Communication Between Home Visits Research and Professional Practices:
Guide for Administrators

(Part II Guidance Document)

The purpose of this document is to provide supporting research for the use of communication between home visits. It serves as a companion document to Communication Between Home Visits in Routines-Based Early Intervention: A Supplement to the Getting Ready Approach.

Early Intervention (EI) Experts Promote Communication as an Integral Component of Service Delivery

Experts in the EI field emphasize communication as an integral component of service delivery. Communication has been recommended as a practice to enhance team functioning and interpersonal relationships (Division for Early Childhood, 2014). It is essential for effective collaborating, sharing, and exchanging information to occur between professionals and caregivers (Council for Exceptional Children, 2020). Several important documents developed by EI experts, guide services coordinators, providers, and other personnel. Aspects of these documents highlighting the importance of communication are shared in the table below.

Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children	ECPC Early Childhood Personnel Center	Council for Exceptional Children	NATIONAL Service Coordination TRAINING WORKGROUP
Guide all Early Intervention Professionals	**Guide all Early Intervention Professionals**	**Guides EI/ECSE Teacher candidates**	**Guides Service Coordinators**
Family Recommended Practices	**Family-Centered Practice Competency Indicators**	**Standard 2: Partnering with Families**	**Knowledge and Skills for Service Coordinators (KSSC) Family-Centered Practices**
✓ F2. Practitioners provide the family with up-to-date, comprehensive, and unbiased information in a way that the family can understand and use to make informed choices and decisions.	✓ Uses effective communication (listening, speaking, writing) skills with all families across cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.	✓ 2.2 Candidates communicate clear, comprehensive, and objective information about resources.	✓ 2.3 Promote engagement and family capacity-building to address their priorities and concerns, by supporting them to identify opportunities to achieve goals for their family and child's development and learning.
✓ F4. Practitioners and the family work together to create outcomes or goals, develop individualized plans, and implement practices that address the family's priorities and concerns and the child's strengths and needs.	✓ Collaborates with the family to identify the family's strengths, needs, concerns, and priorities.	**Standard 3: Collaboration and Teaming**	**KSSC Coordination of Services**
	Coordination and Collaboration Competency Indicators	✓ 3.1 Candidates apply teaming models, skills, and processes, including appropriate uses of technology, when collaborating and communicating with families; professionals representing multiple disciplines, skills, expertise, and roles; and community partners and agencies and supports that help families to make informed decisions and advocate for access, participation, and equity in natural and inclusive environments.	✓ 4.1 Comprehensively orient all families to the early intervention system and discuss formal and informal supports, and opportunities available to them.
✓ F6. Practitioners engage the family in opportunities that support and strengthen parenting knowledge and skills and parenting competence and confidence in ways that are flexible, individualized, and tailored to the family's preferences.	✓ Uses effective communication skills with others. ✓ Collaborates with the family, service providers, and agencies to develop, implement, and monitor an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).		

Nebraska's Approach to Routines-Based EI Home Visits

The Early Development Network (EDN) in Nebraska has trained over 200 EI professionals (S. Bainter, personal communication, March 29, 2022) to use the *Getting Ready Approach* (Sheridan, Marvin, Knoche, & Edwards, 2008). This evidence-based framework includes a structure and set of practices that EI professionals can use to support caregivers and their children within family routines and activities. *Getting Ready* integrates triadic consultation (McCollum & Yates, 1994) with collaborative/ conjoint consultation (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 1992) and emphasizes the importance of open and honest communication between professionals and caregivers.

Nebraska Research Studies Encourage Early Intervention Teams to Enhance Between-Visit Communication

The EDN partnered with researchers at local academic institutions to investigate the impact of the *Getting Ready Approach* implemented as part of the Office of Special Education Programs improvement initiative, Results Driven Accountability (EDN, 2022). Findings from one of the studies suggested a need for enhancement of the structure, delivery of, and support for the implementation of communication between visits with professionals and caregivers. To learn more about this research, visit http://edn.ne.gov/cms/rda-research-studies. Quotes from participants highlighting the importance of communication between home visits are listed below.

Caregiver reporting the benefits of communicating between visits with a professional:
> She checks up on us. She'll text me and ask how things are going. If I tell her that it's [the strategy] not working, she'll develop a different strategy. She always tells me if I need anything, she's there.

Caregiver seeking more communication between visits with professionals:
> There are times when I wish we had more than one meeting a month. There are times where I feel that we've met the goal, she [the child] mastered that, so okay now what?

Professional sharing example of communication between home visits:
> I was at a home visit last week. I said, "I know my coworker is giving me an example of the social story. I will text you guys during the week to tell you what pictures I need." [T]hen they took pictures with their phone and texted them to me... I have some caregivers that like to send me videos and pictures a lot, just because we've talked about something.

Caregiver sharing the value of communicating between home visits:
> They've [the professionals]…made it so easy for me… I've been able to breathe better, because I've been able to talk [to] them about the concerns about my kids, and with no judgment. I've even had people…even doctors, judge about my kids. And I've never had any problems with the home system.

