

Request for Application: CDC-AAP Leadership Opportunity Act Early Ambassadors: State, Territorial, or Tribal Liaisons to CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." Program



Act Early Ambassador Program Overview

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's \(CDC\) National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities](#) and the [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) announce a funding opportunity for Act Early Ambassadors to work with CDC's "[Learn the Signs. Act Early.](#)" (LTSAE) program to improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including autism, by:

- promoting the adoption and sustained integration of family-engaged developmental monitoring using [LTSAE milestone checklist resources](#) in programs/systems that serve young children and their families/caregivers (e.g. WIC, home visiting, child welfare, early care and education, Federally Qualified Health Centers, etc.);
- serving as a state, territorial, or tribal representative of CDC's national LTSAE program; and
- supporting the work of Act Early Teams and other state/territorial/tribal or national initiatives to improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities and promote family-engaged developmental monitoring.

States and Territories Eligible for Funding

This funding opportunity will support a new, two-year cohort of up to 64 Act Early Ambassadors. Individuals from all states, territories, and tribal communities are eligible to apply. Two Act Early Ambassadors may be selected for states with a population greater than 10M (according to 2024 US Census Data). **These states include California, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas.**

Learn the Signs. Act Early. Program Background

CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early." program aims to improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities, including autism, by promoting family-engaged developmental monitoring (regularly tracking milestones) so children and their families/caregivers can get the services and support they may need, like early intervention, as early as possible. Family-engaged developmental monitoring, using [family-friendly milestone checklists](#) like those offered by LTSAE, is important for early identification of developmental delays and disabilities. Developmental monitoring/surveillance in addition to periodic [developmental screening, is recommended](#) by the [American Academy of Pediatrics](#).



While other efforts focus on the promotion of routine general developmental and autism-specific screening, ***the focus of LTSAE and the Act Early Ambassador program is to engage, educate, and empower families and other caregivers to monitor children’s developmental milestones and discuss a child’s developmental progress between, and as a complement to, recommended screenings.*** LTSAE-supported developmental monitoring complements screening by engaging those who care for young children in celebrating a child’s developmental progress and discussing any concerns. If concerns are identified during monitoring, LTSAE reinforces [AAP’s recommendations](#) for a developmental screening or direct referral for further evaluation and services.

Qualifications for an Act Early Ambassadorship

Most importantly, this leadership opportunity aims to identify individuals who share the “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” commitment to improving early childhood programs, systems, and outcomes related to identifying young children with developmental delays and disabilities early so they and their families can get the help they need.

This opportunity is open to all who meet the criteria and can fulfill the responsibilities. Those who have previously served as Act Early Ambassadors are eligible to re-apply. Awards will be made based on an objective review that includes standardized scoring, past participation in technical assistance (TA) calls and annual trainings (for returning Ambassadors), two independent reviews, and group discussion.

To be considered, applicants must:

- reside or work in the state/territory they wish to represent as an Ambassador;
- be able to commit to performing the role of Ambassador for the entire term, through September 30, 2026;
- demonstrate existing connections to or be familiar with state/territorial/tribal programs that serve young children and their families, such as early care and education, WIC, Head Start and Early Head Start, home visiting, or others;
- be involved in or familiar with any cross-systems efforts to improve developmental monitoring/screening and early identification of developmental delays and disabilities in their state/territory such as the Health Resources and Services Administration’s Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) grants;
- demonstrate knowledge and expertise in child development and/or systems that support families with young children and/or early identification and referral for developmental delays/disabilities;
- have good presentation and communication skills;
- be able to integrate promotion of LTSAE resources within their existing roles and responsibilities, and
- have a strong interest in working collaboratively to further the goals of CDC’s “Learn the Signs. Act Early.” program in their state, territory, or tribal community.

Responsibilities of the Act Early Ambassador

Ambassadors are encouraged to apply individual creativity and expertise toward meeting their state, territory, or tribal community's unique challenges related to early identification, with a focus on promoting family-engaged developmental monitoring. CDC's LTSAE program offers [some examples of past creative activities](#) to promote early identification.

