



NATIONAL CENTER ON

Early Childhood Development, Teaching and Learning



Disabilities Services Newsletter

June 2017 / Issue No. 4

Working with Families of Children with Disabilities

In this issue, learn more about how to work with families of children with disabilities. Relationships between parents and caregivers can build family capacity for collaboration and provide the foundation for children's healthy development. Find resources with strategies and practices to support and facilitate sensitive and responsive conversations with parents and families of children who have suspected or identified disabilities.

Read About It



Kristy, a first-year Head Start classroom teacher, completed a developmental screening on Devon, a child who recently joined her class. She was not surprised when she saw several red flags, as she had noticed that Devon was having difficulty following directions during daily classroom routines and activities. Kristy wants to talk to Devon's parents about her concerns. However, she is uncertain about how to start that conversation and is worried about how they will receive the information she shares. Kristy has gotten to know Devon's parents through informal conversations and a home visit. She feels that they have a positive relationship, but this will be the first time she is raising a concern with them.

The question of how to begin conversations with parents when there is a concern about their child frequently comes up when teachers begin to wonder whether a child has a developmental or behavioral concern. This is a question that has also arisen in the [MyPeers Head Start Disability/Inclusion Network](#).

It is important to remember that a positive relationship with the family is an important foundation for this conversation. Kristy is off to a good start in that regard, and there are resources to support staff in sharing concerns with families. There are six relationship-based practices that can guide Kristy in talking with families about developmental or behavioral concerns:

1. Describe the observations of the child's behavior
2. Focus on the family-child relationship

3. Value a family's passion
4. Support parental competence
5. Actively reflect on the family's perspective
6. Reflect on your own perspective

Read more about these six practices in **Relationship-Based Practices: Talking with Families about Developmental Concerns**.

Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices: Family Topic Area

Learn how to support families using family-centered practices that build family capacity and family-staff collaboration. Covering eight topic areas, the DEC Recommended Practices provide guidance and practices for improving the learning outcomes and promoting the development of young children who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. This resource may be useful for staff and families. The “Family” topic area starts on page 16 of the document.

Take a Look



CONNECT Module 4: Family-Professional Partnerships

Learn to describe effective practices for developing trusting family-staff partnerships in early care and education programs. Find tips for developing an initial friendly relationship, making shared decisions, and developing a trusting partnership with families to address challenging issues. CONNECT modules are practice-focused instructional resources for faculty and other professional development providers. They include resources such as video clips, activities, and handouts designed for instructors and learners.

- **Audio 4.2: Janice Fialka**

Family members may experience a range of emotions when professionals introduce a concern about their child. Hear one mother talk about her experiences in this short audio clip.

- **Video 4.10: Maggie & Latesha—Firm Ground Conversation**

Watch a demonstration of a teacher raising a concern she has about a child with his parent. Watch this video and see if you can see this teacher using the six relationship-based practices above. Then explore the rest of the module to learn about effective practices for developing trusting family-professional partnerships.

Strengthening Partnerships to Support Babies with Special Needs

This video provides an overview of what families may experience when they learn their child has special needs. It explains how staff can support, empower, and partner with these families.

Try It Out

Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Simulation 4: Relationship-Based Practices: Talking with Families about Developmental Concerns

What you do and say matters! Use this online simulation to explore and practice everyday strategies for developing goal-oriented relationships with families. Identify family strengths and challenges, and discover ways to talk with families about developmental or behavioral concerns.

Improve Your Practice

Informed Family Decision-Making Practices Checklist

This checklist highlights helpful practices that can be used to engage parents in informed decision-making in ways that are responsive to family concerns and priorities. The performance checklists are intended for practitioners and leaders to increase their understanding and use of the DEC Recommended Practices and for self-evaluation of one's use of the practices.

Families, Too!

Everyday Activities

Help family members prepare for their child's evaluation or assessment. Share this one-page guide about everyday practices that parents can use to inform their child's assessment process. It includes tips for implementing practices, an example of what the practice looks like, how to know it is working, and a video example of the activities. Links to resources where families can learn more about the topic are also provided.

Note: The resources provided are only a sampling of the resources available on these practices.

Ongoing Features

Free Access to a Specially Selected Article from Young Exceptional Children (YEC)

Read the YEC article, [Empowering Families During the Early Intervention Planning Process](#). It is available through this newsletter until July 31, 2017.

Head Start Disability/Inclusion Network on MyPeers

Engage with the disabilities and Head Start community around the country in an online community hosted on the MyPeers platform. Our community currently has more than 1,000 members who are sharing resources, engaging in conversations, and asking questions. [Register now](#) as a member of MyPeers. If you are already a member of MyPeers, find the Head Start Disability/Inclusion Network community under "All Communities" and select the blue "Join" button.

How to Subscribe

Select this link to subscribe to the series: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/subscribe>

Select this link to view previous issues:

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/newsletter/disabilities-services-newsletters>

Please share this message with all staff in your program who may be interested in participating.

We Want to Hear from You

The Disabilities Services Newsletter is produced monthly by the National Center on Early Childhood Development, Teaching, and Learning. Submit questions or suggestions for 2017 newsletter topics to ecdctl@ecetta.info

Select this link to view previous [Head Start Disabilities Services Newsletters](#) on the ECLKC.

The Office of Head Start (OHS) does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of information contained on a linked website; does not endorse the organizations sponsoring linked websites; does not endorse the views they express or the products/services they offer; and cannot authorize the use of copyrighted materials contained in linked websites. Users must request such authorization from the sponsor of the linked website. OHS is not responsible for transmissions users receive from linked websites and does not guarantee that outside websites comply with Section 508 (Accessibility Requirements) of the Rehabilitation Act.

Office of Head Start (OHS) | 330 C Street, SW | 4th Floor Mary E. Switzer Building | Washington, DC 20201

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov> | 1-866-763-6481 | [Contact Us](#)

You are receiving this email because you signed up for Office of Head Start communications. If you prefer not to receive emails of this sort in the future, you can always [unsubscribe](#) here. You also may [modify your ECLKC email subscriptions](#).

Please do not reply to this email. [Contact](#) customer service for additional support.