



# Effective Communication

## – IFSP Team

**The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team is intended to be a collaborative partnership between families, the early intervention providers, services coordinator, school personnel, and other parties that have the goal of working together to make appropriate decisions regarding the infant/toddler receiving early intervention services.** Effective communication is an essential tool to support teaming and collaboration.

**The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act intends for team members to work collaboratively to try and reach consensus.** Consensus is best achieved when the parties of the team are respectful in working together. Consensus is most challenging when various members of the team have diverse opinions. Through careful and purposeful work of sharing ideas, consensus can be achieved.

It is difficult to listen and hear anything positive from someone who is adversarial within the team. All team members deserve respect and should be prepared in any meeting to act respectful to others. Team members work best when they view themselves as collaborators.

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# Communication Guidelines

## 1 **Keep the focus on the infant/toddler and family.**

The IFSP team meeting is not about the adults in the room – it's about the infant/toddler and their family members!

## 2 **Everyone will have an opportunity to share.**

As a result, each member should allow those sharing to finish without being interrupted or shut down. Parents must have an individual voice.

## 3 **Keep the focus on the future.**

The members can get stuck when conversations are geared toward what happened in the past. The focus needs to be on “what are things going to look like moving forward.”

## 4 **Be sure to listen when others are speaking.**

When listening, the goal isn't to come up with answers or build an argument. Instead, listen with the goal of understanding what the other person is saying and where they are coming from.

## 5 **Think about how to share what you need to say in a way that makes it easier for others to hear, understand, and respond.**

When sharing with the team, be sure to share your thoughts with others in a way that is respectful. Mutual respect between team members helps members to stay engaged and not become defensive.

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