Family Resource Support Guide

Introduction

The *Family Resource Support Guide* is a planning and documentation tool for assisting early intervention service coordinators to use a strengths-based process of identifying priorities, developing plans, and building a family's capacity to accomplish their priorities. The *Family Resource Support Guide* also assists with the use of a coaching approach to helping families identify and meet their immediate and future priorities. The *Family Resource Support Guide* may be part of family assessment and/or used to address family-focused outcomes on the IFSP.

Instructions

The *Roadmap for Developing Family Support Goals* shows the flow of a facilitated conversation designed to help a parent reflect on their priorities. The *Roadmap* is a conversation guide for helping service coordinators encourage families to identify priorities, reflect on existing accomplishments toward meeting those priorities, and develop action steps and a plan for support to continue to achieve the priorities. The green boxes represent the reflective questions service coordinators should use during the conversation. The yellow box represents an opportunity to brainstorm with the family and provide feedback or additional ideas. Guidance for how to brainstorm and provide effective feedback is included in this Guide. If the family does not know what their priorities are, or lists more than three priorities, move to section two and complete the *Family Strengths and Priorities Assessment* to determine which issues are the most pressing priorities.

The *Family Strengths and Priorities Assessment* is designed to assist the service coordinator to identify areas of support with which the family would like assistance. The scale assesses the extent to which the family has adequate resources to meet the needs of the family as a whole as well as the needs of individual family members. After completing the assessment, the service coordinator should return to the *Roadmap* and continue the conversations with the family-identified priorities in mind. The *Family Strengths and Priorities Assessment* can be delivered as a parent interview or the family can complete it independently.

Service coordinators can use the workbook pages in this guide to document family-identified resources and develop a plan or they can use Individualized Family Service Plan. The workbook pages can be duplicated in order to keep a running record of the family's goals, priorities, and progress throughout the year. Each priority/goal is dated at the time it is developed and at the time it is met.

After plans for achieving the goals have been established, service coordinators can use the *Roadmap for Reflection: Follow-up Conversation to* coach families through the process of implementing the plans and achieving the goals. The follow-up conversation follows a basic flow and can be used regardless of the topic. The basic flow of the follow-up conversation includes:

- Follow up on the previous plan
- Analyze what worked or did not work and why
- Develop alternative strategies or modify existing strategies
- Share information about policies, procedures, evidence-based practices, etc. as needed
- Evaluate the new options
- Create a new plan and back-up plan
- Schedule a new time to meet to review the outcome of the new plan
- Provide an opportunity to identify now or additional topics

Use this tool anytime you are working with a family to establish a new goal or priority. Once the family has chosen at least one goal, use the *Roadmap Follow-up Conversation* or a *Roadmap* for a specific topic to guide your conversation with a family. The *Family Support Plan* can be revised as needed throughout the program year and minimally should be updated when a goal is completed, changed, or added.

How do I explain the family support process in a way that inspires families to set goals?

The family support process is used by service coordinator's in early intervention to provide families with the support they need to take care of their family and support the child with a disability. Unlike plans a family may have had with other agencies in the past, this plan is designed to support the family to achieve the goals **they** identify. Families are not required to establish a family goal as a condition for enrollment in early intervention. Families are required to be offered the opportunity to develop goals (IDEA Part C 34CFR 303.340(a-b)). Some service coordinators find it helpful to build a relationship with the family first and talk with the family about their strengths and dreams. Once you have established mutual trust, families are more likely to open up and allow you to be part of helping them through their challenges. The plan is revisited frequently.

What do I do if the family sets unrealistic goals or timelines?

Each family has the right to establish an individualized plan based on their own knowledge and experiences and will learn and progress at their own pace. Learning through trial and error is part of the process that builds new knowledge and skills. As the family's coach, your follow-up conversations will provide the family with opportunities to discuss and adjust their plans as needed.

What if I don't agree with the family goals?

