



Home Sweet Home: Engaging Parents in Interest-Based Child Learning Using Everyday Activities and Routines

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The mission of the Family, Infant and Preschool Program is to promote the development of young children by supporting and strengthening families and building caring, responsive communities.

The *Family, Infant and Preschool Program (FIPP)* is a regional early childhood development and family support program serving women who are pregnant and children birth through age five and their families. FIPP was the first early intervention program in the United States supported by state funding. FIPP works in partnership with parents using a family-centered model based on respect for families' beliefs and values as well as their cultural and ethnic background. We take pride in our long and successful history of innovative and effective program development, research, training, and dissemination. FIPP provides support for children and their families in Alexander, Burke, Caldwell, Catawba, and McDowell counties in Western North Carolina.

FIPP has over forty years of practice, research, and training experience in supporting families of young children. FIPP operated a regionally acclaimed Early Head Start program in Alexander County beginning in 2003. In 2010, FIPP was recognized by the Administration for Children and Families as one of ten Early Childhood Centers of Excellence in the nation. Early Childhood professionals travel from across the county to visit FIPP, learn how to provide evidence-based practices to economically vulnerable children, and train with our highly qualified staff. FIPP has particular expertise in supporting children with developmental disabilities, identified delays, learning disabilities, and parents who are interested in early learning opportunities for their children. FIPP provides services for parents who are interested in early learning experiences for their children and group opportunities for families with young children.

FIPP is currently staffed by professionals with degrees and licensure in nursing, nutrition, psychology, occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech-language pathology, special education, early childhood, and human services. FIPP staff members average over 20 years of experience working with young children and families.

FIPP's Vision...

**Demonstrating
excellence and
shaping the
future of early
childhood and
family support**

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DESCRIPTION

As life-long teachers, parents have a special role in supporting their children's growth and development. Conflicting demands, stress, and access to resources can stand in the way of families fully engaging with their children. This session focuses on the strategies home visitors can use to successfully engage families in making the most of everyday activities and routines to promote child learning.

OBJECTIVES

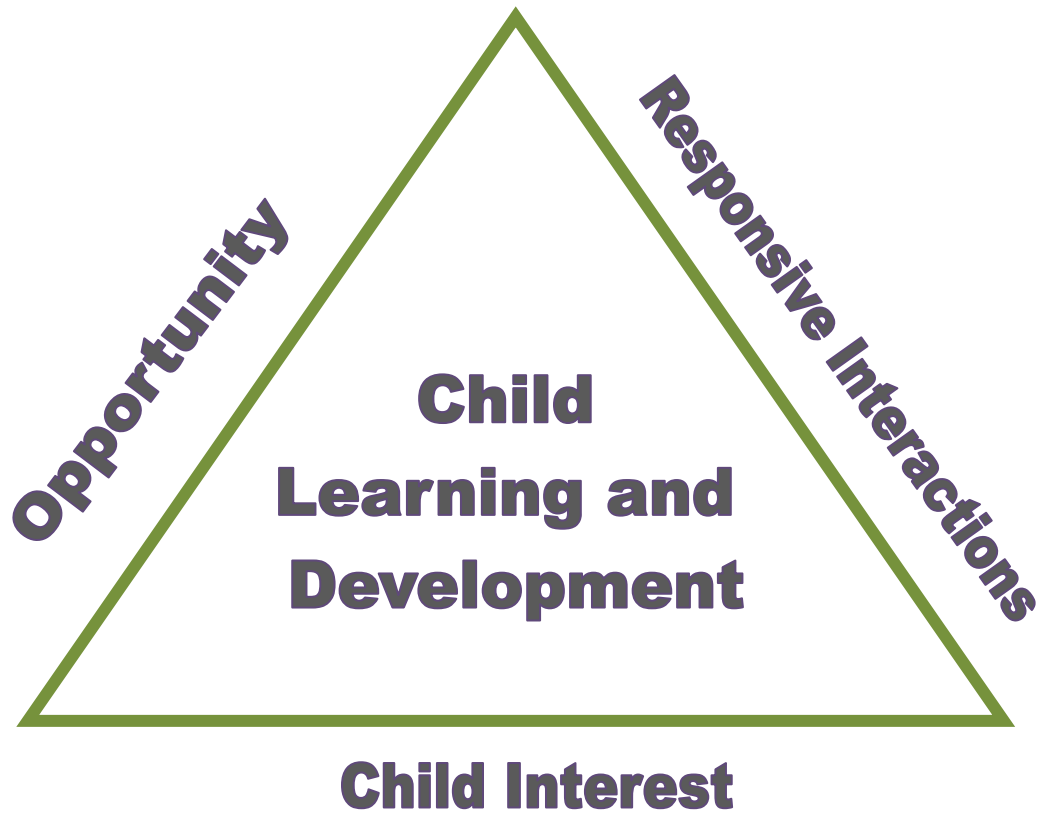
Participants will:

