

EI: Identifying Desired Family Outcomes

In a Nutshell...

Federal and state laws for EI focus on the provision of services in children’s natural learning environments and the provision of supports to families of young children with disabilities. To facilitate family outcomes, we need to implement strategies that support the emotional and learning needs of the families in children’s lives. It’s about helping families identify what they need so they can accomplish the priorities they have for their family.

How do we help families identify what *they* need in order to support children’s learning? First, we must be clear about what we aim to do in our programs. EI is about supporting the adults in the children’s lives, who can then enhance children’s development through frequent everyday interactions and learning opportunities. Being clear about our services clarifies family expectations. We cannot simply be a child’s “therapist or teacher”. We are unable to affect desired child and family outcomes when we restrict our role so narrowly. Second, we must look at our assessment practices. Are we having *intentional and frequent conversations* with families about their needs and their support systems? Are we using evidence-based assessment tools/practices such as a Routines Based Interview (RBI), Eco-maps or quality of life measures to help gather this information?

For Part C services, new federal regulations have been written to address the family assessment question: “... with the family’s permission...family assessment **must be based on information obtained through an assessment tool and also through an interview with the family**” (IDEA 303.321). Identifying family needs and supports is good practice for any family of children birth to age 5, according to the Division of Early Childhood.

Reference Materials

- [Using Resource-based practices](#)
- [Finding and using Family Supports](#)
- [Influencing Family Outcomes](#)

Samples

- [IFSP web](#)
- [Examples](#)

Tools

- [Family Quality of Life](#)
- [SHoRE Satisfaction with Home Routines Evaluation](#)
- [Addressing Family Concern Teaming Video: Go To “Blake”](#)
- [RBI Handout for Families](#)

Key Principles to consider...

1. **EI is a family-centered support model of service.** Families can expect to receive supports for their whole family, not just services for their child. Supports can be emotional, informational, instructional or material and can be formal (agency delivered) or informal (available networks).
2. **EI providers view family members as key agents for influencing children’s growth and development.** Children learn within the context of family life and spend more awake hours with family than they do with us.
3. **Conversations held routinely help identify status of old and new family concerns and needs.** Give families the opportunity to discuss desired family outcomes from participation in our programs at each meeting or visit.

Why is identifying desired family outcomes so important?

Recognizing the importance of identifying *family* needs and supports, in addition to *child* needs and supports, is critical for programming that improves child outcomes. If family members are to be confident and competent contributors to children’s development, they need to have their own emotional and learning needs met.