

Child and Adolescent Development and the Impact of Resettlement on Refugee Youth



	Physical Development	Cognitive Development	Social/Emotional Development	The Resettlement Experience
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Early Childhood (0-5)

- **Infancy milestones:** sitting, grasping, rolling, crawling, walking, feeding
- **Toddlers/preschoolers:** greater coordination of gross and fine motor skills (running, jumping, climbing, drawing...)

- Developing **language**
- **Perceiving** their environment
- **Counting**, sorting, identifying shapes and colors
- Following simple **instructions**
- Understands concept of time
- Learning through **play**

- Importance of **attachment** to primary caregiver
- Facial expressions, developing **empathy**
- Asserting **independence**
- Self-soothing, developing **emotional regulation**
- Increased **socialization**, cooperative play
- Sense of humor, pride, responsibility, guilt

- Impact of **disrupted early attachment/** bonding can lead to a lack of trust and sense of security/safety
 - Often leads to **emotional dysregulation**
 - Unable to express their thoughts and fears in words like older children
- Resiliency/protective factors:**
- Secure attachment
 - Parental resilience
 - Early learning opportunities



Middle Childhood (6-11)

- Slower but consistent physical growth
- Development of **fine and gross motor skills** (dressing, tying shoes, athletic abilities...)
- Able to complete some **tasks of daily living**

- Rapid development of **mental skills** (reading, math)
- **Concrete** (black-and-white) thinking
- Able to describe experiences and talk about thoughts and feelings
- Increased **attention** span
- Understanding the perspectives of others

- Forming stronger and more complex **friendships**
- Developing rules and sense of fairness
- Increased **emotional regulation**
- Peer pressure
- Satisfaction from their efforts/abilities
- **Seeking approval** from adults; sensitive to criticism

- Displacement **disrupts** the process of learning and socialization
- Resiliency/protective factors:**
- School engagement
 - Generally **acculturate** faster than parents and teens
 - Supportive adult (teacher, counselor, case manager) taking interest in the child can have a significant positive impact



Adolescence (12-24)

- Onset of **puberty** (earlier for females than males)
- Hormonal changes
- **Growth spurt:** most rapid physical growth since early childhood

- Developing more **abstract** thinking
- Egocentrism
- Self-conscious
- Growth spurt: most **rapid neurological growth** since early childhood
- Frontal lobe development impacts teens' decision-making, impulse control, etc.

- Prioritizing peer relationships
- Seeking **social acceptance**
- Desire **respect**
- Pushing boundaries, struggling for **independence**
- Developing own set of values/beliefs
- **Identity formation**
- Hormones affect mood and emotional responses

- Resettlement made more complex by **simultaneous changes** of:
- Puberty
 - Developing sense of self
 - Peer relationships/group identity
 - "Renegotiation" of parent/child relationship
- Resiliency/protective factors:**
- Positive peer connections
 - Community involvement
 - Hope and goals for the future



Additional considerations:

- Expect variations - all children develop at their own pace
- Impact of trauma, family separation, culture, and second language acquisition (more rapid in younger children)