Family Support Plans are intended to be responsive to the family's interests and goals (Division for Early Childhood, 2014). If you have reason to raise a consideration, you can do so by asking, "What are your thoughts about…" Be respectful of the family's answer and pursue only those areas where the family has invited your involvement unless the issue involves reportable abuse, maltreatment, or neglect. Families will work more diligently to accomplish goals they are invested in (Dunst & Trivette, 2009). Families have the right to establish goals that are meaningful to them. As the family's coach, you are responsible for providing the family with an opportunity to make informed decisions whether you agree with the decision or not. Each time you meet with the family, you have an opportunity to help the family analyze the progress and the impact of their progress on their overall vision for their family. If you use the Roadmaps, families will gain the confidence and competence they need to become more efficient problem-solvers.

What does the federal code say about providing family support in early intervention?

Part 303.34 of the federal code states "Service coordination services include assisting parents of infants and toddlers with disabilities in obtaining access to needed early intervention services and other services identified in the IFSP…" It also states that "service coordination services include coordinating the provision of early intervention services and other services (such as educational, social, and medical services that are not provide for diagnostic or evaluative purposes) that the child needs." Service coordinators not only provide family support related to the provision of therapeutic, medical, and educational purposes, but also family support related to those areas that strengthen family well-being. Regardless of the type of family support needed, service coordinators and well-positioned to maximize their effectiveness by using a capacity-building approach such as coaching when working with families. Furthermore, the Early Childhood Technical Assistance (ECTA) Center *Key Principles for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments* acknowledge that families who have chronic stress brought on by unmet needs find it difficult to make the time or have the energy to promote child learning in natural environment. When the family's basic needs are met, families have more time and energy to engage in supporting their children's learning through responsive interactions.
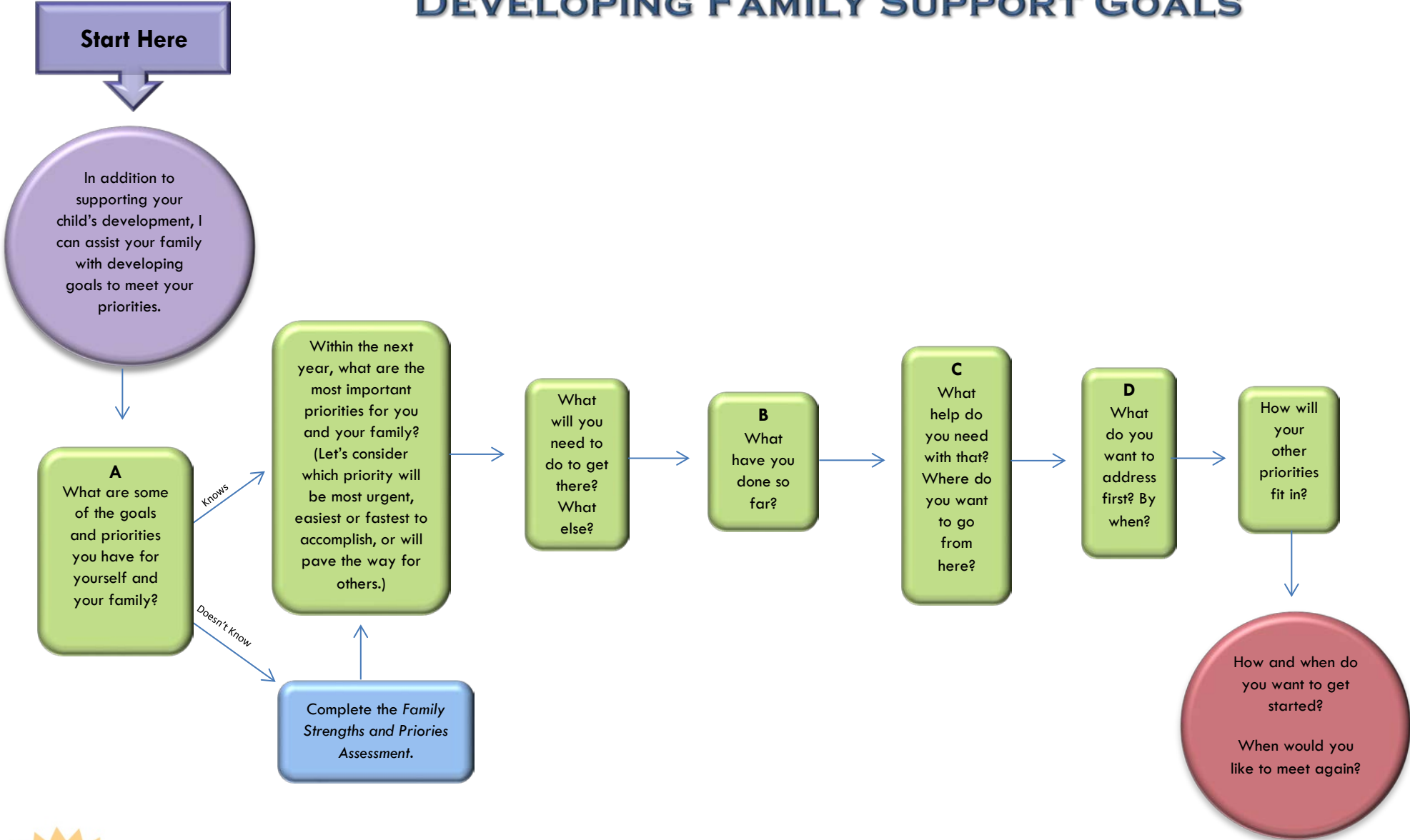
Division for Early Childhood. (2014). DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education 2014. Retrieved from http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices

