

IELG Standards - Self Regulation

Age	Sub-domain	Age Descriptor	Indicators for children	Strategies for interaction
0-9 months	Physiological Regulation	Children's biological rhythms are supported and impacted by their caregiver(s) in order to establish their sleep/wake, feeding, and elimination patterns. Children also begin to develop awareness of stimuli in their environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Begins to demonstrate a pattern in sleep-wake and feeding cycles •Signals for needs, e.g., cries when hungry, arches back in discomfort •Disengages when overstimulated, e.g., turns head, glances away, falls asleep, spits up •Uses sucking to assist in sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide consistent routines in caring for the child • Follow the child's cues and respond thoughtfully • Use touch to help the child regulate, e.g., swaddle, hold, cuddle, rock to help soothe the child • Minimize stimuli in the child's environment, e.g., limit colors, sounds, and objects
7-18 months	Physiological Regulation	Children, through support of their caregiver(s), become increasingly organized in and begin to adapt their sleep/wake, feeding, and elimination patterns. Children are also beginning to organize and habituate to stimuli in their environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Demonstrates consistent sleeping and feeding times throughout the day •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 •Communicates with a wide range of signals as crying diminishes, e.g., smiles, gestures, uses words •Begins to exhibit certain behaviors when overstimulated and/or unfocused, e.g., becomes aggressive, lashes out, bites •Increased desire for independence and control 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a routine for sleeping, eating, and diapering • Recognize the child's sensitivity to sensory exposure and adjust accordingly • Minimize stimuli in the child's environment, e.g., limit colors, sounds, and objects • Provide redirection and be consistent in helping the child regulate in overwhelming situations, e.g., use distraction by sharing a different toy or object • Allow the child to express emotions through newfound movements, e.g., jumping for joy • Provide the child with some responsibility and choices, e.g., ask the child for help building a tower with blocks

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16-24 months	Physiological Regulation	Children have established patterns in sleep/wake, feeding, and elimination functions. Children use nonverbal and verbal communication to signal needs for support in regulating. They begin to manage internal and external stimuli.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Uses gestures and symbolic actions to demonstrate feelings and needs, e.g., lays head on caregiver’s lap when tired •Becomes frustrated and displays regressive behaviors when overstimulated, e.g., temper tantrums •Communicates needs with one or two words, e.g., says or gestures “milk” for “I want milk” •Begins to have an awareness of bodily functions and begins to demonstrate an interest in toileting, e.g., recognizes a “potty” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognize and respond to the child’s communication efforts • Establish a schedule throughout the day that includes sufficient time for feeding and resting • Provide sensory play for the child who is having difficulty remaining regulated due to lack of sensory input, e.g., play dough, water play • Read the child’s cues to determine how to support the child during challenging instances, e.g., use of a soothing voice or gentle touch; or ensure the child is safe and allow them to express their emotions through a more physical manner (lying on the floor, stomping feet)

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21-36 months	Physiological Regulation	Children begin to independently manage functions of feeding, sleeping, waking, and eliminating with some support from their caregiver(s). Children can now manage and begin to discriminate internal and external stimuli.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Calms down in order to sit and read a book with a caregiver •Uses movement to express an emotion, e.g., jumps up and down •Recognizes patterns throughout the day, e.g., grabs a pillow and blanket after lunch, when it is nap time •Communicates needs more thoroughly, e.g., “I am hungry” •Manages overstimulation in a more organized manner, e.g., disengages, walks away •Demonstrates a readiness to begin toilet training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide words to the child’s feelings and physical actions • Teach the child about respecting personal space and provide objects to help them define this space, e.g., individual seat cushions during circle time • Continue using soothing and calming behaviors when helping a child regulate • Listen to child when expressing needs and wants; watch for verbal cues carefully • Slow down and be present for the child; limit overstimulation and provide support for the child as needed • Approach toilet training within the context of the home culture and the primary caregiver’s guidance
0-9 months	Emotional Regulation	Children are developing the ability to manage their own emotional experiences through co-regulation, as they communicate needs to caregivers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Signals needs by sounds and movement •Able to use cues to signal overstimulation , e.g., turns head, gaze aversion •Begins to use self-soothing strategies, e.g., sucks on hands, grasps an object in order to calm self •Vocalizes and uses facial cues to get caregiver’s attention, e.g., cries, gazes, initiates eye contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain emotionally available for the child; respond thoughtfully to their needs, e.g., hold, rock, and cuddle the child when distressed • Respond to the child’s signals in order to meet their needs • Pay attention to subtle cues from the child in order to prevent overstimulation and discomfort • Recognize and control own emotions in challenging instances, e.g., a crying child who will not calm down

