

Joining Your Child's Team

Early childhood staff that work with your family work as a team. You are an important member of this team. You are the most knowledgeable person about your child, your family, and what you want to see happen to help your child learn and grow.

As a team member, it is important to share information about your child during your child's evaluation and assessment and to identify what you want to work on with your child. Helping to develop your child's intervention plan—Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP)—is also important.

Your interactions with other team members provide opportunities to try out ideas, make suggestions, and provide feedback about what is or is not working. This practice guide includes different things that can help you be involved actively and meaningfully with other team members.



DEC Recommended Practices: Teaming and Collaboration 1–3, 5

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Being an Active Team Member

- At first, you might not know the other team members, and it might feel awkward to participate in meetings. It takes time to build trusting relationships, but over time, everyone on the team will become more comfortable with each other.
- Ask team members about their roles, professional training, and what they like about working with young children. In addition to getting to know them better, you'll learn how team members and their expertise can be more helpful to your child and family.
- This is a new journey for your family, and you'll be given a lot of verbal and written information during the process. It's normal to feel overwhelmed by things! Take the time you need to read and understand things, and ask other team members about anything you don't understand.
- It's important you understand your child and family's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP), and other documents and information you receive from the team. If you need more information to understand what other team members are talking about, ask them to explain things to you.
- Suggest good times that work best for you and your child to meet with other team members. Ask about the purpose of each meeting or visit, so you prepare to provide input or ask questions. If you request a meeting or visit, share your reasons and concerns, so other team members can prepare for their role.
- Your family decides on which goals and activities your child's intervention will focus on. The other team members can help you as you learn new strategies and build confidence in helping your child successfully participate in everyday activities and learn and grow.

A Quick Peek

Karen is an early intervention provider, and arrives at a home visit and begins to address two-year-old Amelia's IFSP goal to use single words.

Amelia's mom, Marcy, says it's nice to have a "conversation" with Amelia, but she wishes Amelia wouldn't shriek at mealtime and would eat more different kinds of foods.

Marcy tells Karen that Amelia's screaming at mealtimes is a serious problem, that Amelia will only eat pureed baby food, and that she's worried about Amelia's nutrition.

Together, they talk about what might be happening. Marcy says it's close to lunch time, and asks Karen to stay and observe.

After several minutes, Karen suggests they ask the team's speech and occupational therapists to assess Amelia, to see if there are any physical reasons for her strong reaction to some foods. They can also advise Marcy how she can help Amelia try new foods.

Marcy agrees. Karen thanks Marcy for speaking up about these new concerns saying this is why Marcy is the most important member of Amelia's team.

Signs of Success

- You feel your questions and concerns are answered to your satisfaction
- You are comfortable making suggestions and providing your input
- You feel supported in the decisions you make



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