

Transition from Hospital to Home

When a family transitions their child from a hospital stay into early intervention services, it is important for them to feel comfortable and respected in their communication with early intervention providers. Early interventionists should gather information from family members/parents about their experiences in the hospital in a sensitive and respectful manner. Learning about a family's concerns and priorities before and during a transition is an important first step in the process of developing trust, beginning a new relationship, and developing an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) that is responsive to the family's desires and needs.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Video courtesy of Illinois Early Intervention Training Program

Learning Guide: Gathering Information about Family Concerns

- Ask parents/family members about their preferences regarding a convenient time and place to meet. Determine if they prefer to meet in the hospital or wait until their child has been discharged and is at home.
- Be sure that parents/family members know they can invite other people to the meeting if that would be helpful to them.
- Once the meeting is scheduled, send a follow-up confirmation via e-mail, text, or mail, depending on family preferences for communication.
- Review any records or information sent by the hospital before the meeting to be prepared with a clear understanding of the course of treatment and any concerns about the infant.
- Be prepared to answer family member questions and share information and resources, as appropriate.
- Ask the family if they would like to share their story about their experience in the hospital or other events.
- Be sure to use active and reflective listening skills as the parents/family members share their story and any concerns.
- Ask parents/family members about any concerns, priorities, or goals they might have for their child or other family members
- Ask the family if there are any particular resources and supports with which they would like you to communicate and coordinate regarding their infant.
- Ask family members about how they think early intervention and or other services might be able to address their concerns and priorities.

A Quick Peek

Luis and Carla are finally home as a family. Their twins, Lily and Louisa, were born prematurely and spent a month in the hospital's neonatal intensive care unit. It was a difficult and sometimes frightening time for Luis and Carla, but the girls have been discharged and are doing well. Their physician and a hospital social worker talked to them about early intervention services. While the babies are doing well, they are showing some mild delays due to their prematurity, and Lily struggles with some reflux and oral sensitivity. At first Luis and Carla were nervous about meeting the EI service coordinator, Molly, and having strangers come into their home. When Molly first talked to the parents, she was very courteous, asked only a few questions over the phone, and worked with them to find a good time to meet. During the home visit, Molly shared what she had learned from the referral information and asked them to tell her their story as they were ready. She listened quietly and only occasionally asked a clarifying question. Luis and Carla felt very comfortable with her and shared their concerns about their babies' health and development. Molly made sure she understood their priorities. Then she began to talk about resources and discuss how the EI program might be able to help. Both new parents felt relieved and told Molly they looked forward to her next visit.



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

- Family members express their concerns and priorities to the practitioner
- Family members seem interested in learning more about Early Intervention services and resources
- Family members feel like they are adjusting to new circumstances and are supported in their decisions regarding their children

Online resources about facilitating the transition from hospital to home include a learning module, [*An Early Interventionist's Guide to Prematurity*](#), and [*Early Intervention Strategies for Success: Listening to the Family's Story*](#) by Dana Childress, both from the Virginia EI Professional Development Center.