- Identify the characteristics and benefits of interest-based child learning
- Identify and discuss the learning opportunities inherent in everyday activities and routines that make up the fabric of family life
- Identify methods for promoting parent responsive strategies that engage children and support learning during everyday home activities and routines

ABOUT THE TRAINERS

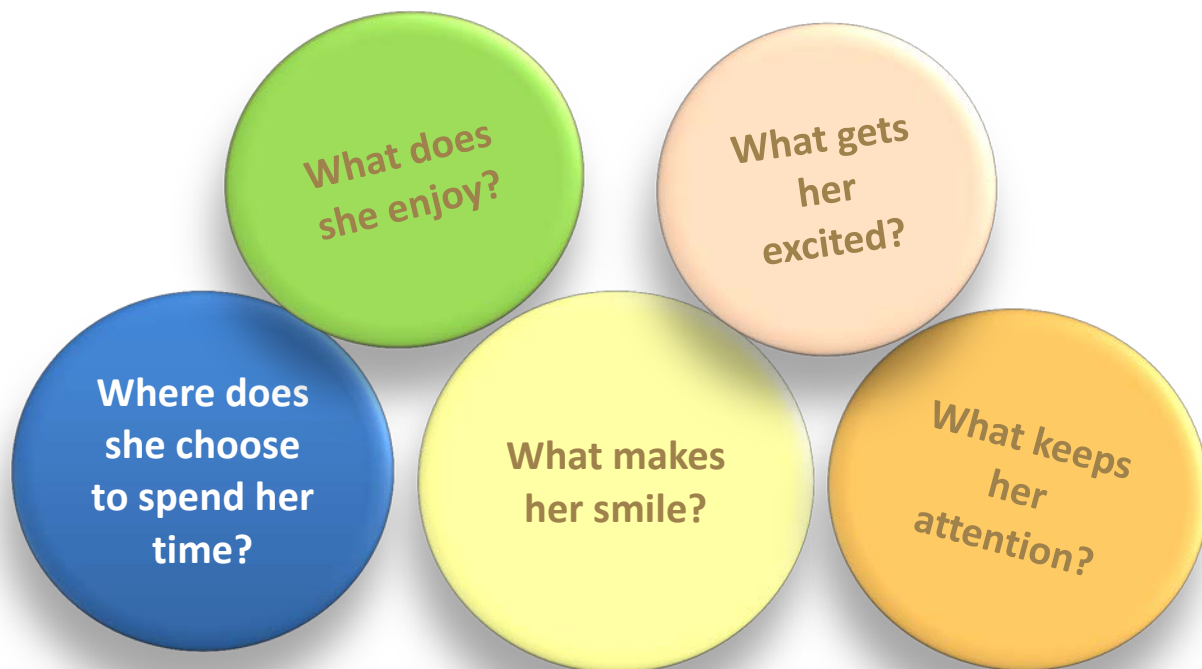
Sarah Sexton, M.Ed., received her B.S. in Early Childhood Education from Boston University in Massachusetts, her M.A in Special Education from Bank Street College in New York, and her M.Ed. in Educational Leadership from Bank Street College as well. Ms. Sexton has worked in the field of education for 17 years, including 15 years serving in management and leadership positions. For 10 years, Ms. Sexton served as EHS Director for FIPP Early Head Start. While with FIPP, Ms. Sexton has also managed numerous grant funded projects in excess of 15 million dollars, including National Endowment for the Arts, North Carolina Children's Trust Fund, Even Start, Smart Start, and Early Head Start. She has conducted numerous training events nationally, including Birth to Three Early Head Start Institute, Zero to Three National Training Institute, Region IV Head Start Conference, North Carolina Family Literacy Conference, FIPP Center for Professional Development, and dozens of other presentations. Ms. Sexton has authored several articles and publications. Ms. Sexton currently serves as the Coordinator of the FIPP Center of Excellence in Early Childhood.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTEREST-BASED CHILD



