



# What Is Coaching?

Coaching is an adult learning strategy that is used to build the capacity of a parent or colleague to improve existing abilities, develop new skills, and gain a deeper understanding of his or her practices for use in current and future situations.

## Key Characteristics of Coaching

1. Joint Planning – Joint planning occurs as a part of all coaching conversations, which typically involves discussion of what the parent agrees to do between coaching interactions to use the information discussed or skills that were practiced.
2. Observation – Observation typically occurs by the practitioner directly observing an action on the part of the parent, which then provides an opportunity for later reflection and discussion.
3. Feedback – Feedback occurs after the parent has the opportunity to reflect on her observations, actions, or opportunity to practice new skills.
4. Action/Practice – Action may occur during or between coaching interactions to provide opportunities for the learner to use the information discussed with the coach or practice newly learned skills.
5. Reflection – Reflection follows an observation or action and provides the parent an opportunity to analyze current strategies and refine her knowledge and skills.

## Coaching in Early Childhood Intervention

Coaching is used for talking with parents and other care providers to recognize what they are already doing that works to support child learning and development as well as building upon existing or new ideas. Rather than telling the other person what he or she needs to do or doing something only to/with the child, individuals using coaching start with what the other person knows and is doing in order to develop and implement a joint plan that meets the needs and

priorities of the person being supported through coaching. Coaching involves asking questions; jointly thinking about what works, does not work, and why; trying ideas with the child; modeling with the child for the parent; sharing information; and jointly planning next steps. In light of the increasingly available evidence for supporting young children with disabilities in natural settings and the intent of Part C to build the competence and confidence of care providers for supporting child learning and development, coaching is a research-based strategy useful for interacting with the important adults in the life of the child.