Family-Centered Practices

Initial Practice Based Professional Standards for Early Interventionists/Early Childhood Special Educators (EI/ECSE)

2.1

Standard 2

Candidates use their knowledge of family-centered practices and family systems theory to develop and maintain reciprocal partnerships with families. They apply family capacity-building practices to support families in making informed decisions and advocating for their young children. They engage families in opportunities that build on their existing strengths, reflect current goals, and foster family competence and confidence to support their children's development and learning.

Component: 2.1

- Candidates apply their knowledge of family-centered practices, family systems theory, and the changing needs and priorities in families' lives to develop trusting, respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with all families that allow for the mutual exchange of knowledge and information.

Objectives

- Describe the elements of family systems theory.

- Describe biological, environmental, cultural, and societal factors that influence a family system.

- Describe family-centered practices that foster trusting, respectful, affirming, and culturally responsive partnerships with families.

- Describe strategies that facilitate the mutual exchange of knowledge and information between professional(s) and a family.

What is a Family?

- Families include two or more people who regard themselves as a family and who carry out the functions that families typically perform

- These people may or may not be related by blood or marriage and may or may not usually live together

Families are Systems

"What happens to one member
of a family happens to all"

(Turnbull, Turnbull et al., 2015 p.1)

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Family Systems Theory

(from: Turnbull, Turnbull et al., 2015)

A family is a social unit embedded within other informal and formal social units:

- Neighbors, friends, places of worship, systems of physical and mental health care, educational systems, employment, systems of access to food, transportation, housing, policy, legislation, and policing)

Family Systems Theory, Continued

- These connected networks/systems surround and include the family, continually influencing each other, reverberating between and across all family members.

- Families can't fully support healthy child development in isolation!

- Interventions must focus on the family within their natural network of systems, not just on the child alone.

Activity

- Watch the video on the following slide

- What systems impact child development? How?

- Can you make a difference in child outcomes without considering adult capabilities?

- How do you serve/empower adults in your work with children with disabilities and delays?

Video:
Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes

https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-adult-capabilities-to-improve-child-outcomes-a-theory-of-change/

Empowering capacity:
Family Centered Practice

- Family involvement in early childhood intervention is an essential component for promoting child learning and development.

- Family-centered refers to a particular set of beliefs, principles, values, practices for supporting and strengthening family capacity to enhance and promote development and learning.

Building capacity

- Capacity-building family-centered practices empower families and promote self-efficacy across social networks and systems

- Require a relationship based on mutual trust and respect

Engaging families to build capacity

Shonkoff (2017), Dunst & Trivette (2009)

- When family members feel safe, strong, and competent to meet the needs of their family, they are more likely to have frequent positive interactions with their child

- When EI/ECSE providers effectively engage families, they are in a position to build family capacity

- Family capacity-building supports adult-child relationships and supports optimal child outcomes

Capacity-building: 4 types
(adapted from Dunst, 2010)

- **A model or paradigm** for structuring how EI/ECSE providers work with families

- **A set of empowering practices** that build and strengthen family capacities

- **A process of building knowledge and skills** to promote responsive caregiving and child development

- **A goal to strengthen family member self-efficacy** beliefs

Contrasting Approaches to EI/ECSE Practices

Capacity-Building Models
- Promotion

- Empowerment

- Strength-based

- Resource-based

- Family-centered

Traditional Models
- Treatment

- Expertise

- Deficit-based

- Service-based

- Professional-centered

Capacity Building Practices

- Relational practices

    - Compassion, respect, active and reflective listening, trust, empathy, effective communication

    - Include practitioner beliefs and sensitivity to family and cultural strengths, values as part of intervention practice

- Participatory

    - Actively involve the family in choices and decision-making, developing family skills needed to obtain resources and supports - with flexibility and responsiveness

Capacity Building Caregiving Opportunities

- Building capacity for family members to positively engage in everyday activities and routines

- Increased frequency of positive interactions supports the learning and development of children

- Increased frequency of positive reciprocal interactions support self-efficacy of caregiving adults

Family-Centered Practice: Principles of Effective Help-Giving

(adapted from Dunst & Trivette, 2009)

- Positive and proactive in the context of trust

- Offered **in response to** an indicated need

- Engages families in choices and decisions

- Culturally normative and appropriate

- Include opportunities to reciprocate

- Enhances self-efficacy

- Promote acquisition of effective strategies that decrease the need for help in the future

Effective Partnering With Families

Description of family-professional partnership framework

- A. Definition | Connect Modules (dec-sped.org)

Family-Centeredness

- Treat families with dignity and respect

  - Individualized

  - Flexible

  - Responsive practices

    - Linguistically relevant

    - Culturally responsive

What Do We Mean by "Culturally Responsive"?

Holding in mind:

- Who is this family? This child?

- What does this family need to feel safe and ready to engage with EI services? What previous experiences have they had with formal systems?

- What words do they use to talk about disability or delay, and what meaning do they make of them?

Cultural Humility:
Examining Our Own Expectations

- What assumptions am I making about this family?

- What developmental milestones do I think are important that may be culturally different for this family? (e.g., independence, self-help)

- What are typical ways that adults and children interact in my own culture vs. others?

Discussion: Case Example

- Luz and her husband Luis live with their son Carlos, who is 26 months old. She and Luis both work alternating shifts to care for Carlos. Carlos has just received a diagnosis of ASD, and his family/team is working on helping him use communicative gestures, sounds, and single words, and increase episodes of joint attention

- Luz is committed to helping Carlos learn. In her birth family, she says that adults did not typically sit on the floor and play with toys with children – adults always worked so children could thrive

- *How would you support social interactions and communication for Carlos and his family? What elements will be important to consider?*

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Activity: Antonia and Her Family

- ECPC Case Study: Family Centered Practice

- What effective strategies or practices were implemented to facilitate the development of a trusting, respectful relationship between Hailey (primary service provider) and Jennifer (Antonia's mother)?

- What additional strategies or practices could have been implemented to support the well-being of this family?

References and Resources

- Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R. Ersin, E.J., Soodak, L.C. & Shogren, K.A. (2015). *Families, Professional and Exceptionality, 2015, Pearson*

- Dunst, C.J. & Trivette, C. (2009) Capacity-Building Family-Systems Intervention Practices, Journal of Family Social Work, 12:2, 119-143, DOI: 10.1080/10522150802713322

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References and Resources

- Dunst, C.J., (2014). [Family capacity-building in early childhood intervention: effects of parent and child competence and confidence](#). Orelena Hawks Puckett Institute, Asheville, N.C. Presentation at the *Eighth National Congress on Early Intervention with Young Children and their Families*, Aveiro, Portugal

References and Resources

- [Early Childhood Personnel Center](#)

- [Cross-Disciplinary Competencies](#)

- [Harvard Center on the Developing Child https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/building-adult-capabilities-to-improve-child-outcomes-a-theory-of-change/](#)

- [Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework (hhs.gov)](#)

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This is a product of the Early Childhood Personnel Center (ECPC) and was made possible by Cooperative Agreement #H325B170008 which is funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.