

HANDOUT #2: DEVELOPMENTAL QUADRANT

Many children who were prenatally exposed to drugs and/or alcohol, or have experienced trauma and loss, are not on track developmentally due to the impact the exposure had on their brain. It is crucial that parents, caregivers, and support team members consider and respond to the children according to their mixed developmental stages. For any child that you are parenting or providing services or supports to, you will find that you have greater success by adapting your approach to meet the need in terms of the developmental age and stage that the child is presenting with. On the back of this document there is a developmental quadrant model for you to use for determining the child's developmental age in four domains.

KEY POINTS:

- Keep in mind the developmental ages that you determine on this quadrant in all interactions with the child, including but not limited to: chores, expectations of abilities, how you respond to the child when they are frustrated, how they play, choices they make, etc.
- Remember that due to the brain injury they sustained in-utero from the exposure, it is very common for the children and teens to display extreme inconsistency in their abilities, reactions, responses, knowledge, etc. Within the same hour, the child might display competency in a certain area and then seem to have lost that competency by the end of the hour.
- Many frustrations and explosive episodes occur when the adults are not recognizing and/or responding to the developmental age of the child they are caring for. It takes time to re-frame how you support your child from a developmental age, but it will ultimately lead to fewer misunderstandings, anger and frustration on both sides, and challenging behaviors.

PARENTING STRATEGIES:

- Physical/Chronological age: Oftentimes creates expectations by parents and others.
- Emotional age: Parent and teach to this age.
- Social age: Provide support and guidance regarding peers and safety measures.
- Cognitive age: Advocate for academic accommodations at this age.

