



Family Engagement in Early Care and Education

Responding With Families to Developmental Concerns



Overview

This module will focus on:

- Observing children's development together and understanding the benefits of screening
- Approaches to conversations with families when developmental concerns arise
- Partnering with families through the process of evaluation for possible services



**By the end of this module,
you should be able to:**

OBJECTIVES

- Describe ways to communicate with families about children’s development and the benefits of screening
- Identify effective practices for talking with families about developmental concerns
- Provide support and ideas about resources for families whose children may need further evaluation and special services

Observing Children’s Development

Observing Children



Image credit: EarlyEdU

There are many reasons to observe children, including the joy of watching them grow and learn.

Noticing Development



Image credit: EarlyEdU

You can observe children's development with families, and collaborate and create opportunities to foster development and learning.

Sharing Observations



Image credit: EarlyEdU

Sharing observations about children's growth and development and exploring parents' individual connections to their children helps to build strong relationships with parents.



DISCUSSION

Sharing Observations

How can you:

- Invite parents to share about their children's development and any skills that are important to them?
- Talk with parents about ways to make sharing about children's strengths and progress a regular part of your communication?



Talk Regularly About Development



Sharing excitement with families when children's skills emerge can lay a foundation for more challenging conversations if a skill is not developing as expected.

Relationship-Based Practices

You can use these six practices to build trusting relationships with parents:

- Observe and describe children’s behavior
- Reflect on the family’s perspective
- Support competence
- Focus on the family-child relationship
- Value a family’s passion
- Reflect on your own perspective

Conversations With Families When Concerns Arise

When Concerns Arise



Image credit: EarlyEdU

Families and educators may have concerns or questions about children's development. Communicating about these should be part of your ongoing relationship.

Developmental Screening



Image credit: EarlyEdU

In some programs, such as Head Start and Early Head Start, educators and other staff do regular developmental screenings with children.



DISCUSSION

Talking With Families About Concerns

Think about conversations you may have had with families about developmental concerns.

- What was successful?
- What did you find challenging?



It is important to bring up any concerns that you have about children's development.

Image credit: EarlyEdU

Planning to Talk With Families

- Ask parents about a time that works well
- Choose a private, comfortable location
- Have developmental information available
- Bring copies of information about the child and possible resources for evaluation
- Include someone who speaks the parents' home language, if needed

Cultural Perspectives



Image credit: EarlyEdu

- Remember that not all cultures view development the same way
- Reflect on your own cultural biases



RESOURCES

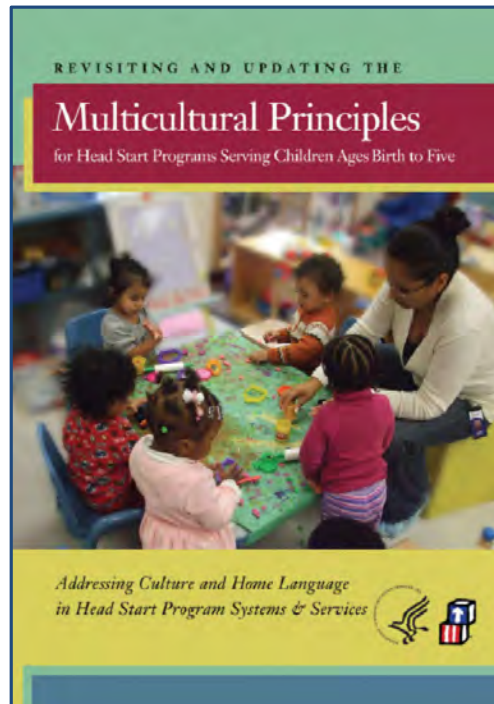


Image credit: Office of Head Start

Invite Families to Share

Is Lily trying to hold up her head at home?

What do you see when Jeremiah plays with other children?

Sharing Information

- Provide details of your observations, using objective descriptions
- Show families concrete information, such as pictures and photos
- Do not diagnose or suggest a possible diagnosis for children

Shifting Perspectives

- Sometimes you and parents may see the same concerns and agree on next steps
- Other times, you may need to work hard to see parents' perspectives and value what they are passionate about
- If parents see the concerns differently, highlight common ground to build on

Observing the Child Together



Image credit: EarlyEdU

After you or a parent has shared a potential developmental concern, you may want to engage in a process of observing the child together.