CHARACTERISTICS OF INTEREST-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Interests can influence a child's involvement and learning in everyday activities, the ways in which they engage in activities, and their development of new understanding and abilities (Krapp et al., 1992). Child interests can be used to encourage participation in everyday activities by increasing a child's opportunities to be involved in activities that match his or her interests (Dunst, 2001; Dunst et al., 2000). A primary goal of Early Head Start home visits is to promote a parent's ability to increase a child's opportunities to participate in activities that provide interest-based learning opportunities. When a child's interests are used as the basis for involvement in everyday activities, children become occupied by playing, interacting, and participating in the activity.



CHARACTERISTICS OF INTEREST-BASED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

Non-Interest-Based Activities:	Interest-Based Activities:
Adults work to engage children in activities the adult believes matches the child's level of ability.	Children are drawn to the activity because of interest and are motivated to participate in ways that match and build on their existing abilities.
Activities are chosen because they are easy for adults or adults believe they will be valuable for children.	Activities and opportunities are chosen because children are interested in them and can participate at a variety of levels.
Children are made to interact with materials or people or interact in adult-directed ways.	Children enjoy and take pleasure in the incidental learning that is a part of the activity.
Children participate when adults put the activity before them.	Children have more opportunities to participate and become engaged.
Children are engaged as long as an adult keeps them engaged.	Children are motivated to stay engaged for longer periods of time.
Children do not understand the relevance of the activity to the real world.	Children have opportunities to learn about their world.
Children are distracted and gain little information or engage in superficial interactions.	Children learn how they can influence things and people.
Children engage in rote behaviors.	Children learn about their own abilities.
Children focus on the isolated tasks the adult intended.	Children become more competent participants in the activities and settings around them.

OBSERVING CHILD INTERESTS

	What are the child's interests?	What is the child learning?
Video 1		
Video 2		
Video 3		

