Making Good Family Choices

Professionals can be most helpful to families if their advice and suggestions are responsive to parents' concerns and priorities. To be sure professionals are responsive to your family's concerns and priorities, it is important that they really listen to and provide families complete and unbiased information so you can make informed choices. This practice guide includes things you can do to be sure interventions fit your child and family’s particular situation.

Learning Guide: Identifying Family Concerns and Priorities

- Your child and family's participation in early childhood intervention should address your concerns and priorities. Professionals, and the advice and suggestions they make, should be in response to your goals and preferences for your child, yourself, and your family.
- You should expect professionals to listen to you and take the time to understand what would be most helpful to you and your family from your point-of-view. Professionals should take the time to be sure they understand your concerns and priorities before offering advice and suggestions.
- Parents and other family members at different times need information, advice, and other types of support and resources. Professionals have a lot of knowledge about the resources and supports that are available to young children and their families. You should expect professionals to make suggestions and provide advice about those resources and support.
- You should expect to receive complete and unbiased information from professionals so that you can make informed decisions. You will want to consider different options and the possible outcomes of different choices for you, your child, and your family.
- Professionals will not always agree with your choices and decisions but they should always support and respect what you decide is best for your child and family. You should always feel supported, respected, and treated in a nonjudgmental way.
- You will likely have many questions about what might be best for your child and family. You should expect professionals to answer your questions so that you have the information you need to make good choices.

A Quick Peek

Susan and Bill Adams are the parents of a 1-year-old daughter, Zoe, who has a disability and medical condition that requires specialized health care. The cost of Zoe’s health care means that Susan needs to return to work. She brings this up during the next home visit by the family’s early childhood practitioner. The mother and home visitor discuss the kinds of childcare Zoe will need and the knowledge and skills childcare staff will need to take care of Zoe’s health care needs. The home visitor and mother identify six childcare centers that meet most of the mother’s requirements. The two go through each center, and identify both the strengths and weaknesses of each facility. They then go back up to the top two best picks, the home visitor shares the fact with the family that this center is operated by a nurse who has considerable experience with children like Zoe. The mother decides to visit that center and eventually enrolls her child in that program after the director's explanation of the care Zoe would be provided.

Learn more about how families can work together with professionals to make good decisions from resources such as What Do Parents Have To Say About Professional Bias? by Lisa Crawford on the Texas Hands & Voices website.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide.

You’ll know you’re making informed decisions if...
- You are provided information you need to make good choices.
- You feel good about the support and resources that you have chosen.
- You feel the practitioner is “on your side.”