

# Early Intervention Teams & Families

## TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

### WHOM WILL YOU MEET?

**SERVICE COORDINATOR:** As your **service coordinator**, I will:

- Explain the First Steps program, including the steps in the process and how services are provided.
- Schedule evaluations, assessments and meetings at times that are convenient for you and your child.
- Learn about your child's and family's daily activities and interests.
- Use this information to help develop goals or outcomes with your Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team.

**PRIMARY PROVIDER:** Your **primary provider** helps you reach the goals set by your IFSP team by:

- Showing your family new ways to help your child grow and learn as a part of your everyday life.
- Building on the activities you already do with your child by using materials and toys in your home.
- Talking to you about how these activities are working between visits.
- Working with other members of the Early Intervention Team (EIT).

### WHAT ARE FIRST STEPS TEAMS?

**The IFSP team** creates a First Steps plan especially for you and your family.

- You know **your family's needs and priorities** best. Your role on the IFSP team is very important!
- Together you and I will **choose other members of your IFSP team**. Other members include any providers who conduct evaluations or assessments or who provide services to your child. You can also choose other family members or friends to participate if you desire.
- In order to help make the IFSP specific to you and your family, the IFSP team will need to know about **your family's everyday activities and interests** in order to create a plan that fits your concerns and priorities.
- With this information, you and the IFSP team **decide the outcomes** you want for this plan. Your IFSP team agrees how the outcomes can be met through services and your family's everyday activities.
- At the initial IFSP meeting, **the team chooses the primary provider**, who also becomes a member of the IFSP team. The team will also consider the need for supporting providers and determine how often visits will occur.
- As your child grows and develops, the IFSP changes. Your child and family may need different services or approaches to **make sure the plan is working well** or to reach new goals. The IFSP team will review the progress under the current plan and consider any new information that may result in changes to the IFSP.
- At a minimum, **the IFSP is reviewed every 6 months**, and annual meetings are held once per year. The team may meet more frequently if needed.

**The EIT** is the other First Steps team that works with you and your family.

- While the IFSP team creates the plan, the EIT explores the best way to carry it out. The **primary provider** is the person who is a member of both the EIT and the IFSP team and will meet with you and your family most often. The primary provider serves as the **connection** between your family and the other EIT members.
- The EIT will have **at least 5 members**: your service coordinator, a physical therapist, an occupational therapist, a speech therapist and a special instructor.

- During monthly EIT meetings, your child's progress and any changes that have occurred for your family are shared. Together **the EIT members discuss the best ways to help**, and your primary provider will bring this information back to you.
- While some EIT members may visit you with the primary provider, others will not. Although you don't see some of the EIT members, the team will share information about your family so **ideas and suggestions can be made** to your family.
- Sometimes, after some of the suggestions and ideas are shared with you by the primary provider, you or the primary provider may feel the need to **call an IFSP meeting** to discuss any changes to the frequency or intensity of the existing services.
- In addition, there may be a need for **other providers** to work with you and your child who are not one of the 5 members of the EIT. Examples might be a nutritionist, audiologist or counselor. These types of services are provided as determined by your IFSP team.

## BUILDING TEAMS

- You are the most important person in helping **your child learn and develop**.
- You know **what makes your child smile and laugh** and also **what makes him/her frustrated or unhappy**. You know your child's and family's daily routines, activities and interests. You have a wealth of information to share about your child.
- You know the **other important people** (relatives and friends, child care providers, neighbors, etc.) who help you and your family and are aware of the materials, toys and other items in your home.
- This information helps you and your primary provider build on your child's and family's interests and strengths. Together you **plan new learning opportunities** for your child in your everyday activities.

## ADVANTAGES OF TEAMS

We have learned many important things about **how infants, toddlers and families can benefit most** from early intervention. **What We've Learned:**

- 1) Families participate in many, many teaching opportunities throughout the day but often do not recognize the significance of the "stuff" of everyday life. **Young children learn best when they are taught skills like eating, playing, moving and communicating** during the times and in the places where they need to eat, walk or talk.
- 2) Family members and other care providers need support to **provide children with learning opportunities**. The traditional hands-on, direct therapy approach is not enough for children. All care providers need to feel confident in **helping children practice skills in settings where they live, learn, and play and at times throughout the day**.
- 3) **Services provided in natural environments support and encourage families** to find and strengthen natural supports outside the early intervention system. These supports, established when the child is young, are likely to remain throughout his/her school career and into adulthood.
- 4) Young children with delays or disabilities have difficulty taking skills they learned in a therapy room or special classroom and transferring them to **places like the park or their living room or church nursery**.

*[Excerpt from Project Therapists as Collaborative Team members for Infants/Toddler Community Services (TaCTICS), principal investigator Juliann Woods, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, at <http://tactics.fsu.edu/goals.html>]*

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