

An IFSP for Providers from a Parent

I...am an individual. Please call me by my name, not my role as “mom”. Although I’m comfortable being called by my first name and it doesn’t matter if you are younger than I, not all parents feel the same way. Please be aware that some may prefer to be addressed more formally, using their last names. When you say my name, you are recognizing and reinforcing the fact that part of my life is myself as an individual, some as a spouse, and yes....a mom too, but not only that. And I want you to realize that many others give me attention for my mother’s role, but they may not stress the importance of finding time for me, or for me and my spouse. If in your team meetings you call me “mother”, that diminishes my other roles. (I promise to call you by your name, and not to refer to you as “teacher” or “speech/language therapist.”)

F...is for friend. Sometimes I need you to be my friend, my listening ear, because my other friends or family members may not always understand as much as you do about what’s going on in my life. Being my friend means you are friendly to me and my family. If you’ve been carefully trained to be “professional” and keep your distance, I understand that we are both going through some uncharted territory in what is known as early intervention. It’s okay with me if you say, “I don’t know”, and if you don’t have all the answers. In fact, maybe I am less intimidated that way. Your “bedside manner” is just as important as a doctor’s, maybe more so.

S...is for sensitivity. Some days are better than others. If you come to my home in the morning when I haven’t had much sleep for several days, I may not be too responsive to your suggestions for adding some wonderful activities to my daily routine. Lots of other things are happening in my life...it’s not just my child with a disability that affects me. Sometimes it’s my own health, or the expenses not covered by insurance, an uncertain future for needed school services, a death in the family...seems like there’s always a lot going on, not just with the child you’ve come to see. It’s really important to us when you are sensitive to a variety of needs.

P...is for potential. Please help validate the potential of our child, our family, and our community. When you do evaluations and report on what our child is doing, you aren’t telling us anything we don’t already know. It would be really helpful if you’d help us as we dream together about what we’d like for our child, and for our family. Don’t tell us what can’t be, but help us put together what can be.

ASHA’S INFANT PROJECT

Mamie Campbell, P.C.D., (913-236-4431 V/TDD). Reproduced with permission of Stephen Campbell (2/4/08).