Early Intervention Rules and Regulations (2015). Early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities. Part 303.34. Retrieved from http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?type=simple;c=ecfr;cc=ecfr;sid=4d8a739944b130f8 117f1aad 43b96192;idno=34;region=DIV1;q1=303;rgn=div5;view=text;node=34%3A2.1.1.1.2

Workgroup on Principles and Practice in natural Environments, OSEP TA Community of Practice: Part C Settings. (2008), March). *Agreed upon mission and key principles for providing early intervention services in natural environments.* Retrieved from http://www.ectacenter.org/~pdfs/topics/families/Finalmissionandprinciples3_11_08.pdf

Roadmap for Reflection
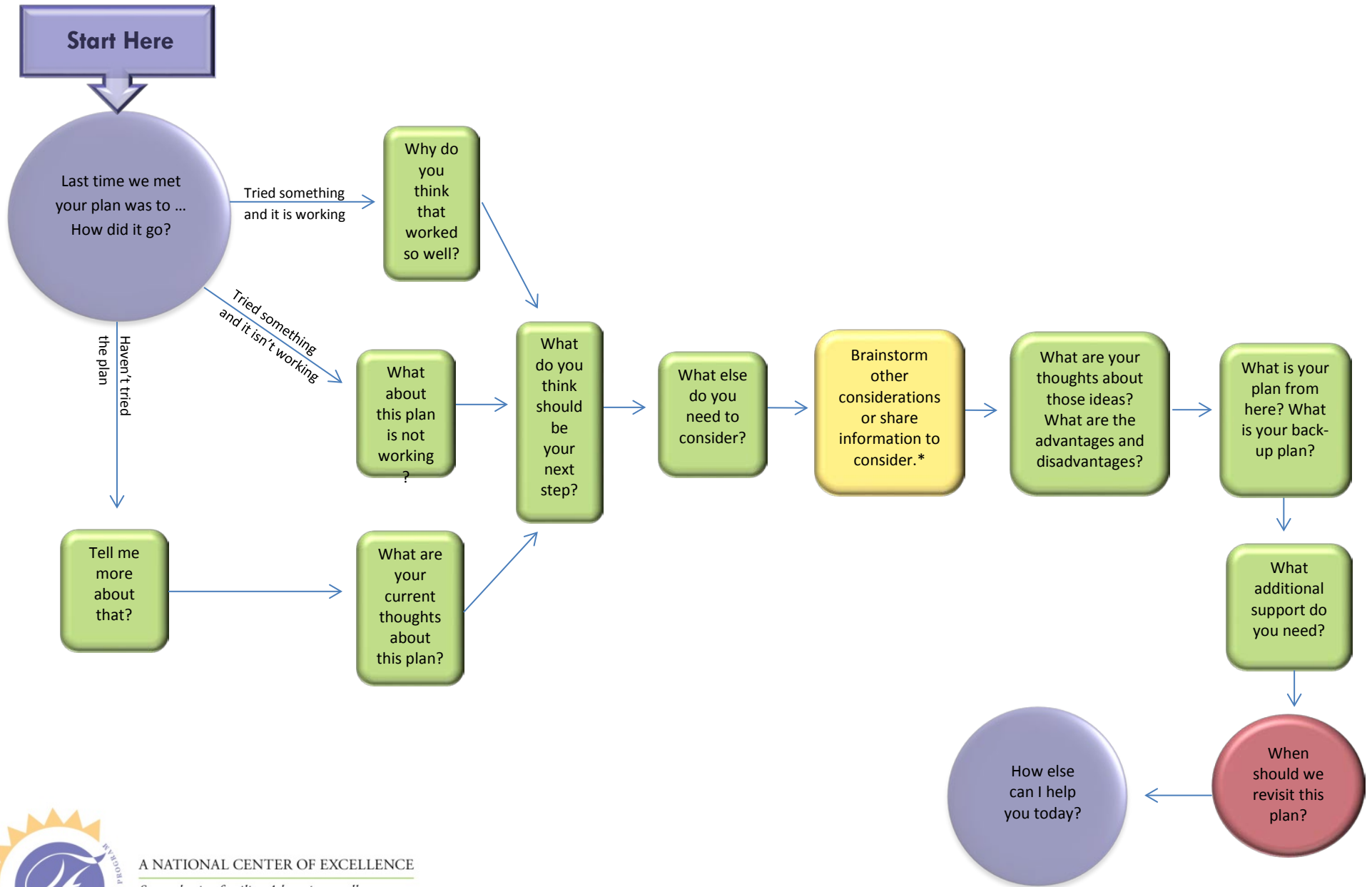# Developing Family Support Goals

