

Family Improvement Activities

Introduction

The Nebraska Family Survey consists of 53 items designed to measure (1) the family's perception of their level of involvement in the Early Intervention Program (29 questions) and (2) how families feel about the quality of services they receive (24 questions). The results of this survey are sent to the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) as the response to Part C Federal Indicator 4. Indicator 4 states:

Percent of families participating in Part C who report that early intervention services have helped the family

- A. Know their rights;
- B. Effectively communicate their children's needs; and
- C. Help their children develop and learn.

OSEP is measuring state's progress over time on this indicator, as well as other indicators. This document is designed to give you ideas that will help your state improve its score on this indicator. The items from the survey are listed in bold below. Beneath each bolded item are a few activities that, if implemented, will further the family's knowledge or skill level related to the bolded item. In most cases, increasing the families knowledge and skill level will lead to a higher level of agreement and therefore a higher score on the indicator. The activities are meant to be examples of activities that can be done to enhance the skill and should be used as a starting point for conversations about the types of activities that can be done locally and statewide. Not all examples will work statewide. If an example doesn't work for your PRT, determine why not and see if an alternative solution can be found.

Next to each bolded item is a three-digit number. This number is the score level or calibration of the item. Higher numbers represent items that, when tested in sample populations, were more difficult for families to attain.

Calibration

Item

- 677 Participate in typical activities for children and families in the community.**
- Develop a mentoring program: Families serve as mentors to other families that are new to Early Intervention.
 - Encourage religious institutions to develop family education committees that encourage inclusive programming.
 - Ensure that local PTA's have parents of children with disabilities on the board.
- 656 Know about services in the community.**
- At the state and PRT levels, create "mini-articles" that include information about services and community events. Submit the articles to local newspapers.
 - Create a phone chain/email list among interested families to inform each other about community events.
 - Create TV and Radio Public Service Announcements.
 - Add community events to school/district websites.
- 639 Know where to go for help and support to meet my family's needs.**
- Develop a local and state list of community support services.
 - Inform pediatricians and therapists about available community services. Create a flyer they can distribute.
- 624 Keep up friendships for my child and family.**
- Assist interested parents set up "Mommy and me" groups. Discuss ideas for meeting or play groups.
 - Help families determine the barriers to keeping up friendships. Where possible, brainstorm creative strategies to overcome these barriers.
- 608 Know where to go for help and support to meet my child's needs.**
- Develop a local and state list of community support services.
 - Inform pediatricians and therapists about available community services. Create a flyer that they can distribute.
 - Check with your local hospital to see if they have a hospital newsletter that includes classes, events, and other information.
- 583 Be more effective in managing my child's behavior.**
- When appropriate, share with the parent a checklist of normal development patterns to help the family recognize normal changes in behavior.

- Help parents recognize the “trigger points” that start negative behaviors and how to divert the child’s attention to something that will lead to appropriate behaviors.
- Help the family realize that they are not the only ones dealing with this type of behavior. Assist the parent in linking with associations that focus on the child’s disability. Where appropriate, link families with other families.

576 Make changes in our family routines that will benefit my child with special needs.

- Show parents how to incorporate physical, occupational, and developmental goals into daily routines such as mealtime, bath time, riding in a car, playing with siblings, etc.
- Find out which family routines are most stressful for the family. Determine how the routine is carried out and which parts of it are stressful. Offer ways to alter the routine so that it is less stressful. Some ways to alter the routine include allowing more time for the activity, allowing less time for the activity, rewards for completing the routine, determining trigger points and ways to avoid them, changing the order of the routine, etc.

576 Do activities that are good for my child even in times of stress.

- Many activities for children can be incorporated into daily routines and not be a stand-alone activity. Brainstorm a list of recommended activities and ways to incorporate them into daily activities such as mealtime, watching TV, in a car or on a bus, or a daily walk.
- Develop a list of stress-reducing activities for parents. Some will involve the parent trying to find alone time or time with other adults without children present. Other activities can be family activities.

569 Improve my family's quality of life.

- Develop a local and state list of community support services.
- Check to see if the local hospital or health center has a newsletter with classes or activities for families.
- Develop a list of questions that coordinators can ask parents to determine what they see as issues in their lives that affect the quality of their lives. Make needed recommendations.

564 Feel that I can get the services and supports that my child and family need.

- Determine what services and supports the family is getting. Include outside support such as clergy, family, friends, etc. Help the family create a wish list of other services and supports. Determine who (family members, EDN, HHS, etc) can help the family meet the goal.

- Help the families develop the language and skills needed to advocate for themselves. This includes knowing the terms used in early intervention, who to contact, how to improve their self-advocacy skills, etc.

563 Get services that my child and family need.

- Determine what services and supports the family is getting. Help the family create a wish list of other services and supports. Determine who (family members, EDN, HHS, etc) can help the family meet the goal.
- Help the families develop the language and skills needed to advocate for themselves. This includes knowing the terms used in early intervention, who to contact, how to improve their self-advocacy skills, etc.

