Supporting family engagement in early intervention:
Empowering families through strength based services

Karen Hopkins and Tabitha Belhorn
Steps Along the Journey
Wires...tests.....DEAF?
We encourage you to slow things down....just a bit.....
Early Interactions

- Attachment
- Bonding
- Eye Contact
- Touch......

Permission to “just be a parent.......”
"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much."

-Helen Keller
MECDHH is Maine’s deaf education agency that provides early intervention through Grade 12 information, support and educational programs for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.
Memorandum of Understanding with Maine’s Department of Education
Act:
- What changes need to be made to the next cycle?
- If no changes, roll out the improvement

Plan:
- Set improvement goals
- Predict what will happen
- Plan the cycle (who, where, what and how)
  - Decide what data to gather

Study:
- Fully analyse data
- Compare data to predictions
- Examine learning

Do:
- Carry out the plan
- Document any problems encountered and observations
- Gather data
Purpose

“To develop one family-centered early intervention and communication opportunities exploration process for families who have deaf or hard of hearing children throughout Maine.”
“All families of infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing will have access to an early intervention provider that specializes in working with deaf children.”
Collaborative Approach to Early Intervention

“All children who are deaf or hard of hearing have a full team of early interventionists supporting their family”

- Parent to Parent Support
- Deaf/HH Support
- Teacher of the Deaf
- Infant Mental Health Specialist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Service Coordinator
- Social Worker
- Special Educator
- Speech Language Pathologist
Early Intervention in Maine

Maine utilizes the Routines-Based Early Intervention Model (McWilliam, 2010)
- Fully understand the family environment.
- Conduct assessment that's truly family-centered.
- Develop clear, specific, measurable outcomes that directly address the family's priorities and help children develop skills relevant to everyday life.
- Provide coordinated, streamlined services. – Primary Service Provider
- Empower families to continue intervention between visits.
- Support early childhood educators
Communication Opportunities Exploration Process

After intake, Routines Based Interview, evaluations, and the initial IFSP, families begin their process with an early interventionist (Primary Service Provider) who supports the family through the initial exploration of communication opportunities while honoring the early bonding process of families with their babies.
6 Visit Process
Early Visits 1-3

- Relationship building

- Support early interactions, attachment and bonding between baby and parent/caregiver.

- Discuss foundations of language and early communication strategies.

- Clarify audiological testing
6 VISIT Process (Early Visits 1-3)

- Provide an unbiased overview of all communication opportunities
- Highlight the variety of available resources
- Provide an overview of hearing assistive technology
- Introduce Maine Hands and Voices, Guide by your Side and Deaf Guide Programs
Windows of Opportunity for Referrals for Parent and Deaf/HH Guide Support

“All families will have the opportunity to meet deaf and hard of hearing adults”

“All families will have the opportunity to receive parent to parent support”

Parent Consultant
• Parent to Parent and Deaf/HH Support

Early Intervention
• Parent to Parent and Deaf/HH Support

Times of Transition
• Parent to Parent and Deaf/HH Support
Strength Search (a learning tool)

- Tell us about your baby
- *Who* are the members of your family
- *What* are your interests (jobs or hobbies)
- *Where* do you get support (friends, neighbors, church)
- *How* do you like to go about tackling a challenge
- *When* do you prefer that others assist you
- *Why* do you prefer certain formats to learn new info

Hopkins, McNally
2009
6 VISIT PROCESS – (Next Visits 4-6)

Explain, demonstrate, compare and contrast communication opportunities the family has expressed interest in exploring.

Explain the role of professionals who work with children specific to each communication opportunity.

Utilize Part C coaching opportunities for joint visits with professionals to provide more in depth information about specific opportunities.
Communication and Language Webs
6 VISIT PROCESS – (Next Visits 4-6)

- Explain child specific hearing assistive technology and equipment management.
- Provide child specific resources regarding hearing levels and implications.
- Review outcomes and complete a communication plan.
Checking Back In (a learning tool)

- What did they tell you
- What made sense
- What was confusing
- What info do you need
- What will be helpful

Hopkins, McNally 2009
Sometimes you just need to go to the beach......
Joint Visits

As families look deeper into various communication opportunities, we bring in specialists, Deaf adults and other parents to offer their perspective. This provides families the opportunity to journey through different options and explore.
Community of Practice

For children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, birth to age 5.
Individualized Approach….each child and family are different
Early Intervention Process

*Six Visit Process* leads to a Communication and Language plan

- Families identify beginning communication approach
- Communication/Language plan written in family’s handwriting
- Communication opportunities journey explained
- Meeting parents and Deaf/HH adults

**Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) Written**

- Family outcomes
- Most appropriate providers
- Deaf/HH inclusion
- Parent Support inclusion
Communication Plan

I. Considering the home language

Step 1. We use the following (check all that apply) as the primary language in our home:

- [ ] American Sign Language (ASL)
- [ ] Signed language other than ASL
- [ ] Spoken English
- [ ] Spoken language other than English
- [ ] Other: ____________________________

II. Considering the child’s language and communication opportunities.

Step 2. We would like information, at this time, on the following communication opportunities:

- [ ] American Sign Language
- [ ] Auditory Oral
- [ ] Auditory Verbal
- [ ] Bilingual Bimodal
- [ ] Cued Speech
- [ ] Puisin Signed English (e.g. Manually Coded)
- [ ] Other, please explain: ____________________________

III. Considering the advantages and limitations of communication opportunities.

Step 3. We have considered the personal advantages and limitations of each option we are exploring for our family.

I. Consider the personal journey to communication.

I. Consider statewide resources and supports.

I. Consider language and communication development.
Reflecting Together

It is important to allow time for families to explore...reflect...change...question...
Empathic Responses

• Reflecting back
  ~ It sounds as if …

• Extending, clarifying
  ~ Tell me more.

• Questioning open ended
  ~ What did you think?

• Summarizing, synthesizing
  ~ It appears that …
Empathic Responses ~ continued

• Checking perception  
  ~ You seem to be...

• Acknowledging  
  ~ I can appreciate that.

• Encouraging expression  
  ~ How did you feel?

Being quiet

Listening and Talking, E. Cole,

1992 A.G.Bell
Remember...its a journey....
Ongoing Assessments

Ongoing language assessment and progress monitoring provides a framework for reviewing the family communication plan and outcomes. This process should be parent led and parent inspired.

- Measure of Engagement, Independence and Social Relationships
- SKI-HI - Language Development Scale
- MacArthur-Bates Developmental Inventory
- Other ongoing language assessments
  - CASLLS -
  - VCSL – standardized visual communication sign language checklist
Semi-Annual Reviews

Review Communication Opportunities

Review Assessment Results

Together the team updates family outcomes and communication plan prior to six month review and annual IFSP.
Recognizing Info & Insight

- How was information exchanged?
- What strengths did you notice?
- What insights were shared?
Promoting Strengths in Families and Professionals

Listen
  ~ Don’t tell

Think with them
  ~ Not for them

Give information
  ~ Don’t insist they use it

Develop options
  ~ Not ultimatums
Promoting Strengths ~ continued

Look for the positive
~ Not the negative

Don’t say “you’re wrong”
~ Determine why they feel they are right

Congratulate their success
~ Don’t ask for applause

Follow their agenda
~ Not yours

PJ McWilliam, 1996
A final thought from a parent...

“What we really want, really need as parents, is opportunities to contact other families with deaf children, help in making regular contact with adults who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, information that is accurate, honest, unbiased and fair, and then the emotional support to make decisions…..”
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