Provider sharing the importance of identifying between visit activities:
> There's a little portion at the bottom [of the home visit plan where] we...write out what they're going to do between visits, and that's something that the family normally decides on. It's not necessarily like something I wrote. I always call it...a mini goal. "What do you want your mini goal to be for next time?" …They come up with it on their own which I do think helps buy in. But I would say that's the most consistent way that we...help them…try and…follow through.

Research Studies Supporting Enhancement of Communication Between Home Visits

As with any intervention decided upon, it is important to understand the research supporting its use with young children and their caregivers. Research about communication between home visits is emerging and needs to be explored, as it provides foundational evidence for enhancing communication between professionals and caregivers. Thus far, there is support for the following:

- Phone calls and text messages sent from professionals between visits had the following impact on caregiver behavior:
  - Increased engagement
  - Increased use of strategies
  - Improved fidelity (implementing the intervention accurately)
  - Improved stress

- Best outcomes were observed when communication between visits included:
  - Asking caregivers direct questions via messages
  - Increasing the frequency of communication between visits
  - Increasing the specificity of messages sent to the caregiver (e.g., send prompt to use one strategy)

The table below provides an overview of studies conducted to examine communication between home visits with professionals and caregivers of young children ages birth to five.

Authors	Title	Intervention or Information Shared	Key Findings or Guidance for Practitioners
Bigelow, Carta, & Lefever (2008)	Text u ltr: Using cellular phone technology to enhance a caregiving intervention for families at risk for neglect	This report compares cellular phone-enhanced version (CPAT) of a caregiving intervention (Planned Activities Training or PAT) to PAT-only. Caregivers received approximately 10 text messages and one phone call per week. When this study was published, 19 mothers, receiving CPAT, of children under the age of six had completed the intervention.	• Caregiving behaviors improved for both groups. • Caregivers were more likely to respond to text messages when asked a direct question than when supportive comments were provided. • Caregivers liked messages with suggestions for fun activities in the community. • More than half of caregivers reported calls from the intervention coach as helpful.

Authors	Title	Intervention or Information Shared	Key Findings or Guidance for Practitioners
Carta, Lefever, Bigelow, Borkowski, & Warren (2013)	Randomized trial of a cellular phone-enhanced home visiting caregiving intervention	This report includes the complete findings of Bigelow et al. (2008). Researchers compared PAT to CPAT of the intervention. CPAT included text messaging twice per day with one message prompting caregivers to use a specific PAT strategy. Between visits, the intervention coach called to talk about PAT and caregiver-child interactions. This study included 371 mothers of children ages 3.5 to 5.5 years.	• Caregiving behaviors improved in both groups. • Adaptive behavior of children in CPAT improved more than children receiving PAT only. • Caregivers in CPAT used more strategies than mothers receiving PAT. • Caregivers had greater reductions in stress and depression with CPAT.
Hurwitz, Lauricella, Hanson, Raden, & Wartella (2015)	Supporting Head Start caregivers: Impact of text message information on caregiver-child activity engagement	Researchers evaluated use of text message intervention to increase caregiver-child activity interactions. One text message was sent each day Monday through Friday. This study included 256 caregivers of children ages 0 to 5 years.	• Caregiver engaged in more learning activities, particularly true of fathers and caregivers of boys. • Caregivers reported text messages were a good way to receive caregiving information.
Lefever, Bigelow, Carta, Borkowski, Grandfield, McCune, Irvin, & Warren (2017)	Long-term impact of a cell phone–enhanced caregiving intervention	Researchers evaluated a cell phone-supported version (PCI-C) of caregiver-child interactions (PCI) intervention. This study included 371 mothers of children ages 3.5 to 5.5 years.	• Children in the PCI-C group were rated to be more cooperative and less aggressive than the wait-list control group.

Authors	Title	Intervention or Information Shared	Key Findings or Guidance for Practitioners
Gauvreau & Sandall (2017)	Using mobile technologies to communicate with parents and caregivers	This is a practitioner-focused article that shares strategies for communicating (sharing information, supporting conversations) with caregivers through mobile technology.	• Examples of applications (i.e., phone apps) provided that can be used to communicate with caregivers without sharing personal contact information. • Example of a survey that can be used to gather information from caregivers on communication preferences provided.
Bigelow, Walker, Jia, Irvin, Turcotte (2020)	Text messaging as an enhancement to home visiting: Building caregivers' capacity to improve child language-learning environments	The report shares the methods and results of Promoting Communication Tools for Advancing Language in Kids (PC Talk) a caregiver-implemented intervention. Intervention coaches sent text messages two times per week and home visitors at least three times per week. This study included 127 families and their infant-toddlers aged 6-30 months participating in EI services, including Early Head Start and Part C IDEA.	• PC Talk increased caregiver engagement and intervention fidelity. • More text messages sent was associated with higher fidelity of caregivers' use of strategies, which in turn was associated with higher child communication outcomes.

Learn More About Getting Ready Strategies

To learn more about how to access the Getting Ready training and implementation, contact your regional Routines Based Early Intervention (RBEI) Technical Assistant for training at: https://edn.ne.gov/cms/sites/default/files/u1/pdf/RBEI_TA_Providers_Map.pdf

Also, consider reading Marvin et al. (2020) *Getting Ready Strategies for Promoting Parent-Professional Relationships and Parent-Child Interactions published in the Journal of Young Exceptional Children.*

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