

Illinois Early Learning Guidelines: Birth to Age 3

# **Self-Regulation: A Foundation of Development**

**Children demonstrate the emerging ability to process stimuli, focus and sustain attention, and maintain engagement in accordance with social and cultural contexts.**

- 1 Birth to 9 months PR.1
    - 1 Begins to demonstrate a pattern in sleep-wake and feeding cycles PR.1.1
    - 2 Signals for needs, e.g., cries when hungry, arches back in discomfort PR.1.2
    - 3 Disengages when overstimulated, e.g., turns head, glances away, falls asleep, spits up PR.1.3
    - 4 Uses sucking to assist in sleeping PR.1.4
  - 2 7 months to 18 months PR.2
    - 1 Demonstrates consistent sleeping and feeding times throughout the day PR.2.1
    - 2 Increasingly organized and consolidated internal schedule for sleep/wake, elimination, and feeding, e.g., decreases the number of naps but extends the length of the naps PR.2.2
    - 3 Communicates with a wide range of signals as crying diminishes, e.g., smiles, gestures, uses words PR.2.3
    - 4 Begins to exhibit certain behaviors when overstimulated and/or unfocused, e.g., becomes aggressive, lashes out, bites PR.2.4
    - 5 Increased desire for independence and control PR.2.5
  - 3 16 months to 24 months PR.3
    - 1 Uses gestures and symbolic actions to demonstrate feelings and needs, e.g., lays head on caregiver's lap when tired PR.3.1
    - 2 Becomes frustrated and displays regressive behaviors when overstimulated, e.g., temper tantrums PR.3.2
    - 3 Communicates needs with one or two words, e.g., says or gestures "milk" for "I want milk" PR.3.3
    - 4 Begins to have an awareness of bodily functions and begins to demonstrate an interest in toileting, e.g., recognizes a "potty" PR.3.4
  - 4 21 months to 36 months PR.4
    - 1 Calms down in order to sit and read a book with a caregiver PR.4.1
    - 2 Uses movement to express an emotion, e.g., jumps up and down when excited, stomps feet when upset PR.4.2
    - 3 Recognizes patterns throughout the day, e.g., grabs a pillow and blanket after lunch, when it is nap time PR.4.3
    - 4 Communicates needs more thoroughly, e.g., "I am hungry" PR.4.4
    - 5 Manages overstimulation in a more organized manner, e.g., disengages, walks away PR.4.5
    - 6 Demonstrates a readiness to begin toilet training PR.4.6
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**Children demonstrate the emerging ability to identify and manage the expression of emotion in accordance with social and cultural contexts.**

- 1 Birth to 9 months ER.1
  - 1 Signals needs by sounds and movement ER.1.1
  - 2 Able to use cues to signal overstimulation , e.g., turns head, gaze aversion ER.1.2
  - 3 Begins to use self-soothing strategies, e.g., sucks on hands, grasps an object in order to calm self ER.1.3
  - 4 Vocalizes and uses facial cues to get caregiver’s attention, e.g., cries, gazes, initiates eye contact ER.1.4
- 2 7 months to 18 months ER.2
  - 1 Communicates needs to an adult, e.g., points, shakes head ER.2.1
  - 2 Able to self-soothe more effectively, e.g., sucks thumb, holds on to stuffed toy ER.2.2
  - 3 Uses social referencing in uncertain situations, e.g., looks at a caregiver’s face for reassurance in the presence of a new person ER.2.3
  - 4 Prefers physical proximity to familiar adults in unknown situations, e.g., follows caregiver when he or she leaves the room ER.2.4
  - 5 Seeks out caregiver through physical actions, e.g., reaches for the caregiver’s hand or moves closer to them when frightened ER.2.5
  - 6 Uses comfort objects, e.g., a stuffed animal or blanket, to help calm down ER.2.6
- 3 16 months to 24 months ER.3
  - 1 Uses caregiver’s facial cues and body language to assist in novel and uncertain situations, e.g., sees a dog for the first time and uses the adult’s smile as a cue to cautiously pat the dog ER.3.1
  - 2 Uses play to sort out feelings and gain control over them, e.g., projects feeling onto an object, grasps a ball and hugs it tightly to chest when excited ER.3.2
  - 3 Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to signal the need for their caregiver, e.g., calls by name, crawls into a familiar adult’s lap ER.3.3
  - 4 Names some emotions, e.g., “me sad” ER.3.4
  - 5 Begins to use “private speech” in order to assist in regulating their emotions, e.g., utters “bear, where is bear” to self ER.3.5
- 4 21 months to 36 months ER.4
  - 1 Communicates wants and needs verbally, e.g. “pick me up” ER.4.1
  - 2 Engages in pretend play to manage uncertainty and fear, e.g., plays doctor and gives someone a “shot” ER.4.2
  - 3 Seeks caregiver support when feeling overwhelmed by emotion; may reject support as well ER.4.3
  - 4 Expresses emotions through the use of play ER.4.4

5 Holds on to a special object during certain times of the day, e.g., blanket, picture, book, stuffed toy [ER.4.5](#)

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## Attention Regulation AR

### Children demonstrate the emerging ability to process stimuli, focus and sustain attention, and maintain engagement in accordance with social and cultural contexts.

