Family-Centered Practices

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

2.2

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: 2.2

- Candidates communicate clear, comprehensive, and objective information about resources and supports that help families to make informed decisions and advocate for access, participation, and equity in natural and inclusive environments.

Objectives

- Describe effective communication strategies to use with families, including those from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds

- Describe strategies to inform families about resources and supports available to them

- Develop strategies to help families make informed decisions and advocate for access, participation, and equity in natural and inclusive environments for their child

Communication and Collaboration

- **Communication**: any means by which an individual relates or exchanges experiences, ideas, preferences, knowledge, and feelings

- **Collaboration**: interactive relationships between adults such as family members and professionals to work together to achieve mutually agreed-upon goals

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Elements of Effective Communication

- Linguistically accessible

- Culturally normative

- Jargon-free and strength-based language

- Respectful

- Confidential

- Presumes competence of both parties

- Fully reciprocal

Linguistically Accessible

- IDEA ʃ303.321(a)(5) and (a)(6) require that notification to parents be provided in the native language normally used by the parents of the child

- All direct contact with a child (including evaluation of the child) includes use of the language normally used in the home or learning environment (ʃ303.A.29(a))

Overcoming Linguistic Barriers

- Families from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds often do not access clear information about service provision

- Poor communication due to language barriers compromises engagement and quality of services

- Interpreters should be actively sought out in your community to meet the legal requirements of IDEA

Selecting a Qualified Interpreter

- Fluent in both languages, including dialect

- Familiar with EI/ECSE terminology

- Familiar with screening/assessment tools

- Familiar with family culture, including nonverbal expressions and gestures

- Follow confidentiality protocol (HIPAA/FERPA)

- Have a certification/licensure

Strategies to Locate Translation and Interpreter Resources

(Rossetti, Sauer et al., (2017)

- Locate materials that have already been translated: check local and state websites, e.g., Connecticut's Birth to Three web platform

- Train bilingual staff in your district to be translators or interpreters, and explore resources for training in your community, e.g., Found in Translation.org

Strategies to Locate Translation and Interpreter Resources, cont.

- Collaborate with local universities to identify students in language programs who may need practicum hours

- Collaborate with other non-profit or other community agencies that have bilingual staff to help with translations or to identify community members who may want to be trained as an interpreter

Strategies for Service Providers Working With Interpreters

(Acar & Blasco, 2016)

- Introduce all parties and explain roles

- Always look at and talk directly to family members rather than to the interpreter – avoid side comments

- Clarify the need for precise translations at all times

- Never enlist children to interpret

- Avoid asking "do you understand?" and instead ask which details could be better explained – focus on specifics

- Speak in a measured pace – and pause often

Implementing Culturally Normative Practices

- Everyone carries culture with them

- Systems of education and care most often based on tenets of the dominant culture

- Children and families learn and use communication, behavior, and prioritize goals in the context of their own culture

- EI/ECSE providers acknowledge and normalize the unique culture of families and create bridges into early care and education environments

Building Trust Through Respectful Interactions

- Being predictable – doing what you say you will do, being on time

- Providing clear information about assessments and programming - creating space for questions

- Making sure that families are the decision-makers

- Frequent communication – check-ins, texts, pictures

- Responding to family needs rather than jumping in – So, what did you try? How did that work?

- Celebrating small steps forward when families are overwhelmed/struggling

Video: Including Culture

Watch the '[Including Culture](#)' video on the next slide, than discuss the following questions;

- How does this teacher talk about how she includes the concept of culture in her classroom?

- She mentioned one example – are there other child behaviors connected to culture that can be misinterpreted?

- Are there differences in the way we might interpret child behaviors based on implicit/explicit biases?