Empathizing With Parents and Families

Parents and families may feel concerned or frustrated after conversations about their child's progress or development. Educators can partner with families to move through this challenging time.

- Express and demonstrate an ability to share an understanding of the feelings and concerns of parents and families
- Communicate your confidence in the family's ability to make the best choices for their child
- Maintain a non-judgmental, non-defensive approach
- Be available to the family, allowing them to take the lead in decision-making



**LEARNING
ACTIVITY**

Thinking About Approaches

- Find a partner and read the scenarios on the handout
- Think about the questions and make a plan together to talk with the child's parents
- Be ready to act out your conversation with the whole group

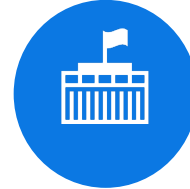
Partnering When Children May Need More Help

Partner with Families to Explore Resources

Families may want to seek evaluations or find out more about developmental concerns. Stay informed about the resources in your community.

Sources of information that parents and families can begin to explore include

- Pediatrician or health care provider
- Local school districts
- Part C Lead Agencies in your state/jurisdiction



IDEA: One System, Two Parts

The Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires that all eligible children receive services.

Part C provides early intervention services for children birth to age 3 with special needs.

Part B provides special education services to preschool children with special needs.

Who Is Eligible?

Part C (Birth to 3) Infants and toddlers with:

- Established conditions
- Developmental delays

Part B (3 to 5) Preschoolers with:

- Disabilities in certain categories
- Developmental delays

Eligibility rules vary by state.

Developmental Delays



Image credit: EarlyEdU

A child may experience a developmental delay, as defined by each state, in one or more of these areas:

- Cognitive
- Physical
- Communication
- Social or emotional
- Adaptive

Meet Families Where They Are



Image credit: EarlyEdU

Parents decide whether to seek out or use early intervention or special education services.



DISCUSSION

Reflecting on Responses

- Have you had experiences where parents chose not to seek an evaluation or use special services for which their child was eligible?
- What was your response?
- What would you do differently, if anything, in the future?

Services: The Basics

Each child receiving services must have a written plan developed by a team that includes the family:

- Infants and toddlers and their families have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Preschool children have an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

Why Services Are Important



Image credit: EarlyEdU

Special services can:

- Strengthen brain and physical development
- Reduce the amount of ongoing and future challenges for these children



VIDEO

Parents Sharing About Special Services

While you watch the next video, think about:

What did families value and find most useful in the services and help they received?



VIDEO: Parents Sharing About Special Services



VIDEO

Video Debrief

Parents described:

- Staff who welcomed them, were interested in their children, and supported their progress
- New skills their children developed that improved their lives

Listening to Families

When parents learn that their child has a disability or developmental delay, they often experience a range of emotions, such as shock, anger, and grief.

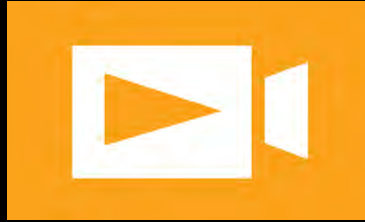
This can be a grief experience for the family, similar to that of someone learning about the death of a loved one.



VIDEO

Strengthening Partnerships

When you watch the next video, listen for any new ideas about partnering with families as they adjust to the idea that their child has a disability or developmental delay.