Start Here

In addition to supporting your child's development, I can assist your family with developing goals to meet your priorities.

A
What are some of the goals and priorities you have for yourself and your family?

Knows →

Doesn't Know →

Complete the *Family Strengths and Priories Assessment.*

Within the next year, what are the most important priorities for you and your family? (Let's consider which priority will be most urgent, easiest or fastest to accomplish, or will pave the way for others.)

What will you need to do to get there? What else?

B
What have you done so far?

C
What help do you need with that? Where do you want to go from here?

D
What do you want to address first? By when?

How will your other priorities fit in?

How and when do you want to get started?

When would you like to meet again?

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FIPP
THE FAMILY, INFANT AND PRESCHOOL PROGRAM

Roadmap for Reflection
Follow-up Conversation

Start Here

Last time we met your plan was to …
How did it go?

Tried something and it is working →

Why do you think that worked so well?

Tried something and it isn't working →

What about this plan is not working?

Haven't tried the plan →

Tell me more about that?

What are your current thoughts about this plan?

What do you think should be your next step?

What else do you need to consider?

Brainstorm other considerations or share information to consider.*

What are your thoughts about those ideas? What are the advantages and disadvantages?

What is your plan from here? What is your back-up plan?

What additional support do you need?

When should we revisit this plan?

How else can I help you today?

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● Instructions ● FAQ ● Roadmaps ● Guidance   FAMILY RESOURCE SUPPORT GUIDE MANUAL

*Guidance for Conducting Brainstorming

The purpose of coaching is to build the individual's capacity to solve problems (identify, evaluate, and implement effective solutions). Brainstorming should be implemented in a manner that prompts the individual being coached to take the lead role in identifying potential solutions/ideas. The potential solutions should include a mix of informal and formal resources and supports. Informal supports include family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, etc. with whom families often "trade favors." Informal supports are often flexible and renewable, meaning the family can continue to access it and the family contributes in some valuable way the relationship. Formal supports include organizations, agencies, and businesses whose resources are reliable, but sometimes costly or nonrenewable. The following prompts can be used to ensure the practitioner provides ample opportunities for the active participation of the individual being coached.

- What else have you done/thought about?
- What other options can you think of? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- Would it be helpful if I offer what I know?

After these (or similar) prompts it is appropriate for the coach to offer up some additional ideas. After the ideas are on the table, the coach reinforces the leadership role of the individual by asking him/her what he/she thinks about the ideas.

The focus should be to help the family build and maintain a network of resources.