OPPORTUNITIES TO ENGAGE IN INTEREST-BASED EVERYDAY ACTIVITIES AND ROUTINES

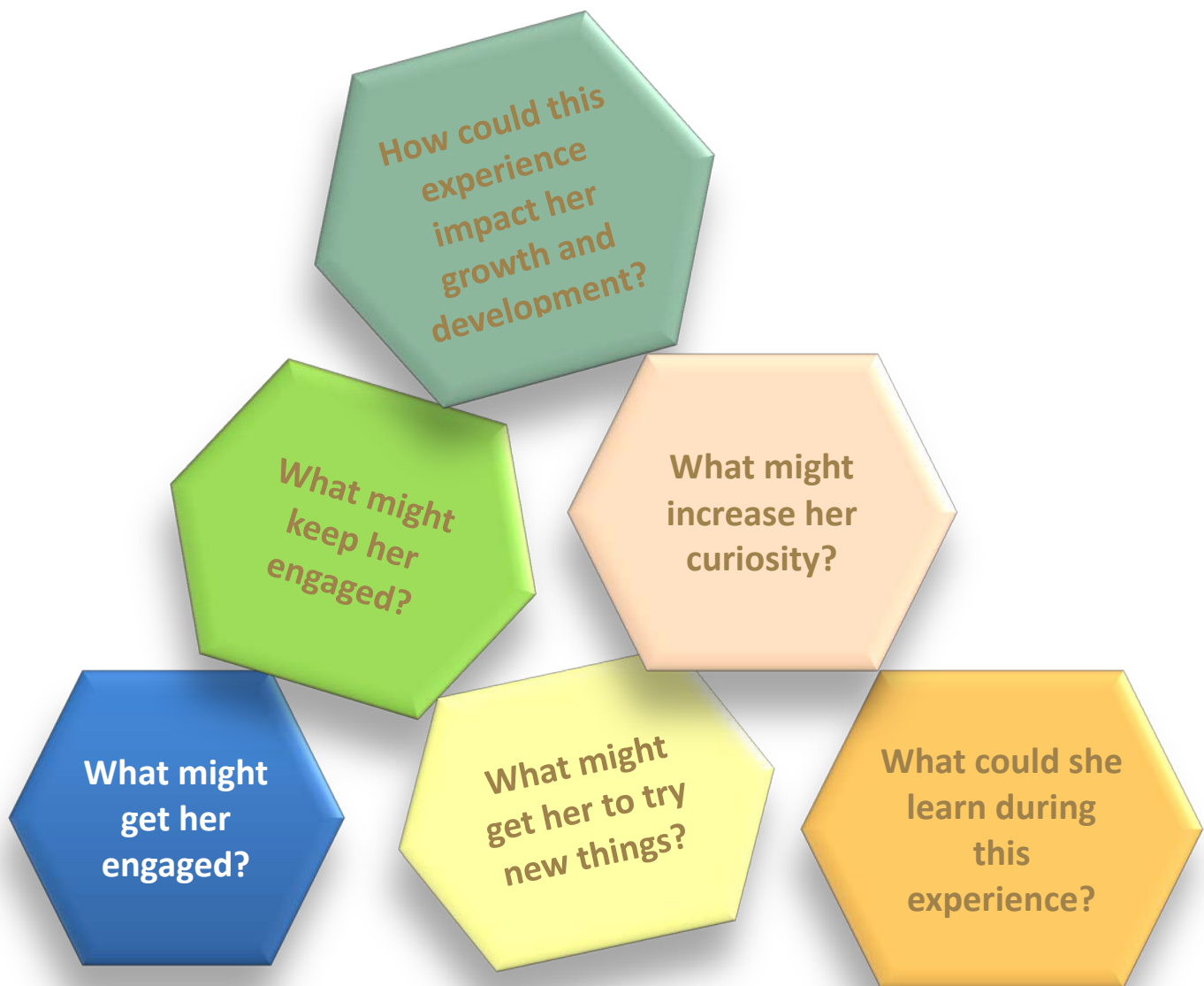
Once the child's interests are established, responsive adults work to identify experiences that allow the child to engage in those interests in meaningful ways. The benefits of using real-life or everyday activities and routines as the context to promote child learning include:

- Everyday activities are accessible to the family all the time
- Children and families have more opportunities to engage and interact in everyday activities and routines
- Everyday activities reinforce the family's existing resources
- Since everyday activities are in context, they promote all areas of development at once



RESPONSIVE INTERACTIONS

Using responsive interactions, parents help their child develop successful ways to learn new things, interact with others, and become independent at taking care of him/herself. Responsive parenting strategies are all the positive ways parents engage and respond to their child. Responsive parenting strategies let the child know immediately that the parent heard and understood what he/she communicated. Responsive strategies also including know the child's interests, abilities and what helps him/ her be successful. These strategies help the child stay engaged in an experience so that learning can occur.



