

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Family Assessment: Gathering Information From Families

Purpose of Gathering Information from Families

The language in Part C requiring a "family assessment" does not imply that early intervention personnel should "assess" or evaluate the family in any respect. Rather, family members are invited to share information, on a voluntary basis, to help service providers understand their concerns, priorities and resources related to supporting their child's development and learning and any other issues the family may want help to address. Identifying the family concerns and priorities helps the IFSP team develop functional outcomes and identify the services, supports and strategies to accomplish those outcomes. The identification of family resources helps the team know what family supports and strengths are already in place to address the identified outcomes.

Because children learn best in the context of everyday activities, families are asked to describe their daily routines and activities, in terms of what interests and engages their child, what's going well and what challenges they face. Sharing this information helps to identify difficulties that providers may problem-solve with families. Moreover, providers and parents can determine the routines in which to embed interventions and learning opportunities. For example, if a child loves her bathtime, it may be a natural opportunity to encourage the learning and use of more words, improving balance, reaching for and grasping toys, etc. Learning about a child's interests, favorite people and preferred toys and activities can help providers and families personalize learning opportunities that will be highly motivating and engaging, and build on the child's strengths.

Often families would like to participate in new activities or use community resources but need help to include their child with special needs. Accompanying the family on an outing, problem-solving with families, preparing and supporting community providers are examples of the ways providers can help families engage in new activities that will have natural

learning opportunities for their child.

Information is usually gathered through conversations with the family. Check lists and interviews can also assist the provider to get useful information. Parents need to know the purpose of this information, how it will be used and where it will be kept. The most important factor in gathering family information is the relationship that develops over time with the provider and family members. Therefore various conversation methods and relationship building techniques yield the most valuable information.

Resources

[A relationship based approach to early intervention](#) (PDF: 262kb) . Edelman 2004. *Resources & Connections* July-September, 2004. Volume 3, Number 2

The National Individualizing Preschool Inclusion Project

Robin Mc William has developed the Routines-based Interview and other materials to gather information from families and preschool teachers about daily routines and activities. Supporting materials are available on the Vanderbilt Children's Hospital website. (downloaded 6/11/09)

- Routines-Based Assessment and Intervention Planning Checklist
- [Routines-Based Interview Report Form](#) (January 2006) (PDF: 56kb)
- Scale for Assessment of Family Enjoyment within Routines (SAFER)
- Scale for the Assessment of Teachers' Impressions of Routines Engagement (SATIRE)
- [McWilliam Goal Functionality Scale II \(GFS II\)](#) (PDF: 84kb)

Questions for Eliciting Family Interests, Priorities, Concerns, and Everyday Routines and Activities (PDF: 18kb)

Anne Lucas (NECTAC, 2005) gathered information based on a literature review that yielded typical questions a service provider may consider using in conversations with families.

Partners on a Journey of Hope

Tennessee's Early Intervention Service Coordination Training; Module 2 provides an excellent overview of active listening skills, particularly the presentation 2.9 - Skills to Ease the Journey.

[Wisconsin Birth to Three Program](#)

Has a detailed module for training SC's for [Getting to Know Families](#). It includes Identifying Family Concerns, Priorities and Resources Guide, a [list of selected tools](#), case studies, and exercises. The family booklet, Families are the Foundation of WI's Birth to 3 Program, provides much information on partnerships with families, including a [checklist designed for families to fill out](#) to help them determine strengths and areas of need for IFSP development.

[Family Guided Routines Based Intervention](#)

The section describing the FGRBI model includes #2 Routines based Assessment in Natural Environments.

[Family guided Approaches to Early intervention Training and Services \(FACETS\)](#)

This project focuses on natural environment and family guided intervention. Module 2 of the training modules has resources for learning about the child and family.

[The FAMILY Assessment by the Colorado Home Intervention Program \(CHIP\)](#)

A multi-disciplinary assessment procedure used to evaluate the abilities of a young child who is deaf/hard of hearing as the child interacts with family members. The resulting data are used in several ways to develop the IFSP.