

## **Part C Eligibility and Data Based Assessment Decisions**

# **Gathering “Data” from Families**

As early intervention professionals, we are legally and ethically responsible for partnering with families. Additionally, there are sound practical and professional reasons for these partnerships, as well. First, families provide relevant and authentic information about their child. They can provide longitudinal information about their child that is only available from and through them (Diamond & Squires, 1993). Secondly, family members provide needed information about their circumstances and how this impacts their child. Lastly, research evidence indicates that more active involvement of families in their child’s program appears to be related to greater developmental progress (Ramey & Ramey, 1998), thus making the concept of partnerships with families a central theme across all phases of the assessment and evaluation process.

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# What Families Want to Know About Assessment

- Assessment means working together to learn about your child.
- An assessment should give you a picture of your child in typical and daily activities and settings.
- Watching a young child do something he enjoys with someone he trusts is an important part of assessment.
- Assessment should be informative and helpful.

Adapted from Zero to Three. (n.d.) *New visions: A parent's guide to understanding developmental assessment*. Retrieved March 24, 2004, from <http://www.zerotothree.org/visions.html>

## Child Directed

- Ability to accurately administer, interpret, and document assessment/evaluation procedures.
- Ability to communicate assessment/intervention recommendations to family.
- Professionals lead the team decision making process.

## Family Directed

- Ability to involve family in assessment process and accurately document their observations.
- Ability to communicate effectively with family to ascertain preferred services and delivery format.
- Family choices drive the team decision making process.

Family-guided Approaches to Collaborative Early Intervention Training and Services (FACETS I). (1996). Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities at Parsons, 2601 Gabriel, Parsons, KS 67357.

## How to Implement Family Guided Values While Gathering Assessment Information

- ◇ Ask only for information that has a specific purpose.
- ◇ Assist families to identify their interests, needs, and strengths through the use of conversations, checklists or in problem solving dialogues.
- ◇ Provide opportunities for open ended comments or responses. Let families “guide” how much and when they share sensitive information.
- ◇ Focus on areas of family concerns, such as: child interests, family interests, and community interests.
- ◇ Focus on strengths and wellness. Present questions, comments, and information in a positive manner.
- ◇ Adapt for differences in lifestyle, religion, beliefs, and coping strategies of the family.
- ◇ Use instructions and language that are clear and understandable. Explain any jargon used.
- ◇ Include existing community resources in information and questions. Identify informal supports.
- ◇ Ask family members to determine who they want to participate in the information sharing, when and where it will occur, and types and amounts of information to be shared.
- ◇ Have families review all written information and determine if it is accurate and acceptable. They determine what information will be shared and with whom it will be shared. (This includes verbal as well as written information.)

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## **Roles of the Family Service Coordinator in Evaluation and Assessment**

- ❁ Arrange and coordinate the evaluations and assessments for each family.
- ❁ Assist the family in identifying the appropriate multidisciplinary team members.
- ❁ Obtain consent from the family.
- ❁ Ensure that nondiscriminatory procedures are followed.
- ❁ Ensure that the family's rights and procedural safeguards are explained to them.
- ❁ Ensure that all information gathered during the evaluation and assessment process is made available to the IFSP team, particularly when the IFSP team members are different from the evaluation and assessment team members.

Reprinted with permission from Gallagher, F. G., Garland, C. W., Kniest, B. A., & Quigley, A. C. (1998). *Caring for infants and toddlers with disabilities: A manual for physicians*. Norge, VA: Child Development Resources, Table 4, p. 6-14.

## Suggestions for Discussing Evaluation and Assessment Information with Families

- \* Provide full and honest information.
- \* Repeat the information in many different ways and at many different times.
- \* When both parents are involved with a child's care, try to talk with both parents at the same time.
- \* Encourage parents to ask questions.
- \* Avoid using jargon as much as possible; explain those terms that must be used.
- \* Present a balanced perspective – discuss positive outcomes as well as limitations.
- \* Avoid a patronizing or condescending attitude.
- \* Offer information about parent to parent support.
- \* Realize parents will need time to consider the information – set up another conference.
- \* Allow parents time to express their feelings and be accepting of those feelings.
- \* Understand that parents may respond with displaced anger; the attack is on the information, not you.
- \* If parents respond with anger, avoid being defensive; continue to be supportive and accepting.
- \* Discuss how to tell other family members.
- \* Suggest reading materials and community resources.
- \* Assure families that you will be available to them in the future.

Adapted from Turnbull, A. & Turnbull, H. R. (2000). *Families, professionals & exceptionality: Collaborating for empowerment*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.