Video: [Including Culture](#)

Learning About a Child's Family Culture

Effective Communication

- Effective communication is the cornerstone of family-centered practice

- Currently, there are too many families of children who are eligible for EI services (in Part C or Part B) who do not engage with early intervention services (ITCA, 2020)

- Families of color less likely to engage with and remain in EI services

- EI/ECSE practitioners can use effective communication to increase the likelihood of family engagement

Identify and Address Communication Breakdowns

Turnbull, Turnbull et al., (2015)

- Family member may be relatively silent (nod, "uh-huh") or may appear distracted (e.g., looks down at phone)

  - May be confused, overwhelmed, or may feel alienated from the process

  - May feel they must "comply"

  - Professionals may unintentionally dominate the interaction taking the position of "expert"

Positive Communication Skills

Turnbull, Turnbull et al., (2015)

Nonverbal communication

- Physical proximity – face to face, on the same level

- Appropriate use of eye contact, making sure to notice how family member uses sustained eye contact

- Attending to the speaker rather than to paperwork

- Noticing how your body expresses your interest in listening to the speaker

Positive Communication Skills: Listening

We have two ears and one mouth so that we can listen twice as much as we speak.

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Effective Listening

Turnbull, Turnbull et al., (2015)

- **Create space** for the family member to speak – we often rush to fill moments of silence

- **Ask open-ended questions** that are relevant to what the family member is communicating about

- **Paraphrase** what the family member said to clarify your understanding

- **Respond to affect** – acknowledge emotions when you hear them expressed

Establishing Partnerships with a Diverse Array of Families

Turnbull, Turnbull et al., (2015) pp. 196-197

Enhancing **shared power** and **connection**:

- **Respect**: Honors all communication as valid and authentic

- **Reciprocity**: Values the power of the family member's voice, brings as much to the interaction as your own

- **Responsiveness**: Each individual has something to contribute – connection is always the focus

Activity: A Tale of 2 conversations

- Watch the first of the "Tale of Two Conversations" videos on the next slide, and identify aspects of the interaction that contributed to a lack of connection

- Watch the second video and identify some of the positive communication strategies we reviewed

Tale of 2 Conversations: Take One

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVNrRJ9Kr88

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Tale of 2 Conversations: Take Two

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IogiEKNt1eE

Communicating with Families

- Establish preferred method of contact and best time to talk

- Treat every message as important and respond to messages promptly

- Address family member by name, not by role (e.g., Mom)

- In early care settings, obtain necessary consents to share pictures and video with families

- Let families know you appreciate their time in communicating with you

Connecting Families with Concrete Resources

Cultivate a list of resources unique to your community:

- Child care

- Transportation

- Housing

- Employment

- Health Care/Behavioral health/Allied health care providers

- Provide information about resources directly, and empower families to make contact

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Connecting Families of Children with Disabilities

- Families of children with disabilities benefit from connections w/other families who share similar experiences

- Parent Centers – federally funded, offer direct and indirect support to families of children with disabilities

- Family organizations focused on specific disabilities, e.g., through Autism Speaks, The Arc, ASAN

- National websites, e.g., National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

Activity

Watch the "**Reflections During the Final Home Visit"** video on the next slide before discussing the following questions

- Listen to this mother talk about her experience with the primary service provider, a physical therapist (PT)

- Which of the practices we discussed today did you hear her bring forward as she talked about her experiences?

- How were these services provided in a way that supported this family's engagement in services?

Video:
Reflections During the Final Home Visit

https://youtu.be/RqR5OfRWvgw

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References and Resources

- Acar, S. & Blasco, P.M. (2016). Guidelines for Collaborating With Interpreters in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education, Young Exceptional Children; Vol. 21(3)

- Hepburn, K.S., (2004). Building Culturally and Linguistically Competent Services to Support Young Children, Their Families, and School Readiness. The Annie E. Casey Foundation.

- Rossetti, Z. Sauer, J.S., Bui, O. Ou, S. (2017). Developing Collaborative Partnerships With Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families During the IEP Process. TEACHING Exceptional Children, Vol. 49(5)

References and Resources

- Turnbull, A., Turnbull, R., Erwin, E.J., Soodak, L.C., Shogren, K.A. (2015) Families, Professionals and Exceptionality: Positive Outcomes Through Partnerships and Trust; Pearson.

References and Resources

- Connecticut's Birth to Three

- CECE Early Childhood Videos at Eastern CT State U: Learning about a Child's Family Culture

- Head Start|ECLKC website: Children with Disabilities

Disclaimer

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