



Lesson one: Introduction to sensory screening

Vision and hearing

To see and hear well, both eyes and ears need to be working properly and healthy. Vision and hearing help children in many ways. Problems with vision and hearing can affect child's ability to learn and to participate in day-to-day activities. This can impact on their home life, their performance at school and their success in adulthood.

Children can have problems of vision, hearing or both. These can occur for many reasons, including diseases or health conditions, infections in their eyes or ears, damage to their eyes or ears. Most eye and ear health problems can be avoided or helped with lifestyle changes, medical treatment, assistive products and/or rehabilitation.

Awareness-raising amongst children, families and teachers on the importance of eye and ear health, along with promoting community engagement with services, are important factors in the success of prevention and care.

Sensory screening

Sensory screening involves simple tests and checks to see if a child might have:

- A problem with vision and/or hearing
- An eye or ear health problem.

Screening does not confirm a diagnosis, disease or condition. Screening identifies that a child needs a referral to trained eye and/or ear care personnel for further action.

Sensory screening includes obtaining consent, carrying out the screen and referring children if needed.

Screening can help to:

- Identify vision and hearing problems early in a child's life
- Make referrals to other services quickly, to prevent further damage to vision and hearing
- Avoid or reduce the negative impacts of a sensory problem on a person's life.

Children should receive sensory screening at school entry and again every 1 to 2 years. Screening for vision and hearing are sometimes completed separately. However, combined screening is best. A combined screen can:

- Identify problems of vision and/or hearing earlier in a child's life
- Reduce costs and time.

Lesson two: Conducting a school-age screening programme

Setting up a screening programme

Before a screening programme can be implemented, it is necessary to:

- Get approvals from the Ministry of Health (MoH) and Ministry of Education (MoE)
- Identify screening locations with capacity to conduct a screening programme, including staff and suitable environment
- Identify referral pathways and processes for local eye and ear care services
- Identify and train screeners
- Source equipment.

Inclusion considerations

All children should have access to screening. This includes children with known vision and hearing problems and those with physical and learning needs.

Discuss with the school screening coordinator how to make screening possible for all children with additional needs and plan for this.

Before carrying out sensory screening, it is essential to obtain consent for each child from an authorized person. This might be parents/caregivers or the head of the school. If consent was not given, the school screening coordinator should speak to parents/caregivers to try and find out the reason. The parents may need more information or reassurance.

Preparing for screening

Preparing for screening includes:

- Preparing the space and equipment
- Organizing paperwork
- Planning the screening flow
- Group preparation session to prepare the children who will be screened.

At the end of the screening day

Make sure that the paperwork has been completed including:

- Register of attendance
- Screen forms to record screening results
- Follow up referral list to record children needing to see eye and/or ear care personnel.

You should also clean the screening space and equipment.

After the screening day

After the screening day the screener and school screening coordinator will:

- Inform parents/caregivers of the screening results
- Communicate with personnel receiving referrals to let them know how many referrals to expect
- Follow up personnel to track whether children who have been referred have attended
- Plan a follow up screening day for any children who missed the screening.

It is important to keep full and accurate records, as these will be used to monitor and evaluate how well the programme is running.

Lesson three: Referral to eye and ear care personnel

Children's attendance at follow up referral appointments is essential for avoiding or reducing the negative impacts of a sensory problem on a child's life. Parents/caregivers are given information on where to take their child using a Notification form.

Many screening programmes are not successful because children are not taken for follow up appointments. Ways to assist attendance at follow up appointments include:

- Tracking follow up referrals to monitor attendance at follow up appointments
- Supporting parents by identifying barriers to taking their child to appointments and exploring solutions.