VIDEO: Strengthening Partnerships to Support Babies With Special Needs

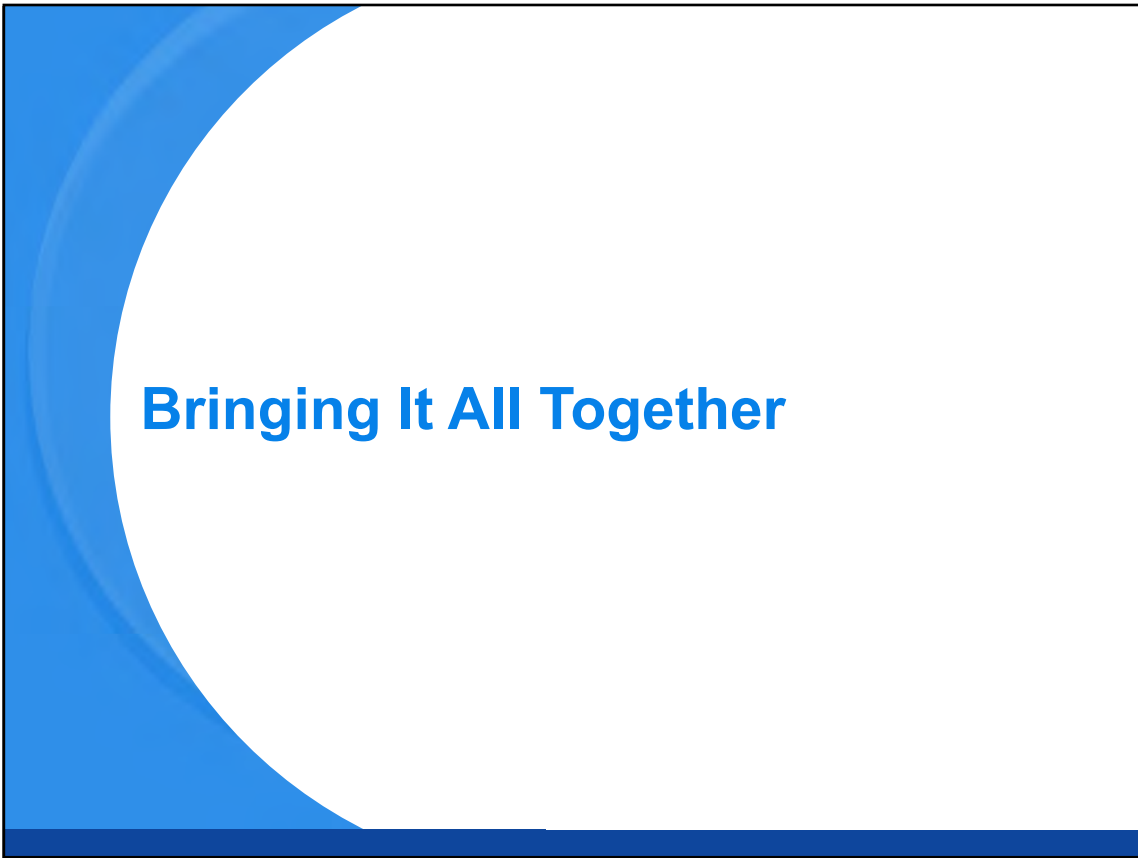


VIDEO

Video Debrief

New concepts are:

- Diagnoses and progress may be slow in coming for children and families
- Parents need to consider the needs of the whole family, while you may be focusing on the child
- You can support families in advocating for their children



Bringing It All Together

The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

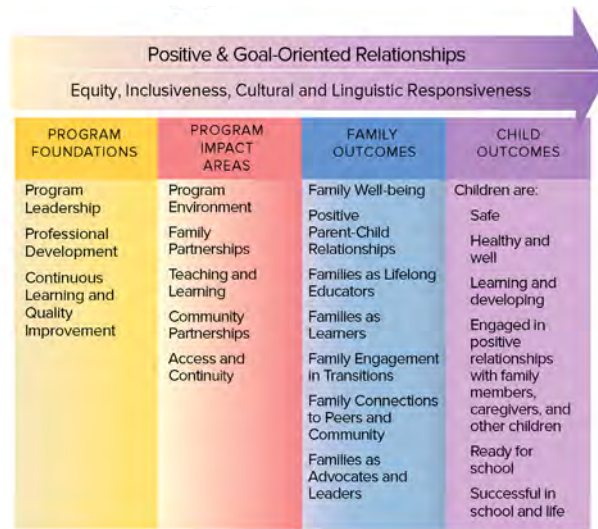


Image credit: Office of Head Start



DISCUSSION

Where Does It Fit?

Which part of the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework does this topic relate to?

- Form a small group and share ideas
- Be ready to share your thoughts with the whole group



SESSION SUMMARY

- Exchanging observations helps you to reach a shared understanding of children's development with parents and family
- Adopting relationship-based practices can help to guide potentially challenging conversations about developmental concerns
- Listening, and helping families to find specialized services, can positively impact children's outcomes

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For more information about this resource, please contact us:
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