- 1 Birth to 9 months AR.1
  - 1 Focuses on objects in the environment during alert states AR.1.1
  - 2 Initiates and briefly maintains social interactions with adults, e.g., establishes eye contact, coos to receive attention AR.1.2
  - 3 Explores environment through senses, e.g., touches and mouths objects AR.1.3
  - 4 Focuses attention on novel objects and familiar caregiver(s) AR.1.4
  - 5 Plays with one object for a few minutes before focusing on a different object AR.1.5
- 2 7 months to 18 months AR.2
  - 1 Engages in joint attention with a caregiver, e.g. joins in looking at the same object or shifts gaze to where someone is pointing AR.2.1
  - 2 Maintains more advanced levels of engagement, e.g., repeats actions over and over when enjoying the reaction and result of the experience AR.2.2
  - 3 Focuses on one object or activity for a brief period of time, even with other objects close in proximity; still easily distracted AR.2.3
  - 4 Shifts attention from adults to peers AR.2.4
  - 5 Relies on routines and patterns to maintain an organized state in order to focus AR.2.5
- 3 16 months to 24 months AR.3
  - 1 Works to find solutions to simple problems and/or obstacles, e.g., attempts to climb onto a piece of furniture in order to retrieve a toy AR.3.1
  - 2 Works on solving increasingly difficult activities, e.g., attempts to solve a simple, three-piece puzzle AR.3.2
  - 3 Remains focused for longer periods of time while engaged in self-initiated play AR.3.3
  - 4 Attends and stays engaged to often reach a goal, e.g., places all the shapes in the shape sorter AR.3.4
- 4 21 months to 36 months AR.4
  - 1 Attention expands and stays focused on an activity or object even when distractions are present AR.4.1
  - 2 Uses self-talk to extend play, e.g., says “now sleepy” to the baby doll after feeding it a bottle AR.4.2
  - 3 Plays independently before moving on to a new activity, e.g., engages in block play, reads a book AR.4.3
  - 4 Wait time increases, e.g., participates in turn-taking activities AR.4.4

- 5 Transitions between what he or she is engaged in and what is happening in the background, e.g., makes a comment in regard to a conversation happening between another child and adult, while engaged in completing a puzzle [AR.4.5](#)
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**Children demonstrate the emerging ability to manage and adjust behaviors in accordance with social and cultural contexts.**

- 1 Birth to 9 months BR.1
  - 1 Cries when hungry, tired, uncomfortable, or bored BR.1.1
  - 2 Uses physical movements to disengage from interaction, turns head, averts gaze BR.1.2
  - 3 Physically explores environment through touch, e.g., sucking, gnawing, hitting, pulling, banging BR.1.3
  - 4 Shows curiosity and limited restraint when exploring the environment, e.g., reaches for objects that adults or other children are holding BR.1.4
- 2 7 months to 18 months BR.2
  - 1 Explores environment while unaware of boundaries and limits, e.g., crawls toward a shelf and attempts to climb it BR.2.1
  - 2 Reads cues and body language of caregiver(s) and familiar others to guide reactions and behaviors in novel and uncertain situations BR.2.2
  - 3 Demonstrates frustration, e.g., cries, bites BR.2.3
  - 4 Has difficulty channeling excitement, e.g., screams, jumps, squeezes, bites BR.2.4
  - 5 Chooses between two options, e.g., “You can have the red ball or the blue ball” BR.2.5
  - 6 Completes a forbidden action regardless of referencing a caregiver’s reaction, e.g., looks toward their caregiver before touching the forbidden object and then touches it anyway BR.2.6
- 3 16 months to 24 months BR.3
  - 1 Communicates “mine” when another child takes a toy away BR.3.1
  - 2 Communicates “no” to self when reaching for forbidden objects BR.3.2
  - 3 Begins to respond to caregiver’s cues and modifies behavior, e.g., does not touch the forbidden object, once recognizing the caregiver is discouraging the action BR.3.3
- 4 21 months to 36 months BR.4
  - 1 Increases the use of private speech in everyday play and interactions BR.4.1
  - 2 Increasingly reacts appropriately to adults’ facial expressions, tone, and affect, before acting on an impulse BR.4.2
  - 3 Identifies situations where he or she needs the caregiver to support in controlling behavior, e.g., holds caregiver’s hand when crossing the street BR.4.3
  - 4 Transitions smoothly if is prepared ahead of time BR.4.4
  - 5 Checks in with caregiver through nonverbal and verbal communication, e.g., glances, waves, points, says name, asks a question, all without having to be in close proximity BR.4.5

6 Demonstrates an awareness of expectations, e.g., approaches and gently touches a baby, waits for brief periods of time when turn-taking [BR.4.6](#)