



Nebraska Early
Development Network

Babies can't wait

Nebraska Department of Education Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services **RBI 102: Frequently Asked Questions**

This document is intended to respond to Part C questions received from early intervention teams across Nebraska who are implementing the Ecomap and Routines Based Interview (RBI). To share other questions, please contact statewide RBEI coordinators: Sue Bainter suebainter@yahoo.com, Janice Lee janicelee1705@gmail.com, or Jeanne Fielder jeanniefielder21@yahoo.com.

Question 1: What is an Ecomap?

The Ecomap is a **graphic** (map or drawing) of the family, which represents their informal (friends, extended family), and formal supports (doctors, services coordinators, providers), along with the strength of those supports. The mapping process takes only 10-15 minutes and is a succinct way of gathering critical family ecology information while at the same time conveying the message that early intervention (EI) is concerned with the whole **family**....not just the “target child”. To view an example ecomap: https://eieio.ua.edu/uploads/1/1/0/1/110192129/ecomap_english.pdf

Understanding the social supports of families is positively linked with achievement of early intervention (EI) outcomes (Dunst, 2000). It is critical to understand the people with whom families are connected - so as to utilize their existing supports without inventing new ones (McWilliam, 2011). While informal conversation is often used to gather this information over time, the Ecomap is a process that will gather the same information in a far more efficient way...*upfront*...where it is most useful in the development of the IFSP.

Demonstration of an eco-map by Dr. McWilliams: <https://medium.com/mah-authentic-assessment-support/ecomap-with-robin-mcwilliam-jason-and-sarah-e27dd2eb5e55>

Question 2: What is an RBI?

The RBI is a semi-structured **interview** used with families, teachers, and child care providers in order to gain meaningful information about how a child participates in everyday activities. Well-done RBIs typically take 1½-2 hours. The RBI has proven itself to be an effective tool for systematically gathering information about:

1) The child’s level of independence; 2) the kinds of social relationships he/she has (including his/her communication); and 3) how engaged he/she is within everyday activities. Families, teachers, and child care providers share information in response to interview questions pertaining to these 3 areas within the home, preschool or child care setting. Families are asked to rate their satisfaction with each of the routines identified. Child and family strengths, challenges and priorities are identified during this process, and then rank ordered. For more information:

<http://edn.ne.gov/cms/sites/default/files/Nutshell%20Child%20Assessment%202020.pdf>

Question 3: Why use an Ecomap and RBI?

The Ecomap and RBI offer a method of gathering relevant assessment information to develop meaningful IFSPs. They also enable EI teams to meet regulatory requirements for both child AND family assessment. Specifically, the new regulations require the following:

Child assessment: 92 NAC 52 006.07 “an assessment of each infant or toddler with a disability must be conducted by ‘qualified personnel’ (as per 92 NAC 52 003.22) in order to identify the child’s unique strengths and needs and the early

Original July 2012; updated December 2023

intervention services appropriate to meet those needs.....must include the following: a review of the results of the evaluation conducted under 92 NAC 51-006.06, personal observations of the child; and the identification of the child's needs in each of the developmental areas in 92 NAC 52-003.15 and 92 NAC 52-006.04";

Family assessment: 480 NAC 3-006.01 4a. *"The IFSP must be based on information obtained through an assessment tool that is selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory; and also through an interview with the family members who elect to participate.....the family-directed assessment must be voluntary.....and include the family's descriptions of its resources, priorities, and concerns and the supports and services necessary related to enhancing the child's development. The family is assisted in identifying the supports and resources present in the child's environment and activities in the child's daily routine that offer opportunities for the child to learn the new skills...."*

Question 4: Who should do the Ecomap and RBI?

It is most effective to have 2 interviewers doing the Ecomap and RBI—a primary interviewer who asks the questions and a secondary interviewer who takes notes. Because the family assessment is a regulatory requirement for services coordination, the services coordinator must be one of the two interviewers. The other interviewer involved in the RBI must be an early intervention services provider (as per 92 NAC 003.22), preferably the "most likely" primary provider for the family. In other words, **if the RBI is used as the district's child and family assessments, the 2 interviewers MUST include both an early intervention services provider and a services coordinator, both of whom are "approved" in the RBI process per the following regulations.**

92 NAC 52 003.22 *Qualified personnel means personnel who have met State approved or recognized certification.....or other comparable requirements that apply to the areas in which the individuals are conducting evaluations or assessments or providing early intervention services.*

480 NAC 3-006.01 4a. *All personnel assisting families in this process must be trained to use appropriate methods and procedures and must conduct the assessment in a nondiscriminatory manner.*

Question 5: When should the Ecomap and the RBI be completed?

Some teams have identified "intake" as an effective time to complete the Ecomap. Others complete the ecomap during the assessment phase; incorporating it into the RBI. The RBI should be completed prior to the development of the initial IFSP and updated at the periodic and annual reviews. (McWilliam, 2010). Most teams schedule the initial RBI after it has been determined that the child is likely to qualify for EI services. It is important to meet Rule 52 and 480 NAC 3 regulations when conducting the RBI at initial IFSP (<http://edn.ne.gov/cms/resources/ei-process-in-referrals>), as well as periodic and annual IFSPs ([Ongoing Assessment Guidance](#)).

Question 6: What is the RBI information used for?