562 Feel that my family will be accepted and welcomed in the community.

- Meet with community leaders (clergy, city councils, community recreation departments, etc). Ask what programming they have that is appropriate for young children with special needs. Recommend ways to accommodate families with special needs.
- Use parents as community leaders. Help build their skills to talk to their clergy or community leaders about inclusive programming.

559 Feel more confident in my skills as a parent.

- Determine what skill areas parents would like to increase.
- Based on parent recommendations and observation, develop a list of topics. Determine whether it is feasible to have a regional speaker on selected topics. Offer babysitting or separate activities for the children.
- Develop a recommended reading list of book and internet sites.
- Develop a list of available community services.
- Link parents together in monthly meetings to discuss a variety of parenting topics.
- Develop a community list serve. It can be through a free service offering such as YahooGroups or Google groups.

559 Feel that my child will be accepted and welcomed in the community.

- Have staff or family mentors meet with appropriate community leaders such as clergy, staff at county recreation departments, local councilmen, etc., and discuss ways to make local programs inclusive.
- Ask parents if they feel that their family is accepted in the community. Why do they feel that way (either positive or negative)? Where possible, offer suggestions to reduce barriers.

- 556 Communicate more effectively with people who work with my child and my family.**
- Do the staff that meet with the family allow time for questions?
 - Do the staff that meet with the family feel that communication is good? If not, how can it be improved?
 - Is there a language or cultural barrier? Does the state or PRT need to make cultural sensitivity classes or information available to staff?
- 552 Understand how the early intervention system works.**
- Are the Procedural Rights handouts written in a family friendly manner?
 - Are there family friendly brochures on available services, the role of child find, who to contact for questions, etc?
 - Do the staff that visit families ask the families if they have questions about the local- or state-level Early Intervention system?
 - Based on questions families typically ask, develop a “Top 10” list of questions asked and the answers given. This list may vary from PRT to PRT.
- 545 Understand the roles and responsibilities of the people who work with my child.**
- Create state, PRT, and/or district-wide handouts with the categories of service providers available and each service provider’s role.
 - Families know that “Maria comes to my house to work with my child,” but often don’t know the type of service provider Maria is (e.g., language therapist, PT, OT). Help families learn these terms and what role they play in helping the child.
- 540 Figure out solutions to problems as they come up.**
- State- or district-level staff should hold focus groups with site coordinators. Discuss the common issues that arise among families. Share solutions.
 - Ensure that parents have access to their coordinator, other parents who are mentors, and community services.
- 539 Feel that I can handle the challenges of parenting a child with special needs.**
- Determine which aspects of parenting are most difficult for the parent and individualize suggestions as appropriate.
 - Where available, tell parents about local parenting classes.
 - Create a book list of recommended books on parenting a child with special needs.
 - Create a list of websites that focus on parents with special needs.

- 539 Know about my child's and family's rights concerning early intervention services.**
- Update or create a pamphlet for parents telling them about their rights and available services.
 - Create a discussion and answer packet for Site Coordinators. Have everyone discuss one or two points about available services, your EI system, and/or the family's rights on their next home visit.
- 534 Be able to evaluate how much progress my child is making.**
- There are many different types of progress, and each type has its own evaluative process. Determine the areas of progress parents most commonly request. Speak to therapists in that field. Share information with parents. Share developmental checklists and other materials as appropriate.
 - At each visit make it a point to tell the parent what improvements the child has made or give a strategy for improvement.
 - Contact the baby formula companies. Some of them have great newsletters on activities and developmental milestones for children ages birth through 1 and give the milestones for development. Most will also send families a free case of formula. (Check with the diaper companies, they may also have good deals and informational newsletters.)
- 516 Understand my child's special needs.**
- Help families develop a list of questions to ask their pediatrician or specialist seeing their child.
 - As appropriate, give families reading material on their child's disability.
 - Assist parents in joining or forming parent groups to share information related to parenting and their child's disability.
 - Give the family a list of appropriate websites of related organizations or print materials from those websites to share with families.
- 498 Feel that my efforts are helping my child.**
- Ensure that staff visiting families are using all appropriate opportunities to reinforce the positive things parents are doing with their children. Conduct periodic staff trainings to reinforce these skills.
 - Use tangible ways to show parents the progress they are making with their child. This could include photos, video taping the child periodically, progress charts, etc.
 - The "baby steps" count. Remind parents that each small bit of progress adds to the overall progress the child is making.

497 Do things with and for my child that are good for my child's development.

- Find out what activities the parent is currently doing with his/her child. Show the parent ways to extend the current activities.
- Share appropriate books, games, and toys with families.
- Set up a central place in the district where families can exchange puzzles, books, or toys.