

Family Member Roles in Informed Clinical Reasoning

One way to gather information to determine a child's eligibility for intervention services is through an assessment process called "informed clinical reasoning." An evaluation team, which includes a child's parents and other family members, gathers the information using conversations with people who know the child best, direct observations of the child's engagement in everyday activities, and a review of results from developmental assessment instruments. This information provides the foundation for becoming "informed" about a child's developmental status and for making decisions about the presence of delays in the child's development.

Learning Guide: Using your knowledge of your child to support assessment

Parents contribute to their child's assessment by doing some or all of the following:

- Describe your child's skills, abilities, interests, preferences and challenges with professionals on the evaluation team. Explain how your child interacts with objects and people in everyday activities and routines, including what your child does well and things your child has difficulty doing in the activities and routines.
- Describe unusual behaviors, situations, and activities where your child struggles to participate with objects or people. Suggest other individuals such as a grandparent or caregiver who know your child well and who could add to the information you provide.
- Assist the team in observing your child in different everyday activities and routines to obtain information about how your child participates in the activities. How does your child interact with people and objects? What challenges does your child have in participating in everyday activities? Are there any unusual or atypical child behaviors and/or development? Help team members complete a developmental checklist or other assessment tool by describing behaviors your child is able to do, is just learning to do, and/or is not yet doing.
- Provide the team available medical records or other reports so that the information may be used to determine your child's eligibility for intervention services.
- Jot down and/or ask team members for the different kinds of information gathered as part of your child's assessment. The information should include the different settings in which information was obtained, what team members gathered the information, your observations and concerns about your child's development, and the team members' assessment of your child's behavior and functioning in different activities.
- Together with other team members, discuss how all the information confirms or does not confirm that your child has a developmental delay (according to your state's eligibility criteria). Come to an agreement about your child's strengths, needs, and eligibility for intervention services.

Watch a video of this learning guide

You'll know the practice is working if ...

- Your child's abilities, strengths, skills, and behavioral difficulties in everyday activities have been identified
- Multiple sources of information about your child's functioning in everyday activities are used to determine your child's eligibility for intervention services
- You receive information about the rationale for the eligibility determination

A Quick Peek

Taylor and Sidney have requested assistance from their local early intervention program because they have concerns that their 18-month-old, Landry, has delayed skills compared to other children they know. As they prepare for a visit from an evaluation team, they make notes of their concerns and examples of Landry's abilities in different activities. They know that their information may help the evaluation team

make decisions about Landry's eligibility for early intervention. On the day of the evaluation, they share their notes with the professionals, describe situations where Landry is having difficulty, and ask the team to pay particular attention to Landry's ways of communicating. They suggest the team observe Landry in several activities, including playing with toy cars, climbing on their outdoor playset with siblings, and eating lunch. They also help the team complete a developmental checklist by describing what Landry is able to do and is just beginning to do. After considering this information, the parents and team agree that although the assessment results do not indicate that Landry has a delay that meets their state's eligibility criteria, his skills in everyday activities and communication are not typical for an 18-month old. Everyone agrees that Landry is eligible for early intervention services based on an atypical developmental pattern and behavioral indications. The parents ask for a written summary of the eligibility findings.

Online resources providing information and activities related to informed clinical reasoning include this web article: "[What to Expect During an Early Intervention Evaluation](#)" by Annie Stuart

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