

Temperament Traits

ACTIVITY LEVEL	Amount of movement and body activity
BIOLOGICAL RHYTHMS	Regularity of such functions as sleep-wake cycle, hunger, bowel elimination
ADAPTABILITY	How quickly or slowly the child adapts to a change in routine of overcomes an initial negative response
APPROACH/WITHDRAWAL	How the child responds to a new situation or other stimuli
SENSITIVITY THRESHOLD	How sensitive the child is to potentially irritating stimuli
INTENSITY OF REACTION	The energy level of mood expression, whether positive or negative
DITRACTIBILITY	How easily the child can be distracted from an activity like feeding or play by some unexpected stimulus such as the ring of a telephone or someone entering the room
QUALITY OF MOOD	The amount of pleasant, cheerful and openly friendly behavior (positive mood), as contrasted with fussy, crying, and unfriendliness (negative mood)
PERSISTENCE	How long a child will keep at a difficult activity without giving up

Temperament Chart Procedure

Temperament describes individual styles or the “how” of behavior. These personal characteristics can be seen when children are play with friends, doing school work, or watching television. Some children are recognized as always being on the go, compared to others who move at a slow deliberate pace. There are children who are overly intense and who are easily irritated and upset, and there are other children who are shy, and uneasy in new situations. These individual differences in temperament in temperament are:

- Biologically based
- Apparent early in life
- Characteristic of individuals over time and in different situations

Differences in temperament affect how children get along with their families at home, and how the get along in school.

A temperament chart must be completed for each Head Start child within 45 days from the first day of service. It is suggested that teachers complete the temperament chart with parents on their first home visit. A chart is available for the child as well as a chart for the adult. Parents should be encouraged to complete a chart and compare and contrast their temperament to their child’s. The parent answers the temperament questions on the assessment scale, rating their child’s traits on a scale from 1-5. The parents should then complete the scale for themselves. Once the scale has been completed the responses for both the child and adult are plotted on the chart.

Teachers should review this information with the parent with the intention of helping the parent to understand how their temperament and their child’s temperament interact with one another. Recognizing the differences in temperament may help the parent to approach everyday tasks in a different manner that is more aligned with the child’s temperament. It may also help to explain why the parent has been unsuccessful at changing some behaviors they find frustrating or undesirable. Teachers should incorporate this information into their planning in an effort to use the child’s strengths, and approach learning in a manner that is most conducive to the child’s learning style.

Copies of the temperament chart should be kept in the teacher’s planning binder and in the child’s main file.