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Family Involvement and the Nebraska Early Development Network

Mark Smith

Nebraska has had wonderful family participation since the inception of the EDN program. With family input, perspectives, and ideas, the EDN has continued to evolve into the program it is today. Without question, “Together, we are better!”

In addition to involvement at the Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Council (ECICC) and Planning Region Team (PRT) levels, many families have been (and will be) involved in the following:

- *Participating in Routine-Based Interview (RBI) training*

across the State. The RBI is considered to be a “best practice” in child and family assessment. The interview format for gathering family information is expected to result in an increase in family-focused outcomes on individual family service plans (IFSPs) and to focus supports and services on “whole families” as well as children.

- *Providing feedback about their involvement in early intervention by completing the annual Family Survey.* Family Survey results are used by federal, state, and local EDN administrators and providers to maintain high-quality programming. We are proud that families in Nebraska were instrumental in the original design of the survey, and we have one of the highest return rates in the nation!
- *Serving on local leadership teams* as Nebraska implements the Pyramid model of social and emotional development. This ensures that the family perspective is represented as communities work to meet the needs of infants and toddlers with social, emotional, and/or behavioral challenges.



We thank families for their time and commitment to the EDN and encourage ALL families to consider involvement at the ECICC, PRT, or technical assistance levels.

Results-Driven Accountability: Routines Based Early Intervention (RBEI)

Sue Bainter and Cindy Hankey

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) announced a major change in the way it will oversee states’ special education programs. Until now, ED’s primary focus has been to determine whether states are meeting

federal timelines for referrals, evaluations, etc. While compliance requirements are important, under a New plan, *Results-Driven Accountability (RDA)*, ED will be focusing on the implementation of strategies supported by research to improve results and outcomes for students with disabilities. RDA efforts apply to states, local school districts, and PRTs.

RDA started in NE with a review of early intervention data. The review showed a need to focus State and local efforts on implementation of child and family assessments, aligning our IFSP child and family outcomes with family-identified needs and priorities, and providing supports and services within family routines. Stakeholders, including family members, are the key players in early intervention and provided the guidance for NE's selection of its State Identified Measurable Result —the implementation of routines-based early intervention (RBEI). This approach consists of three improvement strategies: (1) use of the Routines-Based Interview (RBI) as the child and family assessment tool, (2) development of functional child and family outcomes resulting from priorities identified through the RBI, and (3) provision of quality home visits within family routines.

The RBI is a semi-structured interview conducted by the services coordinator and an early intervention (EI) provider after the child has been found eligible for services. The RBI focuses on the child's independence, engagement, and social interactions during everyday routines and activities with his/her family. Through the interview process, the family identifies the parts of the day that go well for the child and family and those that do not. The interview ends with a list of child and family outcomes prioritized by the family. Over the past 5 years, several EI providers and services coordinators across NE have been trained in RBI and have found it to be extremely helpful in building relationships with families and in the development of more functional and meaningful IFSPs. Feedback from families who have participated in the interview process has also been very positive, including reports such as: "The RBI helped me identify areas where my son's limitations and abilities were affecting his and our family's daily lives" and "Walking through my day helped to identify different priorities I had never taken the time to think about!" Nebraska is looking forward to expanding the use of the RBI as a child/family assessment tool and increasing the functional and routines-based information included in the IFSPs in order to ensure quality home visits.



Perspectives from the Field: Digging Deeper with Data at a Local Level

Kristy Feden, Early Childhood Supervisor, Papillion-La Vista School District



In Nebraska, the results and effectiveness of EI services are measured annually through data collection. We specifically look at how well infants and toddlers with IFSP's perform on three outcomes: (1) Percent who demonstrate improved positive social-emotional skills, (2) Percent who demonstrate improved acquisition and use of knowledge and skills, and (3) Percent who demonstrate improved use of appropriate behaviors to meet their needs. We also look at how well our EI services are meeting the needs of families; specifically the (1) Percent of families reporting that EI services helped the family know their rights, (2) Percent of families reporting that EI services helped the family effectively communicate their child's needs, and (3) Percent of families reporting that EI services helped the family to help their child develop and learn. In the Papillion La Vista school district, we use the I.D.E.A.L process when collecting and looking at these data. Here's a brief description of how the process works....

Identify: The early childhood (EC) team identifies assessment data sources.

Describe: The EC team discusses strengths and weaknesses identified in the data. What strengths in child performance are identified? How does child performance this year compare to performance last year? Is there evidence of improvement or decline across sub-groups (e.g., special education)? What are the biggest areas of concern?

Evaluate: The EC team answers the “why” after describing the data. What results were unexpected? What might have caused the changes for the better or for the worse? What best practices research/strategies might be useful?

Act: The EC team holds ongoing discussion about actions and strategies that are evidence-based. What actions, interventions, strategies will be tried? What is the timeline?

Learn: The EC team needs to know what worked and what didn’t work. How will the team ensure that the actions, interventions and strategies tried are done with fidelity? How often will child progress be monitored?

Over the course of each school year, the early childhood team peels away layers of data using the I.D.E.A.L. process. Our early childhood staff is enthusiastic about this, as it provides a functional way to use data that helps us improve outcomes for children and it gives us an avenue for carefully analyzing the strategies and interventions we use in our service delivery. As we look at data, we continually ask ourselves: “Are we where we want to be with children and families?” “Are we doing the best we can in supporting children and families”? We don’t want to passively collect data and do nothing with the information. By carefully reviewing and analyzing data, identifying research-based interventions and strategies and striving for measurable growth on all of our outcomes, we feel we are providing the greatest opportunities for growth that we can. Through intentional data-based decision making, we are confident that we are making a difference in the lives of young children in NE, and we have a system in place to measure that impact! If you have questions about the I.D.E.A.L. process or engaging staff to use data in meaningful ways, please contact me anytime. I enjoy talking with colleagues across NE and gaining new strategies and insight through those discussions (kfeden@paplv.org or 402-

514-3242). To learn more about the I.D.E.A.L. process, please review the article by Dr. Mueller and Dr. Hanson in the 2014 *Journal of Staff Development*, Volume 35(4). The article is titled “Leading in learning: Nebraska district nets success with evidence-based learning.”

Early Childhood Interagency Coordinating Committee

The ECICC meets four times a year. The current schedule is shown below.

Scheduled Meeting for 2014

November 21, 2014
Cornhusker Hotel, Lincoln, Nebraska

Scheduled Meetings for 2015

February 13, 2015
May 1, 2015
August 28, 2015
November 20, 2015