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7-18 months	Emotional Regulation	As children continue to depend on and learn from caregivers, they begin to use more purposeful and complex skills in managing their emotions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Communicates needs to an adult, e.g., points, shakes head •Able to self-soothe more effectively, e.g., sucks thumb, holds on to stuffed toy •Uses social referencing in uncertain situations, e.g., looks at a caregiver's face for reassurance in the presence of a new person •Prefers physical proximity to familiar adults in unknown situations, e.g., follows caregiver when he or she leaves the room •Seeks out caregiver through physical actions, e.g., reaches for the caregiver's hand or moves closer to them when frightened •Uses comfort objects, e.g., a stuffed animal or blanket, to help calm down 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond thoughtfully to child's needs, e.g., reassure child who is feeling uncertain through facial expressions, voice, and touch • Model appropriate expression of emotions for the child • Be aware and responsive to the child's needs; read the child's facial cues and body language to help gauge what he/she may be feeling • Match the child's emotional state through facial expressions and body language, e.g., widen eyes and move up and down when the child starts to laugh and clap • Provide child with comfort objects when upset, or during difficult times such as transitions, e.g., a blanket, favorite stuffed animal • Ensure to always say good-bye when separating from the child

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16-24 months	Emotional Regulation	Children begin to recognize a specific range of emotions and manage their emotions through both the use of advanced soothing strategies and the use of their caregiver.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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 •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 •Uses verbal and nonverbal communication to signal the need for their caregiver, e.g., calls by name, crawls into a familiar adult’s lap •Names some emotions, e.g., “me sad” •Begins to use “private speech” in order to assist in regulating their emotions, e.g., utters “bear, where is bear” to self 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain physically and emotionally available for the child; respond thoughtfully to their requests • Describe feelings when interacting with children • Use books that illustrate different emotions that children may experience • Provide sensitive guidance and reassurance to the child when he or she is having difficulty managing and expressing emotions

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21-36 months	Emotional Regulation	While children still need support from a caregiver, they are able to better manage their emotions and can sustain regulation as they begin to discriminate which skills and strategies to apply in different situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Communicates wants and needs verbally, e.g. “pick me up” •Engages in pretend play to manage uncertainty and fear, e.g., plays doctor and gives someone a “shot” •Seeks caregiver support when feeling overwhelmed by emotion; may reject support as well •Expresses emotions through the use of play •Holds on to a special object during certain times of the day, e.g., blanket, picture, book, stuffed toy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remain physically and emotionally available for the child, e.g., share in the child’s expressions and feelings of joy and excitement through touch and sound • Continue to use books that illustrate different emotions that children may experience • Validate the child’s feelings and let them know it is okay to feel the emotions they are experiencing • Provide balance in both supporting the child and allowing the child space to work through situations independently; use the child’s cues to decide what he or she needs • Prompt and provide words for what the child may be feeling for more complex emotions
0-9 months	Attention Regulation	Children are attempting to process an abundance of new stimuli every day. Children are also building their internal capacity for sustained attention and regulation through interactions with their co-regulating other.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Focuses on objects in the environment during alert states •Initiates and briefly maintains social interactions with adults, e.g., establishes eye contact, coos to receive attention •Explores environment through senses, e.g., touches and mouths objects •Focuses attention on novel objects and familiar caregiver(s) •Plays with one object for a few minutes before focusing on a different object 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage face to face with the child during the day; smile, coo, and laugh • Ensure the child is in a relaxed and alert state when interacting • Provide interesting toys, books, and other objects for the child to explore • Always provide a variety of options during exploration, e.g., three or four different toys on the blanket • Join child in exploration to help expand and sustain attention

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7-18 months	Attention Regulation	Children begin to have shared interests, building a capacity for purposefully attending to objects and people, and hold sustained attention for increasing amounts of time as they are quicker to organize and habituate to stimuli in their environment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engages in joint attention with a caregiver, e.g. joins in looking at the same object or shifts gaze to where someone is pointing •Maintains more advanced levels of engagement, e.g., repeats actions over and over when enjoying the reaction and result of the experience •Focuses on one object or activity for a brief period of time, even with other objects close in proximity; still easily distracted •Shifts attention from adults to peers •Relies on routines and patterns to maintain an organized state in order to focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend quality time with the child sharing in activities such as reading and playing with toys • Support and extend interactions, e.g., demonstrate different ways an object can be used; limit distractions • Provide uninterrupted time for the child to play and explore his or her surroundings • Create an environment that does not overwhelm the child with too many colors, sounds, and objects; limit choices • Provide predictable routines within the day, e.g., story time right after lunch
16-24 months	Attention Regulation	Children begin to focus and attend for longer periods of time, in particular while engaged in self-created and goal-directed play. Children also have an increased internal capacity to organize and plan while attending and focusing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •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 •Works on solving increasingly difficult activities, e.g., attempts to solve a simple, three-piece puzzle •Remains focused for longer periods of time while engaged in self-initiated play •Attends and stays engaged to often reach a goal, e.g., places all the shapes in the shape sorter 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide uninterrupted time for the child to work on activities that interest him or her, e.g., avoid interrupting or intervening when the child actively engages with an object, person, or activity • Remain available for the child and respond promptly if he or she asks for help • Create an environment that does not overwhelm the child with too many colors, sounds, and objects; limit choices • Help expand attention through extending interactions that are interesting to the child