Tips for Asking Reflective Coaching Questions

1. Ask only one reflective question at a time.
2. Be comfortable with silence while waiting for the person to think about his/her response.
3. Avoid asking "grand tour" questions to revisit the previous joint plan (e.g., "How are things going?").
4. An awareness, analysis, or alternatives question always precedes informative feedback.
5. An analysis question always follows informative feedback (e.g., "What are your thoughts about that idea?" "How would that work for you?").
6. A self-attribution question is "What did you do to make that happen/cause that progress?"
7. A yes/no question should only be used to ask permission or not make an assumption (e.g., "Would you like to try it?").
8. When you ask a reflective question and the person says, "I don't know,"
   a) rephrase the question to ensure he/she understands, or
   b) provide affirmative feedback about an observation you made in the past that confirms he/she knows, or
   c) provide informative feedback, and then ask the person an analysis question.
9. When a person says, "Just tell me,"
   a) assure the person that you have some ideas to share;
   b) ask the person a few awareness questions to ensure that the information/idea you have matches the needs/priorities; and
   c) provide informative feedback, and then ask the person an analysis question.
10. Avoid asking questions with the answer embedded (e.g., "I wonder what would happen if…?" "What would you think about…?" "How about you try…?").
11. Avoid asking questions to get the person you are coaching to agree with what you are thinking (i.e., coaxing).

Rush, D. D. & Shelden, M. L. (2011). The early childhood coaching handbook. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Tips for Providing Feedback

1. Feedback occurs after the learner has had the opportunity to reflect on his or her observations or actions, or after the learner has practiced a new skill.
2. Feedback can be affirmative. Affirmative feedback includes statements that describe, restate, or acknowledge what the learner has said (e.g., "Yes, I see what you mean.").
3. Feedback can be evaluative. Evaluative feedback includes comments that evaluate or judge what the learner has said. Evaluative feedback should be used in moderation so that it does not stifle the learner's opportunities to evaluate his/her own actions (e.g., "That was the perfect way to describe what worked. That's exactly how I saw it, too.").
4. Feedback can be informative. Informative feedback includes instances where the coach is sharing new information with the learner (e.g., "Toddlers typically test limits just the way you describe Lisa. Although it's frustrating, it is normal for her age."

Rush, D. D. & Shelden, M. L. (2011). *The early childhood coaching handbook*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.

Effective Helpgiving Dos and Don'ts

Do...	Don't...
☑ communicate clear and complete information in a manner that matches the family's style and level of understanding.	☒ tell the family what you think is best for them.
☑ interact with the family in a warm, caring, and empathetic manner.	☒ tell the family to come in and meet with you because you have things you need to go over.
☑ treat the family with dignity and respect and without judgment.	☒ judge the parent's choices as "good" or "bad."
☑ communicate to and about the family in a positive way.	☒ tell your colleagues information about the family that they don't need to know.
☑ honor and respect the family's personal and cultural beliefs and values.	☒ expect the family to see the world from your perspective.
☑ focus on individual and family strengths and values.	☒ focus on the individual's and family's weaknesses and deficits.
☑ acknowledge the family's ability to achieve desired outcomes.	☒ tell family members their dreams are not realistic or possible for them.
☑ work in partnership with family members to identify and address family-identified desires.	☒ tell the family members what their goals should be and how they should reach them.
☑ encourage and assist the family to make decisions about and evaluate resources and/or strategies best suited for achieving desired outcomes.	☒ tell the family which resources they should use and/or call and make arrangements for the family to use the resources.
☑ seek and promote ongoing family input and active participation regarding desired outcomes.	☒ tell family members why their plan didn't work and revise the plan for the family.
☑ encourage and assist the family to use existing strengths and assets as a way of achieving desired outcomes.	☒ take action (e.g., filling out applications, making phone calls, setting up appointments, etc.) for the family.
☑ provide family participatory opportunities to learn and develop new skills.	☒ do things for the family that the family members can do or learn to do for themselves.
☑ support and respect the family members' decisions.	☒ tell the family what you think of their ideas, such as, "that's not the best decision."
☑ work with the family in a flexible and individualized manner.	☒ tell the family when and where the meetings will occur. lecture families when they are late.
☑ offer help that is responsive to and matches the family's interests and priorities.	☒ talk about what you think should be important to the family.

Adapted from Wilson, L. & Dunst, C. J. (2005). Checklist for assessing adherence to family-centered practices. *CASETool, 1*(1).

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