Successful Ambassadors are highly resourceful and seek strategic connections. Act Early Ambassador responsibilities typically require about 6-10 hours per month. Act Early Ambassadors are required to work with CDC's LTSAE program, AAP, fellow Ambassadors, and their state, territory, or tribal community's Act Early Team or other related collaborative initiatives to support national, state/territory/tribal, and local activities to improve early identification of developmental delays and disabilities including;

- increasing family-engaged developmental monitoring through the promotion and sustained integration of LTSAE materials into state-wide systems and other programs that serve families/caregivers with young children;
- collaboration with programs that serve young children and their families/caregivers, such as Head Start and Early Head Start, WIC, home visiting, IDEA Part C/Child Find and others, as well as health care and early care and education professionals to introduce and sustainably integrate LTSAE developmental monitoring tools and trainings into the work of those programs with families/caregivers and professionals;
- commitment to performing the role of Ambassador for the entirety of this term (through September 30, 2026);
- developing, maintaining, and implementing a work plan that includes at least 2 Ambassador goals; at least 1 of which must advance the adoption and sustained integration of developmental monitoring using LTSAE in at least one state-wide system/program such as WIC, home visiting, IDEA Part C/Child Find, early care and education (including Early Head Start), child welfare, or similar;
- participation in 60-minute Ambassador TA calls with AAP and CDC every other month;
- preparing a brief mid-year report of Ambassador activities (typically collected through a survey);
- preparing an annual report of Ambassador activities (typically collected through a survey);
- participation in an annual training in-person in Atlanta, GA November 13-14, 2024 and dates for 2025 TBD.

Additionally, Act Early Ambassadors are encouraged (but not required) to:

- collaborate with state, territory, or tribal agencies and others to improve policy and programs related to early identification;
- post updates and share resources among the network of Ambassadors (through the Ambassador email listserv and other mechanisms);
- participate in 1-hour "learning circle" webinars every other month;
- participate in 1-hour, topic-specific "Act Early" webinars; and
- present Ambassador achievements and lessons learned at state and national conferences and other appropriate forums.

Act Early Ambassador Administrative Support

To support Ambassadors, AAP will provide:

- Anticipated annual funds of a minimum \$6,000 plus travel expenses for the annual Ambassador training
 - The funds can be used to support a variety of activities related to the implementation of the Ambassador work plan. Please note, if you cannot accept funds for Ambassador efforts related to work you are already carrying out, you can use the funds for convening meetings, printing materials, to supplement staff time, etc.
 - Funds are distributed in two installments-the first installment following the Act Early Ambassador training in November and the final installment following completion of the mid-year survey report.

To support Ambassadors, CDC will provide:

- Scheduled and as-needed technical assistance provided by email, phone, and webinar.
- Structured peer support, and a forum to network, share ideas, and problem-solve with colleagues working on similar issues nationwide.
 - Note: participation in in-person meetings, webinars, and the Ambassador group email list helps keep Ambassadors connected with one another; this connection to other Ambassadors is among the most valued aspects of the Ambassador experience.
- Technical expertise and consultation, and information from leading national experts in the fields of child development, developmental disability, and health promotion.

Timeline

RFA Release: July 1, 2024

Q&A Call: July 16, 2024 at 11 am PT/12 pm MT/1 pm CT/2 pm ET ([Register for the call here.](#))

Application Deadline: August 5, 2024 at 5:00pm ET

Notice of Awards: No later than September 16, 2024

Act Early Ambassador Term: October 1, 2024-September 30, 2026

2024 Annual Training: November 13-14, 2024 in Atlanta, GA

Application Procedure

To be considered eligible, applicants are required to complete and submit all sections of the application and include all required documents in **one single file** to actearly@aap.org. Applications received after the deadline will not be considered. You will receive a notification of the receipt of your application no later than 48 hours following submission. If you have not received a notification of receipt within this timeframe, please contact Laura Murray at lmurray@aap.org.

Fiscal Agent

It is anticipated Ambassadors will receive annual funding of a minimum \$6,000.00 to support expenses related to the implementation of their Ambassador workplan. The Ambassador funds must be awarded to a fiscal agent that will receive the funds and be responsible for progress reports. Applicants must identify a fiscal agent during the application process. If selected, the Ambassador and their fiscal agent will be responsible for providing a W-9 along with any additional requested items. Please direct questions concerning the Act Early Ambassador funds or fiscal agent requirement to Laura Murray at lmurray@aap.org.

