




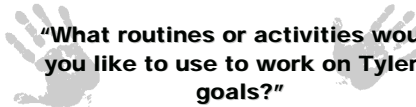
Facilitating Family Involvement in Daily Routines

Two handprints, one on the left and one on the right, framing the text.

A Family-guided Process

- provides information and resources
- is transactional
- is individual
- offers choices
- results in informed decision-making

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Two handprints, one on the left and one on the right, framing the text.

“What routines or activities would you like to use to work on Tyler’s goals?”

“That’s why I have them come. I, as a parent, can’t do it without some training. Since it’s been so long since I had my last one, it’s hard to remember exactly what developmental toys to work with at his age. But I have been doing my best.”

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A family-guided process is based on the assumption that adequate information and support are provided to family members to assist them in making responsible and informed decisions. To guide the process and make it "fit" their child and family situation, the family members must understand the key concepts of the decision they are being asked to make.

One of the most, if not the most, essential responsibilities of the interventionist is to make information and resources available to families using methods and materials that are meaningful and easily understood by the family. The materials should be tailored to offer the amount of information, at times and in a format that is most beneficial to the family. The timelines for disseminating the information should be individualized for the family and not based on arbitrary program policies.

For some families, information will be shared through conversations; others may prefer written documentation to read and digest independently; still others prefer another parent to share the information with them. Many families prefer talking about an issue, such as using routines for intervention, with the early intervention staff and then watching a supportive video. There is no single correct way; the family guides the process by choosing the way that is best for them.

The information sharing, however, is not unidirectional. It is a transactional exchange. As information is shared with the family, the family is also sharing information with the interventionist about their values, interests, histories, concerns, and goals. The content shared by the family should help guide the interventionist in knowing if more information or resources are needed or if the family is ready to make decisions.





“Because his dad works, they don’t have as much time together as he and I. They shower together in the morning. That is probably their most together time. In the evenings when the other kids have settled into their evening routines, they may play together for a few minutes until bedtime.”

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Communication Skills



- Listen
- Reflect feelings
- Reflect content
- Question

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Steps to Family-guided Problem Solving



- Defining the concern/problem
- Identifying the data
- Generating ideas
- Choosing solutions
- Developing the plan
- Evaluating the plan

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Family guided routines for early intervention are developed using the family’s choices for settings, participants, materials, and strategies. The routines are not available in a workbook for dissemination. Each one is different depending upon the family’s interests and strengths. The family identifies who will participate, how often, when, and where.

Identifying the information with the family to develop the routines requires mutual respect, time, and effective communication skills. There is not a set of communication skills specific to the development of family-guided intervention routines but simply a skillful application of the basic communication skills which are useful in early intervention realizing that a family is being asked to share very personal information.

The interventionist needs to be able to:

- Listen:
 - * focus and follow the family's lead
 - * use facial expressions to encourage
- Reflect feelings:
 - * be clear and concise without adding or deleting information or judging
 - * summarize sensitively
- Reflect content:
 - * paraphrase briefly
 - * organize and restate
- Question:
 - * make open ended comments and queries
 - * promote problem solving

Implementing a family-guided process engages the team in a collaborative and creative problem solving process to achieve flexible and individualized participation for each family. The process includes steps that preempt jumping ahead to solutions without carefully identifying and examining the data, possible alternatives, and delineating an evaluation plan to be sure the decisions are most appropriate. No decisions made should ever be considered final but rather the team should embrace the value of ongoing problem solving to see new and better options for enhancing the child's development and the family's decision making capacity.

In relationships valued by the partners, there is a tendency to provide answers to questions that are perceived as "correct" or the answer believed to be the one the questioner wants to hear whether it is true or not. Families value their relationship with their interventionists because of the services they provide for their child. Interventionists also value their relationship with the family. Both partners must appreciate the complexity of the communication focusing on embedding intervention within the daily lives of children and families. It is very personal.




- “This is probably a stupid question.”
- “You know best. You’re the teacher.”
- “I don’t know. I’m just a parent.”
- “It’s probably wrong. I learned it from my mother.”

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“We are beginning to embrace home care at a time when nobody is at home anymore.”

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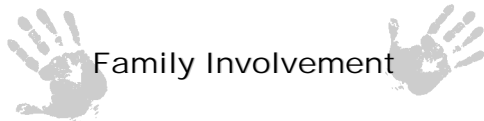
If we look at the meanings and not just the words, families offer us some excellent guidance for communicating more effectively by the comments they make. Family members rarely describe themselves as equal partners in the intervention process. They lack the experience and expertise the providers have. A problem solving approach supports the back and forth exchange of ideas and strategies. No one has all the information; everyone has some. Together the best plan can be developed.

Interventionists frequently ask advice on how to get families involved in their child's intervention. Involving families in the intervention process is really not the question. Families are involved simply by being a family. The question really needs to focus on the amount and types of involvement. The answers then can come from the ideas and strategies offered and the choices made by the family members.

If the only involvement proposed is to complete daily activities at home with the child, then some family members will say they can't do it, or others may agree, but never get the activities completed. However, if a variety of involvement ideas are jointly identified, family members can identify the option, or options that works for them. The level of involvement they choose will vary based on their own family situation. It will also change. For some families, it may change day to day or week to week. With others, it may change as the child grows and develops or as family circumstances change. The interventionists need to be aware of the ever changing needs of families and be able to accommodate the changes within their routines. Each visit becomes an opportunity to reflect on the current options and to brainstorm and plan more preferred routines.

Families can choose to be involved in intervention in different ways. Some options families have chosen include:

- Making suggestions about materials or strategies for a childcare provider to use during routines at the center;
- Completing a schedule matrix for one or two activities at home;
- Involving grandma and grandpa in routines at their house;
- Developing a special routine for the siblings;
- Embedding targets within one routine (e.g. diapering) throughout the day;
- Observing the child's ability to use a new skill in a different situation;
- Coordinating routines between the childcare and home.



Family Involvement

- **must be flexible**
- **is individualized**
- **offers options**
- **accommodates change**

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The intervention team, including the family, must determine if the opportunities for teaching and learning are sufficient for each child. The entire intervention program for a child should not be embedded into family routines, unless that is the family's choice. The team must monitor the child's progress as routines change and skills develop. Lives change; children change; concerns and priorities change. It is only logical that services must change accordingly. There is no perfect pattern for service-- only the one that meets the needs of the child and family.



"Meals are a good time to work on his goals. Even if you get really busy, he has to eat, so opportunities are always there. He's usually in a good mood during meals, and I am able to pull in many different skills, fine motor, making sounds, turn-taking, whatever. Plus, he's developing life skills that he'll have to have."

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