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21-36 months	Attention Regulation	Children begin to attend to, engage in, & transition between multiple activities at a time. They also have an increased internal capacity to discriminate & strategize while focusing & attending, & can remain focused for longer periods of time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Attention expands and stays focused on an activity or object even when distractions are present •Uses self-talk to extend play, e.g., says “now sleepy” to the baby doll after feeding it a bottle •Plays independently before moving on to a new activity, e.g., engages in block play, reads a book •Wait time increases, e.g., participates in turn-taking activities •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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe the child during play and limit adult-directed interruptions while engaged • Engage in play with the child; create games that encourage the child to find certain objects in the environment • Provide independence for the child to problem-solve and discover while engaged in play • Create a quiet space and limit distractions for children to attend and focus • Focus on extending the child’s experiences through the interaction between adult and child instead of focusing solely on objects
0-9 months	Behavior Regulation	Children respond to internal and external states and have little or no self-control over their behavior. Children depend on caregivers to co-regulate their behavior.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Cries when hungry, tired, uncomfortable, or bored •Uses physical movements to disengage from interaction, turns head, averts gaze •Physically explores environment through touch, e.g., sucking, gnawing, hitting, pulling, banging •Shows curiosity and limited restraint when exploring the environment, e.g., reaches for objects that adults or other children are holding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be emotionally available and sensitive to the child’s needs • Provide consistency and routines for sleeping, eating, and diapering • Respond promptly and thoughtfully to the child’s cues • Manage own expectations with the understanding that the child cannot control his behavior • Create a safe environment for the child to actively explore

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7-18 months	Behavior Regulation	The use of social referencing emerges and supports children in developing an internal capacity to modify some of their behaviors. Children still depend heavily on the use of their caregiver to help co-regulate their behaviors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Explores environment while unaware of boundaries and limits, e.g., crawls toward a shelf and attempts to climb it •Reads cues and body language of caregiver(s) and familiar others to guide reactions and behaviors in novel and uncertain situations •Demonstrates frustration, e.g., cries, bites •Has difficulty channeling excitement, e.g., screams, jumps, squeezes, bites •Chooses between two options, e.g., “You can have the red ball or the blue ball” •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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the child with plenty of warning in between transitions; use picture cards to help • Guide the child with both nonverbal and verbal communication, e.g., use facial expressions that match what is being said • Establish routines for everyday activities • Manage own expectations with the understanding that the child cannot control his behavior • Use redirection and distraction to avoid power struggles

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16-24 months	Behavior Regulation	<p>Children may be able to demonstrate limited self-control over behavior by responding to cues found in the environment. Children also begin to use more complex strategies to help manage feelings of impulsivity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Communicates “mine” when another child takes a toy away •Communicates “no” to self when reaching for forbidden objects •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 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide the child with clear limits and provide reminders of them through the day • Model thoughtful and respectful behavior when interacting with the child • Encourage the child to express what he or she is feeling, e.g., stomp feet if mad • Guide the child with both nonverbal and verbal communication, e.g., use facial expressions that match what is being said • Establish routines for everyday activities • Manage own expectations with the understanding that the child cannot control his behavior • Use redirection and distraction to avoid power struggles

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21-36 months	Behavior Regulation	Demonstrate limited self-control without intervention, have a range of expected behaviors & can manage some, increased capacity to recognize when they need a caregiver to help regulate instead of relying on their own self-regulation strategies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Increases the use of private speech in everyday play and interactions •Increasingly reacts appropriately to adults' facial expressions, tone, and affect, before acting on an impulse •Identifies situations where he or she needs the caregiver to support in controlling behavior, e.g., holds caregiver's hand when crossing the street •Transitions smoothly if is prepared ahead of time •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 •Demonstrates an awareness of expectations, e.g., approaches and gently touches a baby, waits for brief periods of time when turn-taking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare the child for changes in routines and transitions by providing them plenty of time to anticipate and plan for change • Acknowledge and praise desirable behavior by saying what the child did and why it is important • Be consistent in limit-setting and responses • Briefly revisit behavior after the child has reached a calm state, e.g., "You were so upset, I am so sorry you felt that way. It's important to remember that we do not hit our friends."