Teams use the priorities of the family to develop functional and measurable IFSP outcomes. Outcomes resulting from a family interview are not discipline specific or generic ("I want my child to talk"). They are not missed test items. They are a direct reflection of the child's participation, independence and relationships within their everyday routines. Finally, gathering information about child development can be used to score the required GOLD entry assessment. One tool.....multiple purposes. For more information about developing functional IFSP outcomes: http://edn.ne.gov/cms/sites/default/files/Nutshell%20Purpose%20of%20IFSP-IEP%20outcomes_0.pdf

Question 7: What are the requirements for documenting the child and family assessment, particularly for Services Coordination?

Per 480 NAC 3-006.01, the family assessment is *"voluntary, based on information obtained through an assessment tool and interview, and includes the family's description of its resources, priorities and concerns related to enhancing the child's development"*.

The list of family priorities resulting from the RBI is the documentation of the family assessment. The family MUST receive a copy of this list, as well as a copy of the ecomap if completed, within 7 days of the IFSP meeting as per 480

Original July 2012; updated December 2023

NAC 3-008.06, #6. The list of RBI priorities MUST be written into the *Concerns, Resources and Priorities* page of the IFSP and information collected during the RBI should also be reflected in the *Child's Present Levels of Development* pages. Family priorities may also be reflected in the services coordination file - either written in the narrative itself or a copy of the list placed in the file. A copy of the ecomap, if completed, should also be in the services coordination file.

If desired, the notes taken during the RBI by the secondary interviewer could also be included as part of the services coordination file, either handwritten or typed.

Question 8: Some families are very reserved and the RBI feels intrusive. Do you have any "tips" for interviewing quiet families?

Services Coordinators and EI providers must conduct child and family assessment in a non-discriminatory manner as per 480 NAC 3-006.01 4a. Family Assessment – *"All personnel assisting families in this process must be trained to use appropriate methods and procedures and must conduct the assessment in a nondiscriminatory manner"* and 92 NAC 52 006.05C *"all evaluations and assessments of the child shall be conducted by qualified personnel, in a nondiscriminatory manner, and selected and administered so as not to be racially or culturally discriminatory."*

From Dr. Robin McWilliam: "Because the RBI is used in different countries and with different types of families, within countries, we have quite a bit of experience with its use with reserved families. Having said that, it's important to point out that reserved families are found everywhere and that supposedly reserved cultures can have gregarious people. We need to be careful not to paint people with a broad brush nor discriminate against any group by saying the RBI is unsuitable for them.

"The RBI is structured around questions about child functioning in routines, so it should not challenge private people who know we're there to help. They might not give long answers, but we still follow the semi-structure of the six pieces of information for each routine. What everyone else is doing could be considered nosy by some people, but we explain that we're getting context for understanding the child's functioning and, later, what kinds of intervention might work, which might depend on what other children the parent is also dealing with or how many other adults are present. If the parent doesn't share personal information, that's fine.

"When we tell families, they don't have to say anything they don't want to say, we need to mean it and not be concerned when families keep some things to themselves.

"During the three "magical" questions (time, worry, and change), families can always deflect, if they choose to. Because we want to ensure we have at least one family goal, we can usually take something the family has chosen and make it into an information goal for the family. If you think about it, all child goals are family-information goals anyway.

"The RBI was designed for universal use. In sum, we should relax around families who don't disclose much--and we should make sure it's really a family preference and not an issue of the interviewer's skill. Highly skilled interviewers might not get a lot of personal information from reserved families, but they will still get at the core of what the families want their child to be able to do six months from now. And that's good enough."

Question 9: What if the child spends a significant amount of time in childcare, how does the RBI apply?

Evidence about child learning clearly identifies everyday learning opportunities as the most effective medium for promoting child development. Therefore, best practice for authentic child assessment should include all environments in which the child spends significant amounts of time; including childcare programs. PRTs who have been using the RBI for several years recommend the following options:

- Optimally conduct the RBI with the family and the childcare provider at the same time;
- If not possible, conduct the RBI with the family and the childcare provider at separate times, recognizing that **the family chooses their priorities** for the IFSP. The family's priorities may include those identified by the childcare program;
- Use the SATIRE (R.A. McWilliam) when interviewing childcare providers, <https://eieio.ua.edu/uploads/1/1/0/1/110192129/satire.pdf>

Original July 2012; updated December 2023

To meet Rule 52 and 480 NAC 3 regulations for child and family assessment, the RBI must be conducted with the family, by an approved EI provider and an approved services coordinator.

Question 10: Once a provider or services coordinator has gone through the 7 step RBI training process (<http://edn.ne.gov/cms/sites/default/files/u26/Nebraska%20Required%20Training%20Practices%20one%20pager%20revising.pdf>) and been approved (85% or better on the RBI implementation checklist), can they coach/mentor other providers and services coordinators in the region?

Yes. Once EI providers or services coordinators (SCs) are RBI approved, they can become coach/mentors for your region. The PRT Leadership team guides the designation and work of their coaches. When regions are training large numbers of participants i.e. during RBI boot camps, they typically serve as coaches. If the numbers of staff needing to be trained are small, the coach “individually” supports the new staff member as they progress through the 7 step RBI training process using the Individual Training Checklist.

All approved providers and SCs must demonstrate fidelity to the RBI process annually. The PRT leadership team must decide how the fidelity checks will be completed. Some regions may have fidelity checks completed by a designated group of coach/mentors. Other regions may simply “pair up” approved providers/SCs to complete fidelity checks on each other. Additional training is available for approved providers/SCs to feel confident and comfortable in a coach/mentor role; completing fidelity checks and giving feedback to others, <https://edn.ne.gov/cms/sites/default/files/train-timeline.pdf>.

This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document. For comments regarding this document contact nde.guidance@nebraska.gov