(7) CONSIDERATIONS
When Selecting a Screening Tool

With a variety of screening tools available, screening programs are faced with choosing a measure that is consistent with their goals and resources. See below for seven factors to consider when selecting a developmental or social-emotional screening tool.
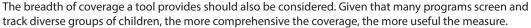
1 Flexibility of use

Flexibility of use includes type of administration options, technological support, and ease of scoring. Generally, a tool with more flexible guidelines leads to more accurate and representative estimates of children's capabilities.
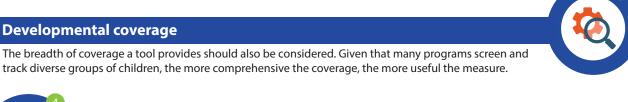
2 Compatibility with existing services and personnel

In communities where screening programs exist, choosing a tool that is the same or at least compatible with current practice promotes cooperation and leads to the creation of functional networks that use resources wisely. The background and training of available personnel should also be considered before selecting a tool.

3 Developmental coverage

The breadth of coverage a tool provides should also be considered. Given that many programs screen and track diverse groups of children, the more comprehensive the coverage, the more useful the measure.

4 Cost

The cost of materials, administration, and program operation (e.g., bookkeeping, referral) are expenses associated with any early detection program. The cost per child should be evaluated in light of the size of the group to be included in the screening efforts.

5 Scoring options

Screening measures may be most useful when they reflect diverse skill levels on individual items. For example, a three-point scoring rubric (e.g., yes, emerging, not yet) may provide more information about a child's development than a two-point scale (e.g., yes/no).

6 Parent involvement

The potential for parent/caregiver involvement is important. Parents/caregivers usually spend more time with their young children than other adults and therefore are a rich and important source of information on their children's development, as well as problems that may exist.

7 Psychometric properties

Determining a screening measure's validity, reliability, and utility is necessary to ensure that children's outcomes are accurate and dependable. Consequently, a final factor to be considered is the breadth and depth of information available on the tool's psychometric properties.