Engaging Families During Early Intervention: Coaching Strategies That Make A Difference

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Description of a typical EI therapy session
• How do you share your expertise?

IDEA Part C
• Family-Centered
• Strengths-Based
• Natural Learning Environment
• Everyday Activities

Early Intervention services: Guiding Principles
• Family centered and culturally and linguistically responsive
• Developmentally supportive and promote children’s participation in their natural environments
• Comprehensive, coordinated, and team based
• Based on the highest quality evidence that is available

(ASHA Position Statement, 2008)

Differences between Coaching & Direct Intervention
• Direct
  — 1:1 interaction between the child and practitioner
  — How children learn
  — Parent is in the role of an observer
  — The practitioner implements strategies
  — Focus is on Intervention
  — Play activities
  — Elicit language with planned activities
  — Home program? Maybe.

• Coaching
  — Interaction is between the caregiver and practitioner. Interaction is between the caregiver and child
  — How adults learn
  — Practitioner is the observer
  — Practitioner models when applicable
  — Focus is on Prevention
  — Routines
  — Facilitate language during naturally occurring routines
  — Parent implements strategies everyday

Learning
• Active Engagement – Construct Your Knowledge By Doing
• Safe and Nurturing Learning Environment
• Risk Taking
• Work Collaboratively With Others
• Your learning is not complete until you teach what you know to someone else and can describe precisely what you have learned and what you understand
• Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivators
Realities of Practice

• Continuation of child-focused
• Practitioner teaches the child rather than involving the caregiver in teaching the child
• Direct explanation and modeling are frequently used strategies instead of less direct strategies

Realities of Practice

• Research shows:
  – Caregivers are engaged most of the time
    • They are watching their children while the providers deliver interventions
  – Children are engaged most of the time
    • With object play
  – What are the providers doing?
    • Delivering interventions
    • Minimal teaching of caregivers
  (Wilcox, 2012)

Realities of Practice

• Rossetti surveyed 300 parents/caregivers to determine their number one frustration with service providers:
  • “They don’t listen to me.”
• He then surveyed 300 service providers to determine their number one frustration with parents/caregivers:
  • “They don’t listen to me.”
  (Rossetti, 2009)

Empowering parents—Why Coach?

• Family members are the principle stakeholders involved in young children’s lives
  (Bagnato, Neisworth, & Pretti-Frontczak, 2010)
• Dunst (2000) found that empowering parents to be teachers increased child learning and was more effective than clinic settings and in-home direct therapy approaches

Caregiver responsiveness

• “parents are the major influence on their children’s development even when their children participate in intervention; and the effectiveness of intervention is highly associated with parents becoming more responsive with their children during the course of intervention”
  (Mahoney, 2009, p.90)

Responsive strategies

• Playing frequently with the child
• Imitating the child’s actions and communications
• Waiting expectantly
• Following the child’s lead
• Giving the child frequent opportunities to make choices
• Building on the child’s interests
• Turning routines into games
• Assigning intent to the child’s facial expressions and vocalizations
  (Rush & Sheldon, 2011)
Environment

• Natural learning environments are most effective
  – (Dunst, 2000)
• Naturalistic approaches
  – Occurs in daily routines, play and conversation
  – Based on incidental learning
  – Parent/caregiver is primary change agent

Stages of learning

• Pre-Aware
• Aware
• Action

Social Interactionist theory of language development

• Vygotsky (1986) believed that children’s cognitive development resulted from interaction between children’s innate skills and their social experiences with peers, adults, and culture in general.
  – “zone of proximal development”
• Bruner (1977) suggested that when caregivers and their infants engage in joint referencing, they share a common focus of interest that ultimately contributes to language acquisition.
• Children develop communication within extended adult-child interactions
• Interactions provide children with natural learning opportunities
• Responsive language input
  – Simplified adult language input facilitates children’s communication

Evidence-based practice

• Coaching is an evidence-based approach
• It is an interactive process between the family and the coach that includes
  – Sharing of information
  – Support and encouragement for the family
  – Refinement of existing practices
  – Development of new skills
  – Promotion of continuous self-assessment and learning
  – (Sheldon & Rush, 2010)

How Do you share your expertise?

• How do you create opportunities for informal dialogue with family members?
• What are some ways that you acknowledge family strengths and competencies?
• How can you do more to solicit parents’ opinions and ideas?
• What are specific strategies that you use to seek understanding from caregivers?
• How do you demonstrate that you care about the entire family?
• When have you acknowledged and responded to feelings and emotions of the family?
  – (McWilliam, 2010)

Purpose of Coaching

• The role of the coach
  – Provide supportive and encouraging environment
  – Jointly examine and reflect on current practices
  – Jointly apply new skills and competencies with feedback
  – Jointly problem solve challenging situations
• Effective coaching can set the stage for lifelong learning
Type of coaching

- Coaching is used to support the coachee in specific ways that are related to his or her goals, not make the person do what the coach wants or believes that the coachee should do.
- Support includes:
  - Helping the coachee become aware of and analyze current knowledge and performance
  - Developing alternatives and a plan for improved knowledge and performance with assistance as needed from the coach
  - Helping the coachee conduct a self-evaluation of his or her own knowledge and performance, with feedback from the coach as needed, until the coachee is competent and confident that he or she

Evidence-based definition of coaching

- An adult learning strategy in which the coach promotes the learner’s (coachee’s) ability to reflect on his or her actions as a means to determine the effectiveness of an action or practice and develop a plan for refinement and use of the action in immediate and future situations
  (Rush & Sheldon, 2011)

Key Characteristics of coaching

- 1. Joint Planning
  - Agreement by the coach and coachee on the actions they will take or the opportunities to practice between coaching visits.
  - What the coach does
  - What the coachee does
- 2. Observation
  - Examination of another person’s actions or practices to be used to develop new skills, strategies, or ideas.
  - What the coach does
  - What the coachee does

Tools

- The Asset-Based Context (ABC) Matrix (Wilson & Mott, 2006)
- The Interest-Based Everyday Activity Checklist (Swanson, Raab, Roper, & Dunst, 2006)
- The Routines-Based Interview (McWilliam & Clingenpeel, 2003)
Ten key elements of coaching in early childhood

- 1. Consistent with the principles of adult learning
- 2. Capacity Building
- 3. Nondirective
- 4. Goal Directed
- 5. Solution Focused
- 6. Performance-Based
- 7. Reflective
- 8. Collaborative
- 9. Context Driven
- 10. As hands on as it needs to be

— (Rush & Sheldon, 2011)

Characteristics of an Effective Coach

- Competent (skilled, knowledgeable, helpful)
- Open (objective, respectful)
- Adaptable (flexible, open, agreeable)
- Caring (empathetic, active listener, encouraging)
- Honest (trustworthy)

(Rush & Sheldon, 2011)

References