

# Plain Language Glossary of Parenting & Child Development Terms

Healthy Start Community Health Worker Course



**Cognitive development:** Cognitive development is the process of growth and change in a child's mental/intellectual abilities such as thinking, learning, remembering, decision-making and problem-solving.

**Colic:** Predictable periods of intense crying for no apparent reason, in an otherwise well-fed, healthy baby. Colic usually improves and then goes away by 4-5 months of age.

**Depression/perinatal depression/postpartum depression:** A mood disorder which causes persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest in daily activities and things you used to enjoy. Perinatal depression is experienced by a woman during and after pregnancy, while postpartum depression is experienced following childbirth up to a year after the baby is born.

**Developmental milestones:** Developmental milestones are things most children can do by a certain age. At each age children reach milestones in the following areas: social and emotional development, communication and language development, cognitive development and motor development. (See *cognitive development, language development, motor development and social/emotional development*).

**Developmental delay:** Developmental delay is when a child is slower to reach developmental milestones than most other children the same age. If a parent is worried about development delay or other problems with a child's cognitive, language, social-emotional or motor development, they should talk to their pediatrician or other health care provider. There are many things that can be done to support a child's development, and it is best to intervene early if a child may have a developmental delay. (See *developmental milestones, cognitive development, language development, social/emotional development, motor development and intervene/intervention*).

**Father involvement/partner involvement:** Father involvement both before and after the child is born is very important to the health and development of both mother and child. Having an involved father during pregnancy has been shown to have a positive impact on birth

outcomes. Children with involved fathers are more likely to have better physical and emotional health, better social relationships and do better in school.

**Immunizations:** Shots (vaccinations) given to protect people against serious diseases, such as measles, tetanus and flu. There are recommended immunization schedules for babies, children, teens and adults. An important reason for well-woman and well-child visits is to receive recommended immunizations.

**Infant:** A baby, from birth to age 1 year.

**Intervene/intervention:** Intervene means getting involved to prevent something from happening, or solve a problem. A medical treatment or preventive measure.

**Intimate partner violence:** Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is physical, sexual or psychological harm caused by a current or former intimate partner or spouse. Also called “domestic violence”.

**Language development:** Language development is the process of growth and change in a child’s communication and language abilities, including speech and non-verbal communication.

**Literacy:** The ability to read and write. Parents can support a child’s literacy development by reading and looking at books with them often, starting in infancy.

**Medical home:** Having a usual source of medical care, a regular healthcare provider or clinic that a woman and her children go to. A “patient-centered medical home” is a team-based approach to health care delivery which provides comprehensive and patient-centered medical care to patients, to keep people as healthy as possible.

**Motor development:** Motor development is the process of growth and change in a child’s ability to move and control his/her body movements. Includes “fine motor” (small muscle) skills such as picking things up with fingers, and “gross motor” (large muscle) skills such as walking.

**Pediatrician:** A doctor who specializes in the care of babies, children and adolescents up to age 21.

**Referral:** Sending someone (setting up an appointment) to a doctor or other health care provider, or to another service such as substance abuse treatment, mental health services, or social services.

**Safe sleep practices:** Putting a baby to sleep alone, on his/her back, and in a crib with no blankets, pillows or soft toys. These safe sleep practices should be followed for all sleep times—naps and at night. Following safe sleep practices greatly reduces the risk of SIDS and other sleep-related causes of infant death. (See *SIDS*).

**Screening:** Testing to detect those with a high probability of having or developing a disease or condition. Testing to look for early signs of illness, before you have any symptoms. The word “screening” can also refer to asking questions about a person’s health status, history, living conditions and behavior to find out about health risks a person may have.

**Secondhand smoke:** Smoke from a burning cigarette, cigar or pipe, or smoke breathed out by the person who is smoking. Breathing in secondhand smoke can cause health problems for infants and children, such as coughs, colds, ear infections and pneumonia, as well as a higher risk of SIDS. (See *SIDS*).

**Shaken baby syndrome:** Shaken baby syndrome is serious injuries caused by violently shaking a baby or child. When an angry or frustrated parent or caregiver shakes a child to punish or quiet them, this can cause brain damage as well as injuries to the neck, spine and eyes, and even death. Shaking a baby/small child is very dangerous-- as little as 5 seconds of shaking can cause shaken baby syndrome.

**SIDS:** SIDS is the sudden, unexplained death of a baby younger than one year of age that doesn’t have a known cause even after a complete investigation. The risk of SIDS can be greatly reduced if the parents follow safe sleep practices for their baby. (See *safe sleep practices*).

**Social/emotional development:** Social/emotional development is the process of growth and change in a child's ability to interact and form positive relationships with others, and to express and manage their emotions.

**Toddler:** Term often used to describe a young child, ages 1-3.

**Well-baby visit/well-child visit:** Regular visits with a pediatrician to check on the child's health, growth and development, provide preventive care such as immunizations, and give parents a chance to ask questions. Well-baby visits may include a physical exam, measurement of height and weight and head circumference, hearing and vision checks, and assessment of developmental milestones. The recommended schedule for well-baby visits is at 2-5 days and 1, 2, 4, 6, 9 and 12 months. After 1 year of age, the recommended schedule for well-child visits is 15, 18, 24, and 30 months and then annually beginning at 3 years of age. (See *head circumference*).