The Big Picture

- Focus
- Purpose
- Process

Establishing Great Relationships with the Families You Serve...

Families are a valuable asset for enhancing child's development.

Research findings demonstrate that effective collaboration between parents and professionals can benefit the child's learning and development.

Early intervention provides supports to families and caregivers to enhance child's learning/development through routine events, IDEA 2004

Family Centered Services

The Children's Center
For Communication and Development
The University of Southern Mississippi
Early Intervention Symposium

Picture This!
Establishing Great Relationships with the Families You Serve--Addressing Perceptions and Expectations

- Katherine Pittman, MS, CCC-SLP
- Donna Stauter, MS, OTR

Financial: All presenters above are salaried staff members at The Children's Center for Communication and Development. Each provides direct services to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with disabilities. Presenters' participation is within their scope of employment at The Children's Center for Communication and Development. No staff member receives additional payment for course presentation.
Objectives:

- Consider family dynamics of a child enrolled in early intervention services
- Identify influences of perception
- Conceptualize the idea that perceptions direct expectations
- Process building great relationships
• Early Intervention provides supports to families and caregivers to enhance child's learning/development through routine events, IDEA 2004

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"While all parents at some time act as advocates, information seekers, spokespersons, and public educators for their sons or daughters, these roles become more crucial for parents of children with a disability as they become increasingly involved with a wide variety of community service providers (Minnes, Nachshen, & Woodford, 2003)."

A diagnosis brings a host of individuals into the parent's life.
Laying the foundation for our focus...

Family dynamics
  • Diverse characteristics
  • Stressors
  • Strengths
Families are diverse.
- Two parent families
- Working mother
- Single parent
- Grandparent as primary caregiver
- Foster parent/temporary guardian

We don't know the child like the parent does.

Although our visits may be held in the presence of a babysitter or childcare worker, we must always make an effort to communicate details of the visit to the parent or primary caregiver.
Stressors

- Relationships
- Lack of stability
- Childcare
- Financial Hardship
- Coping with changes brought on by diagnosis
- Stuck in stage of grief
Stages of grief

- Denial
- Anxiety
- Fear
- Guilt
- Depression
- Anger

- We can't think of stages happening in a linear pattern, since that's not always the case.
- It's common for parents to re-experience feelings of grief at various points.
Strengths:

- Responsiveness to child
- Ability to play with child
- Ability to gather information
- Ability to discuss expectations
- Organizational skills
Families are a valuable asset for enhancing child's development.

- "most stable, influential, and valuable people in a child's life" (Lovannone, Dunlap, Huber, & Kincaid, 2003)

- "Research findings demonstrate that effective relationships between parents and professionals are likely to have empowering benefits for the parents" (Dunst & Trivette, 1996)
Influences on perception...

- Culture
- History
- Experience

"When people view something with a preconceived concept about it, they tend to take those concepts and see them whether or not they are there" (Currier, 2012)

"Perception may not be accurate, but it is what causes people to think, feel, and respond in a specific manner." (Currier, 2012)
A glimpse inside the home...

Mr. Holland's Opus
• The Information juggle
  • What parents see in child vs. what physicians expect
  • Outdated information available in printed resources
• Therapy/Medical decisions
  • Choosing plan that will have best outcomes for life
• The Emotional rollercoaster
  • Mom's desire to "just be mom" and communicate with her child
Perceptions direct expectations

We can't change parents' perceptions, but we can help them think differently about their expectations for their child, for us as service providers, and for themselves.

• We can help them develop healthy expectations.
Thinking differently about expectations

Help parents gain ownership.

Help parents see their value on the service-delivery team.

Help parents see gains in the long term realm.

Help parents enjoy their child.

- Think of therapy being part of routine events that child and parent participate in, rather than being an action "done" to child or a place
- Provide affirmation based on the child's improvements
- Identify areas of independence for child
- Focus less on age-related milestones, more on child's strengths
- Assure them that it's perfectly acceptable to just "be mom/dad"
Expectancy Effects

- Research
- Self-fulfilling prophecy
- Children perform to expectations set for them
Kambree
Great relationships build partnerships

Key components to building family-centered relationships

- Positiveness
- Responsiveness
- Orientation to all family members
- Sensitivity
- Friendliness

McWilliam, Tocci, & Harbin, 1998
Building a partnership...

- Discussion must be person-centered, rather than disorder-centered
  - Value the child as an individual
  - Person-first language
  - Avoid blanket statements
- Focus on individual child, rather than using other children (even your own child) as a reference for comparison
- Talk with parents, rather than talking at them
  - Listen to their thoughts
  - Ask open-ended questions
  - Avoid guilt-provoking questions
- Respect parents' ideas and beliefs
Empowering parents

- Empowerment brings feelings of control, positive feelings about parenting capabilities, (Dunst, 2004)
- Relationships between professionals and families impact parent’s feelings of empowerment, (Dunst, 1996)
Capacity Building Approach

- active involvement of parents
- help to acquire knowledge and skills
- accomplish goals

Dunst et al., 2001c
Professionals provide support to help parents/caregivers:

• Identify the child's interests
• Identify everyday activities that provide interest-based learning opportunities
• Increase child participation in these activities
• Use responsive teaching to reinforce child's strengths and work on new skills
References


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