



Meetings



What does a functional participation-based IFSP/IEP meeting look like?

Research Says...

When family members are viewed and engaged as active participants on the team, partnerships grow. Partnerships between family, services coordinator, and early childhood practitioners in the planning phases can result in greater satisfaction with the services delivered for the child (Koren, Paulsen, et al, 1997), more control in influencing the outcomes (Thompson, Lobb, et al, 1997), greater engagement from families in the intervention program and bolster the intervention effectiveness and efficiency (Sheridan & Kratochwill, 2007). Finally, interventions that focus on promoting family strengths and building constructive partnerships in addition to child change/growth produce changes in the family environment, parent-child relationship, parenting skills and family involvement in children's learning (Caspé & Lopez, 2006).

Furthermore, we know...

Meetings need to have a clear purpose. The purpose of meetings focused on Individualized Family Service Plans or Individual Education Plans (IFSP/IEP) is to outline the support for the learners (i.e., child, parent, care provider). In order to effectively reach this end, it is important that each meeting have an agenda, establish a start and end time, identify what is expected, and evaluate its success (National Staff Development, 2006). Furthermore, a good meeting engages participants as a team that discusses, decides, and does real work together (Richardson, 2005).

“A team is a small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, set of performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable” (Katzenbach & Smith, 1993 p. 2).

Therefore...

The following recommended practices influence the potential of IFSP/IEP meetings being functional and participation-based (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005).

Functional Participation-based IFSP/IEP Meetings

A PRACTITIONER'S RESOURCE

*All documents jointly produced by Nebraska Departments of Education
& Health and Human Services*

August 2008

Encourage Team Membership and Participation

- Engage the family from the beginning in planning when and where the meeting should occur.
- Provide families opportunity to invite others to meetings who are important in the child's life.
- Identify need for and availability of appropriate interpreters or other accommodations before scheduling meeting time/place.
- (Re-) Introduce yourself to family members upon entering the meeting room.
- Address family in their native language or direct English to parent and not the bilingual interpreter.
- Provide opportunities before and during meetings for family members to ask questions.
- Ask open-ended questions that encourage conversation between family members, services coordinators, teachers and other providers.
- Refer to family members/teachers with their preferred name and not their title or relationship (i.e., "mother")
- Provide information, before the meeting if possible, about possible options, such as program philosophies, models and components of service, and any possible program restrictions/limitations, so parents can make informed choices and seek clarification during the meeting.



Expect More Discussion than Reporting

- Aim to share assessment information with family members prior to an IFSP/IEP meeting so they have time to reflect and consider questions they want to ask.
- Assist families in preparing for meetings by guiding reflection on concerns and possible questions.
- The IEP/IFSP is not pre-written prior to meeting. Possible goals/outcomes can be anticipated for discussion purposes but not finalized in wording until the meeting.
- Allow the meeting to be led by conversation and agenda, not by section headings of forms.
- Be an active listener. Use person-first language.
- Be prepared. Take time to review information previously provided or that you wish to share.
- Ask colleagues and family members for examples and clarification in order to assure understanding.

Focus on meaningful functional concerns

- Review concerns, priorities and interests discussed during pre-IFSP/IEP contacts and/or the assessment and information gathering sessions.
- Have focused discussions regarding naturally-occurring activities or routines in the child's life that can support identified needs and desired outcomes.
- Engage family members and teachers/care-providers in discussion about modifications that could make a child more successful or engaged in routine activities at home, school or community.
- Help family members and teachers explore their needs in caring for the child or in tending to family or classroom needs that could directly or indirectly influence the child's development.
- Engage team in making a list of possible outcomes/goals reflecting everyone's concerns/needs before selecting priorities for the next 6-12 months.



Consider strengths, supports and learning opportunities

- Celebrate successes and acknowledge strengths in the child and family that contribute to a child's development, competence and/or independence.
- Provide information about opportunities for family members to get in touch with other families.
- Ask about formal and informal, family and community supports and resources available to the family.
- Explore family members' preferred methods (and locations) for communicating with providers once intervention services begin (e.g., home-visits, phone, email, newsletters, notebooks, conferences).
- Discuss the supports or accommodations in place already in the child's life that will ensure the child has access to peers, materials, and activities appropriate to his/her age.
- Give examples of how a possible goal/outcome might be addressed in everyday activities/interactions and the role family members, services coordinators, and service providers might play in maximizing these learning opportunities.

Remember...

Engaging families as partners and establishing all participants as members of a team who have a shared goal requires the use of dialogue and conversation in meetings.

Reliance on only reporting out information, and seeking answers to closed questions for the purpose of completing forms and procedural safeguards often results in little dialogue and participation from only a minimum of players in attendance. The following questions can help invite brainstorming, alternative perspectives and input from a variety of people in attendance when asked with sincere interest/curiosity.

- Tell us what has changed or not changed since the last time we met?
- What is going well for you? your family? the classroom?
- What's most important to you?
- What do you feel you need support with?
- What would make him/her more involved in that activity?
- What I'm hearing you say is...
- Give us an example.
- How can we help?
- Tell us what has worked in the past.
- Let's make a list of possibilities.
- If we had time and resources to address only a few concerns, which would be most important or have the biggest impact?
- What activities does he/she enjoy?
- Is there anything he/she would like to do that his current abilities keep him from doing?

NOTE: Information about Nebraska's rationale for functional, participation-based outcomes/goals can be found in the Preamble. This is one of a series of four documents. These documents and references can be found at <http://www.education.ne.gov/ECH/> , <http://ectc.education.ne.gov/> , <http://www.education.ne.gov/edn/> , <http://www.pti-nebraska.org/>