



Facilitating a Problem-Solving Approach for Families

Utilizing consistent problem-solving strategies can help families become more autonomous and self-reliant. Families can practice the basic steps of problem-solving in many aspects of the early intervention process so that they can effectively deal with future concerns.

The basic steps include:

1. Defining the problem with data- What is the concern/problem?

Family teams need to learn to be specific, to get to the "root" of the problem or concern. Some problems may be well structured with adequate information to propose solutions. Others will be less structured and need considerable information gathering before solutions can be proposed. Questions that may help team focus on the specifics include:

- * What are the priorities?
- * Whose problem is it?
- * What's demanding attention?
- * What demands are really most pressing?
- * When am I concerned? When is it on my mind? Where?
- * What will happen if I don't deal with these?
- * What do I most hope to preserve, achieve, attain or avoid?
- * What information do I have? Must I get? Would I like?
- * What would I like to do, do more, or do better?
- * What have I been trying unsuccessfully to avoid?
- * What are my "bottom-line" goals or concerns?
- * What must change immediately for our family to move forward?
- * What concerns or opportunities must be addressed first?
- * What do I really know to be fact about this mess? When does it occur? How often? Where? With whom?
- * What patterns do I see in these data?
- * What's already been tried? With what results?
- * What might I have overlooked? What else?
- * What feelings, hunches, impressions, ideas, questions or observations might be involved?

2. Generating ideas - What things can I (we) do?

- * How might this problem be solved?
- * What tried and true solutions have worked for similar problems?
- * Who might have good ideas to consider?
- * What's my greatest fantasy about how to do this?
- * What would I do if there were no obstacles?
- * How might I use some ideas or objects from a totally different context or purpose?
- * Which alternatives are most appealing? Attractive? Least intrusive?
- * What ideas deserve closer examination or consideration?
- * What ideas offer me the best chance to do something?
- * What ideas surprised me or caught my attention?
- * What options suggest new and promising ways to solve this problem?
- * What ideas do I really like best?



3. Choosing solutions - Which is the best?

- * What factors or criteria might be considered?
- * Ease of implementation?
- * Resources necessary available?
- * Expense?
- * Time?
- * Intrusiveness to other family members?
- * What standards or "yardsticks" might be applied to these ideas?
- * How might we determine the strengths or weaknesses of these ideas?
- * How might interesting ideas be made stronger or better?
- * What criteria are most important and necessary to use?
- * What might go right? So what?
- * What might go wrong? So what?
- * What solutions can be combined to improve outcomes?

4. Developing the plan - Who will do what, when?

- * How might we take these actions?
- * What might be sources of assistance or resistance?
- * What might make action easier to take? More difficult?
- * What are some possible obstacles, objections or concerns and what do we do if they occur?
- * Who or what could make your action a "breeze"?
- * Who will help? How will their support be gained?
- * What should I do within 24 hours? What sequence of steps should be planned?
- * How will we monitor and document progress?
- * What are the most important steps to prevent problems?
- * What are the most likely contingent steps, if problems arise?