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**[Early Childhood Screening for Health and Development]**

The First Things initiative identifies health screening as an important component to support early childhood development. Screenings afford the opportunity to address all aspects of children's physical and cognitive development that influence learning and school readiness.

Screening is a health promotion activity in which children may not be perceived as at risk of or already affected by an illness or disease, or developmental delay. Screening is a public health approach that addresses health and wellness and frequently does not include clinical care at the time of the screening activity. Screening involves questions to parents or caregivers and possibly minimally invasive evaluation (visual observation as in the case of oral screening) to determine whether additional tests or treatment may be needed to reduce the risk of disease or developmental delay. Screening by trained and qualified personnel takes place in many settings including health clinics, child care facilities, health fairs, or community service agencies and may also include evidence based preventive health measures such as the application of fluoride varnish.

Screening has important differences from clinical practice as it targets apparently healthy children and provides the information necessary for parents and caregivers to make informed choices about next steps and interventions should potential problems be identified.

Many of the Regional Partnership Councils have elected to dedicate resources to strategies that address health and development screening and that are aligned with First Things First health goals and key measures.

To ensure that these screening activities work in a coordinated and effective manner, First Things First will convene a standing cross-regional policy development workgroup composed of FTF staff and representatives from Regional Councils that are proposing new strategies in this area. These strategies can be most successfully implemented with the following conditions:

- Within regions screening activities are aligned with and are not duplicative of established screening activities within the regions.
- Screening activities are conducted by organizations and individuals with the appropriate credentials and in accordance with established standards and equipment.
- Across contiguous regions such as those in Maricopa and Pima Counties, screening activities are coordinated and to reach and target populations of children birth through age five that may not currently have screening activities available.
- Screening is not a "stand alone" but must include appropriate service support so that families have pathways to access any follow-up interventions and treatment that may be needed.
- Mechanisms are in place to identify and address gaps in screening for specific physical and mental health problems or delays or for children.