/red indicator on the severity scale supports a specialist referral.

**Definitions**

- **Trauma**: an event or series of events that have long lasting impacts (e.g. abuse, neglect, witness to violence).
- **Tasks**: activities that you would expect a child of similar age to do as part of a family, school or community (e.g. playing with friends, participating in physical activities, enjoying a meal).

**Referring**

Every family is different, before referring consider:

- Family readiness for assessment. If not ready, consider GP case management and school liaison
- Family identification of which services will be most helpful now
- Service eligibility (e.g. age, geography)
- If there is a risk to family, self or others – consider services to support child’s mental health and safety (e.g. Child and Youth Mental Health Service, psychiatrist, Child Safety).

A referral to a **developmental service** and/or general paediatrician may be indicated if:

- History of developmental concerns **over time**.
- Presentation of developmental concerns **over contexts** (e.g. school and home).
- Severity scale is **most/all tasks, most/all environments**.

A referral to a **behavioural based service** may be recommended if behavioural or emotional concerns are noted (e.g. aggressive, frequent meltdowns) but minimal/no developmental concerns.

If a young person is experiencing difficulties with one/some tasks in one/some environments services including private allied health, university clinics or child health may be indicated.

If a young person is experiencing current trauma (e.g. using illicit substances or being affected by cyber bullying) ensure the young person is safe and supported before a referral to an appropriate service is made.

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**School aged children need a TEAM approach. Families, schools, communities and specialist services can work together to ensure:**

**TRANSITIONS** are supported. Starting/leaving primary or high school, age 9, grade 9 are some key transitions where young people with developmental concerns may require extra support.

**EXPLORATION** and identification of other conditions. Developmental difficulties often occur with other conditions (e.g. mental health, medical complexity). They may be hidden by behavioural or emotional concerns. If a young person is having behavioural or emotional concerns, it is important to ask about their development.

**ACROSS CONTEXT** presentations are considered to determine impact of developmental challenges. It can also help identify developmental strengths that can support a young person’s function and participation.

**MONITORING** of development of children with identified vulnerabilities occurs. Research shows that children who have a history of medical complexity; a history of trauma and/or a parent with mental health concerns are more likely to present with developmental concerns.

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Please contact Child Development Program Access Service on 1300 366 039 (prompts 2, 2) for more information regarding referrals.

Call 13HEALTH (13 432 584) 24 hours, 7 days to speak to a Child Health Nurse.

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Your concerns
- Developmental concerns
  - Poor school performance
  - Difficulties with talking/listening/playing/co-ordination
  - Loss of skills
- Behavioural concerns
  - Distracted
  - Overactive
  - Disruptive
  - Aggressive
- Emotional concerns
  - Socially withdrawn
  - Frequent meltdowns
  - Frequently worried/sad

We will ask about
- Child/young person's history
  - Medical history
  - Family and social history
  - Developmental history
  - Parental mental health
- What else?
  - Information from school/other settings
  - Options tried
  - Family functioning
  - External factors (e.g. illicit substance, cyber bullying)
- Trauma
  - Current trauma/s
  - Historical trauma/s
  - Family trauma/s

Together we will explore
- Difficulties with
  - Learning new things
  - Understanding another's view
  - Understanding jokes
  - Giving relevant information
  - Taking turns in conversation
  - Following directions
  - Finishing tasks
- Difficulties with
  - Sleep
  - Toileting/Dressing
  - Changes in routines
  - Diet and mealtimes
  - Organising self and belongings
  - Achieving everyday tasks
- Difficulties with
  - Calming after being upset
  - Making and keeping friends
  - Recognising emotions
  - Separating from parent
  - Sharing/cooperating
  - Playing with others
    (would rather be alone)

Frequency/severity scale
- One task
- One environment
- Some tasks
- Some environments
- Most tasks
- Most environments
- All tasks
- All environments

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