Act Early Ambassador Program Application

State/Territory/Tribal Community: _____

Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Current Affiliation: _____

Current Professional Role: _____

Are you a member of any cross-systems initiative to improve developmental monitoring/screening and/or early identification of developmental delays in your state/territory? Y N Former Member

If yes, please name the initiative and describe your role: _____

Are you a full-time resident and/or working in the state/territory/tribal community you are representing?

Y N

Are you currently an active member of your state's Act Early Team?

Y N N/A; no such team exists

Please read and check the box below before signing:

I fully understand the requirements and responsibilities associated with an Act Early Ambassadorship.

Applicant Signature: _____

Fiscal Agent Organization _____

Name of Fiscal Agent (Print) _____

Fiscal Agent Signature: _____ Date: _____

Submit the completed form to Laura Murray at AAP at actearly@aap.org

Required Attachments (submit by email as a single file):

- **Headshot** (If selected for Ambassadorship, this will appear within the bio document on the CDC Ambassador web pages)
- **Brief Bio (250 words or less):** Highlight relevant training and recent professional experience and any qualifications not covered below. (If selected for Ambassadorship, this bio will be used on the CDC Ambassador web pages)
- **Personal Statement (300 words or less):** Tell us about your interest in becoming an Act Early Ambassador and how this role fits with your personal and professional goals.
 - *Be sure to describe the following:
 - Existing connections to or familiarity with state, territory or tribal programs that serve young children and their families, and
 - Past success you have had in influencing practices, processes, or policies to improve early childhood programs/systems and personal/professional contacts that will help you be successful.
- **Proposed Ambassador Goals (500 words or less):**
 - *Be sure to describe the following:
 - At least 2 goals that you hope to accomplish during your term as an Act Early Ambassador (at least 1 that includes working toward the adoption and sustained integration of developmental monitoring using LTSAE in a state, territory, or tribal-wide system/program) and why you believe you will be successful in achieving them
 - A description of the potential for planned activities to be sustained once the time period for the Ambassadorship has ended
 - Remember: Goals should be specific and should detail the potential for sustaining impact beyond your term. Remember that at least 1 of your goals must advance the adoption and sustained integration of developmental monitoring using LTSAE in one state-wide system/program such as WIC, home visiting, IDEA Part C/Child Find, early care and education (including Early Head Start), child welfare, or similar.

Sample Ambassador Goals:

- (1) Collaborate with state Head Start and Early Head Start to improve developmental monitoring by systematically integrating the regular use of LTSAE milestone checklist materials, including the CDC *Milestone Tracker* app, into classrooms and as part of regular parent-teacher meetings state-wide.
- (2) Partner with state and local WIC leaders to integrate CDC's Developmental Monitoring in WIC Program into regular WIC visits, to increase developmental monitoring and referrals for developmental concerns.
- (3) Work with early childhood state agencies to incorporate CDC's "Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns" online developmental monitoring training into early care and education training programs.
- (4) Work with state-wide home visitation programs to increase developmental monitoring by integrating the use of LTSAE milestone checklists into home visits and train home visitors to make referrals for developmental screening.
- (5) Work with my state, territory, or tribal community's American Academy of Pediatrics chapter/early

childhood chapter champion to promote the use of LTSAE milestone checklists, including the CDC's *Milestone Tracker* app, as a tool to support developmental surveillance between well-child visits.

Required Letters of Support:

- **Attach a letter from your supervisor/Program Director** that supports your application (one page maximum).
- **Attach a letter of support from an individual (from outside your organization of employment)** who can attest to any past success you have had in terms of fostering cross-system collaboration to create positive change for young children and their families.

Checklist of Items to Submit as One Single PDF File

- Act Early Ambassador Program Application Sheet (remember to sign it)
- Headshot
- Brief Bio
- Personal Statement
- Ambassador Goals (at least 2)
- Letter of Support from Supervisor/Program Director
- Letter of Support from Someone Outside your Organization
- Fiscal Agent Name and Signature
- Sent via Email as One Single File to actearly@aap.org