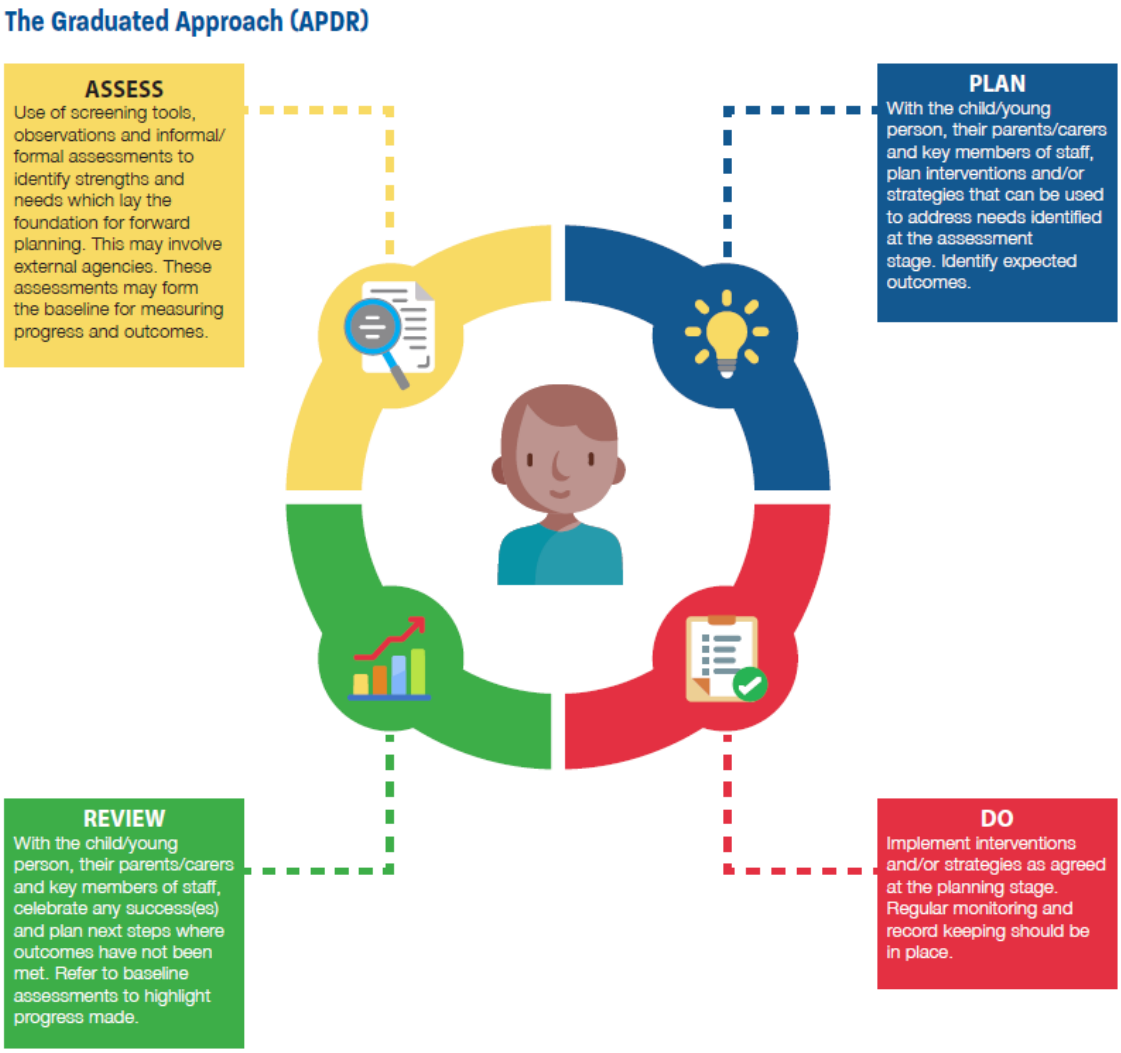The graduated approach