

## **Strategies for Helping Families and Providers Prepare for Assessments**

1. Find out what questions/concerns the family has about their child. Suggest that they write them down to share before and/or during the evaluation.
2. Find out what questions the family has about the assessment. Ask what the family would like to learn or gain from the assessment, and what would make the assessment most comfortable and meaningful for them and their child.
3. Explain the assessment's purpose and process to the family. Explain what will happen next if the child is found to be eligible for early intervention services. Explain what will happen if the child is NOT eligible for services.
4. If able to accommodate their wishes, find out what dates, times, and location the family prefers for the evaluation. Ask who they would like to invite to be present (family members, friends, family advocate, interpreter). Find out what disciplines or specialists they would like to assess their child or whether they want a general developmental assessment.
5. Explain in detail what will take place the day of the assessment/evaluation.
6. Give the family a list of helpful hints and reminders about what to have available during the assessment, such as snacks, favorite toys, and so forth. Let them know how they can interact with their child during testing, what will happen if their child gets sleepy, hungry, upset or sick, their responsibilities during the assessment and similar guidelines for their interaction with assessors and their child.
7. Discuss frankly with the parents whether they wish to have – and are prepared to hear – information about any potential problems in health, development or learning that may be determined during the assessment. Find out how or what level of information they want; e.g., scores, developmental levels, general idea of their child's development or just suggestions on how to help their child learn.
8. Explore with the family any individual, cultural and linguistic characteristics that may influence the assessment process. Provide an interpreter, cultural mediator and/or parent support if appropriate and available. If using an interpreter or cultural mediator, have that person prepare the team to understand some of the cultural differences in the family.
9. Provide an opportunity for the family to talk with a parent who has been through the process.
10. Show the family a photo album of the assessment team members. Explain what each will do.
11. Help the family keep a notebook or family album about their child with pictures, developmental milestones, a "wish list" of priorities and expectations for their child, professional reports, medical records, IFSPs, etc....

12. Have the family video the child during routines and activities in the home and community and interacting with family members and others. Review and use this information to plan an individualized assessment based on routines that are going well vs. those that are not going well.
13. Gather information regarding the child's and family's typical routines, activities, and settings. This can be done through informal or structured interview or through parent completion of family-directed assessment tools, either on their own or during an interview.
14. Assure the family that not all evaluations have to occur at this point in time and that they may include plans for additional, more comprehensive or specialized evaluations in the IFSP.
15. Let the family know prior to the assessment when they will receive verbal and written results, reports and recommendations. What will they be told or what information will they be given the day of the evaluation? What will they receive in the mail or be given by an Early Intervention Service Coordinator or other person? What will they receive at a post-assessment meeting?

### **Preparing for the Post-Assessment Meeting**

1. If able to accommodate their wishes, find out what dates, times, and location the family prefers for the post-assessment meeting. Can it take place the same day as the evaluation with a written report to follow?
2. Find out what would make the meeting most comfortable and meaningful for the family.
3. Ask the family who they would like to invite to the meeting. Ask which service providers/assessors they would like to have at the meeting. How would they like to structure the meeting and receive the assessment results and from whom?
4. Advise the family some assessment results may be inconclusive or conflicting and that assessors may not always agree with each other.
5. Remind the family that they will receive much help and support following the meeting in order to begin making decisions and taking action on the recommendations. Assure the family that they can decide which recommendations to implement and when and that they will not be expected to act on recommendations right away.
6. Provide the family with information on the following:
  - a. Expectations of them during the meeting. What is their role? What do you want them to do?
  - b. What further information or input will they be allowed to provide?
  - c. When, how, and of whom may they ask questions?
  - d. Will an interpreter be present? Will reports and forms be in their primary language?
  - e. What if they don't understand the results and recommendations and what they mean? What if they don't agree with the results and/or recommendations?

- f. What will be the content and format of the meeting? If possible, share assessment information and recommendations in a conversational format, preferably structured around concerns, issues and questions expressed by the family prior to or during the assessment. This is generally preferred over a more formal process of going around the table/room with one person sharing all information before the next person reports.
- g. What will happen after the meeting? What will be the next steps depending on the evaluation results, especially regarding eligibility or in-eligibility.

References:

“What Works”, Project ACT, Department of Speech, Language and Hearing Sciences, University of Colorado at Boulder.

Volume I: Strategies for Helping Families be Prepared for Evaluations and Assessments

Volume II: Helping Families be Prepared for the Post-Assessment Meeting