

Table 10-1 Information to Be Sought during the History Taking of a Child with Suspected Developmental Disabilities

ITEM	POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE	ITEM	POSSIBLE SIGNIFICANCE
Parental concerns	Parents are quite accurate in identifying development problems in their children.	Mental functioning	Increased hereditary and environmental risks
Current levels of developmental functioning	Should be used to monitor child's progress	Illnesses (e.g., metabolic diseases)	Hereditary illness associated with developmental delay
Temperament	May interact with disability or may be confused with developmental delay	Family member died young or unexpectedly	May suggest inborn error of metabolism or storage disease
PRENATAL HISTORY		Family member requires special education	Hereditary causes of developmental delay
Alcohol ingestion	Fetal alcohol syndrome; index of caregiving risk	SOCIAL HISTORY	
Exposure to medication, illegal drug, or toxin	Development toxin (e.g., phenytoin); may be an index of caregiving risk	Resources available (e.g., financial, social support)	Necessary to maximize child's potential
Radiation exposure	Damage to CNS	Educational level of parents	Family may need help to provide stimulation.
Nutrition	Inadequate fetal nutrition	Mental health problems	May exacerbate child's conditions
Prenatal care	Index of social situation	High-risk behaviors (e.g., illicit drugs, sex)	Increased risk for HIV infection; index of caregiving risk
Injuries, hyperthermia	Damage to CNS	Other stressors (e.g., marital discord)	May exacerbate child's conditions or compromise care
Smoking	Possible CNS damage	OTHER HISTORY	
HIV exposure	Congenital HIV infection	Gender of child	Important for X-linked conditions
Maternal illness (so-called "TORCH" infections)	Toxoplasmosis, Syphilis (Other in the mnemonic), Rubella, Cytomegalovirus, Herpes simplex virus infections	Developmental milestones	Index of developmental delay; regression may indicate progressive condition.
PERINATAL HISTORY		Head injury	Even moderate trauma may be associated with developmental delay or learning disabilities.
Gestational age, birth weight	Biologic risk from prematurity and small for gestational age	Serious infections (e.g., meningitis)	May be associated with developmental delay
Labor and delivery	Hypoxia or index of abnormal prenatal development	Toxic exposure (e.g., lead)	May be associated with developmental delay
APGAR scores	Hypoxia, cardiovascular impairment	Physical growth	May indicate malnutrition; obesity, short stature, genetic syndrome
Specific perinatal adverse events	Increased risk of CNS damage	Recurrent otitis media	Associated with hearing loss and abnormal speech development
NEONATAL HISTORY		Visual and auditory functioning	Sensitive index of impaired vision and hearing
Illness—seizures, respiratory distress, hyperbilirubinemia, metabolic disorder	Increased risk of CNS damage	Nutrition	Malnutrition during infancy may lead to delayed development.
Malformations	May represent genetic syndrome or new mutation associated with developmental delay	Chronic conditions such as renal disease	May be associated with delayed development or anemia
FAMILY HISTORY			
Consanguinity	Autosomal recessive condition more likely		

Adapted and updated from Liptak G: *Mental retardation and developmental disability*. In Kliegman RM, editor: *Practical Strategies in Pediatric Diagnosis and Therapy*, Philadelphia, 1996, WB Saunders.
 CNS, Central nervous system; HIV, human immunodeficiency virus.

Psychological Assessment

Psychological assessment includes the testing of cognitive ability (Table 10-3) and the evaluation of personality and emotional well-being. The IQ and mental age scores, taken in isolation, are only partially descriptive of a person's functional abilities, which are a combination of cognitive, adaptive, and social skills. Tests of achievement are subject to variability based on culture, educational exposures, and experience and must be standardized for social factors. Projective and non-projective tests are useful in understanding the child's emotional status.

Although a child should not be labeled as having a problem solely on the basis of a standardized test, these tests provide important and reasonably objective data for evaluating a child's progress within a particular educational program.

Educational Assessment

Educational assessment involves the evaluation of areas of specific strengths and weaknesses in reading, spelling, written expression, and mathematical skills. Schools routinely screen