

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

### **“Best Practices” in Early Intervention Assessment**

The assessment process is a critical event for families and their children; the outcome of this process could mean specialized interventions that could significantly change a child's developmental course. Assessment, of course, is important for eligibility determination but also equally important for program planning, monitoring progress and program evaluation. Since this process is so vital to families and professionals, it is equally imperative that materials and procedures for early childhood assessment are relevant and meaningful (Bagnato & Neisworth, 2000). To assist with our understanding of assessment, Bagnato and Neisworth, 1991, proposed this definition for early childhood assessment and the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) endorsed it:

Early childhood assessment is a flexible, collaborative, decision-making process in which teams of parents and professionals revise their judgments and reach consensus about the changing developmental, educational, medical and mental health service of young children and their families (p. xi).

Using and reflecting on this definition assists us, as early interventionists, to understand the importance of using “best practice”. Viewing early childhood assessment as an ever changing process is consistent with a family-centered view of service delivery knowing that every family is unique and different. Building on these differences make the assessment process meaningful to families and supports the family in making decisions about their child.

Included in the hard copy version of this packet are the articles:

Neisworth, J. T., & Bagnato, S. J. (2000). Recommended practices in assessment. In Sandall, S., McLean, M. E., & Smith, B. J. (Eds.), DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education (pp.23-27). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Early Childhood Connections for Infants, Toddlers and Families. (2002, September 16).

Self-assessment of DEC's recommended practices in assessment. Retrieved January 6, 2009, from [http://www.eicolorado.org/files/DEC\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.eicolorado.org/files/DEC_Practices.pdf)

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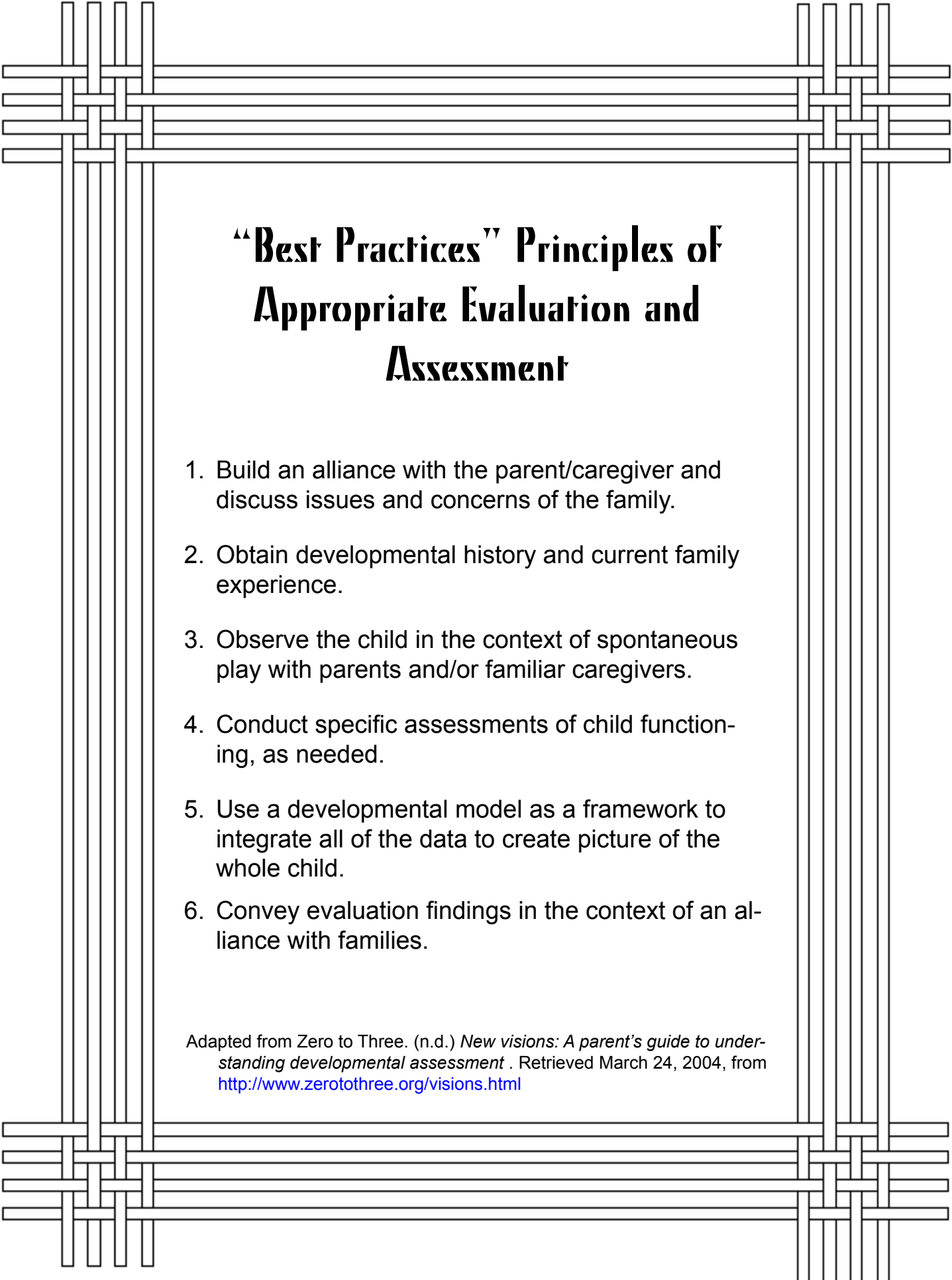
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## **“Best Practices” Principles of Appropriate Evaluation and Assessment**

1. Build an alliance with the parent/caregiver and discuss issues and concerns of the family.
2. Obtain developmental history and current family experience.
3. Observe the child in the context of spontaneous play with parents and/or familiar caregivers.
4. Conduct specific assessments of child functioning, as needed.
5. Use a developmental model as a framework to integrate all of the data to create picture of the whole child.
6. Convey evaluation findings in the context of an alliance with families.

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>

## DEC Recommended Practices

The DEC Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/ Early Childhood Special Education is a source of guidance for early intervention practices. Using evidence-based research and literature, the following publication synthesizes research into practical applications and “best practices”. The list of 46 recommended practices in assessment should be used as a catalyst for making decisions and recommendations about assessment on your early intervention team.

The self-assessment tool can be used as benchmarks for assessing your team and program. This tool can be used in a variety of ways. Included on the introduction to the tool are some suggestions for its use. Please read these before using the tool within your own program.

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Neisworth, J. T., & Bagnato, S. J. (2000). Recommended practices in assessment. In Sandall, S., McLean, M. E., & Smith, B. J. (Eds.), *DEC recommended practices in early intervention/early childhood special education* (pp.23-27). Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Early Childhood Connections for Infants, Toddlers and Families. (2002, September 16). Self-assessment of DEC's recommended practices in assessment. Retrieved January 6, 2009, from [http://www.eicolorado.org/files/DEC\\_Practices.pdf](http://www.eicolorado.org/files/DEC_Practices.pdf)