START HERE

Supplies

To complete this activity you will need the following supplies:

DATE: _____

CHILD'S NAME: _____

Recipe for Supporting Interest-Based Learning

Recipe for:



Which steps can your child do AND would your child like to do? Circle the happy face for the steps your child can do and enjoys. Circle the unhappy face for the steps your child does not enjoy.





























GO TO NEXT PAGE

START HERE

1

On the activity card on the next page circle the happy face for the steps that your child can do and enjoys. Circle the unhappy face for the steps or ingredients your child does not enjoy.

2

Focus your time on the steps that have high interest and minimize or eliminate the parts that have no interest.

3

I Plan To Do This
I Did This Today



When focusing on the steps that have high interest remember to try these responsive strategies:

Responsive Strategies

- Engage my child in what is interesting to him/her
- Help my child get started in the activity
- Make sure that people and appropriate toys are available to my child
- Give the child lots of chances to do what he/she can do and likes to do

Respond to my child's behavior

- Shift attention to match my child's interests
- Let my child change what he/she wants to do
- Make myself part of my child's play
- Give my child a sufficient amount of time to respond
- Modify interactions to match my child's attention span
- Make sure my child is in the best position possible to interact with objects and people
- Comment on what my child is doing
- Arrange the play area to encourage the continuation of the activity

Encourage my child to elaborate

- Use comments, suggestions, and questions to get my child to do new things
- Offer choices in materials, use gestures to encourage different use of materials, show something new with different materials, etc.
- Play with and take turns with my child
- Physically assist my child if necessary (e.g., hold toy)

DATE: _____

CHILD'S NAME: _____

SUPPORTING MY CHILD

4

Write other steps you added to this recipe to increase your child's participation.

5

Take home extra recipe cards and try it out at home.

TRY IT AT HOME

Activity/ Experience	How will the family support the child?	Expected outcome
<p>Playing with Dad in the yard</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Run/walk <input type="checkbox"/> Collect nature <input type="checkbox"/> Show daddy and mommy <input type="checkbox"/> Take turns <input type="checkbox"/> Observe nature <input type="checkbox"/> Hear new words 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy spending time with her family outdoors <input type="checkbox"/> Learn new words for outdoor objects
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take her outside every day <input type="checkbox"/> Follow her interests <input type="checkbox"/> Take turns holding and finding things <input type="checkbox"/> Help her hold or pick up objects <input type="checkbox"/> Talk to her about what she sees and is doing 	

Playing with Dad
in the yard

- Run/walk
- Collect nature
- Show daddy and mommy
- Take turns
- Observe nature
- Hear new words

- Enjoy spending time with her family outdoors
- Learn new words for outdoor objects

- Take her outside every day
- Follow her interests
- Take turns holding and finding things
- Help her hold or pick up objects
- Talk to her about what she sees and is doing

Child Learning Observation



Characteristic	Examples
<p>How did the practitioner promote the identification and use of child interest?</p>	
<p>How did the practitioner promote the identification and use of everyday opportunities?</p>	
<p>How did the practitioner demonstrate and promote the use of responsive interactions?</p>	

ROADMAPS FOR REFLECTION

Roadmaps for Reflection

Description

The *Roadmaps for Reflection* serve as a guide for early childhood practitioners by demonstrating an appropriate path for family support coaching conversations. Coaching is most successful when the family determines the priority to be discussed rather than addressing the practitioner's goals or desires for the family. The *Roadmaps for Reflection* address common topics when supporting families who are under-resourced. The front side of each *Roadmap for Reflection* is designed like a flowchart to show possible directions conversations might take, appropriate questions to prompt the family's reflection, and opportunities for providing additional information (i.e., informative feedback). The reverse side of each *Roadmap for Reflection* provides the practitioner with research-based information to use when providing informative feedback to the family. When families participate in repeat conversations using the *Roadmaps for Reflection*, they are more likely to learn the problem-solving process and strengthen their ability to meet future challenges.

Instructions

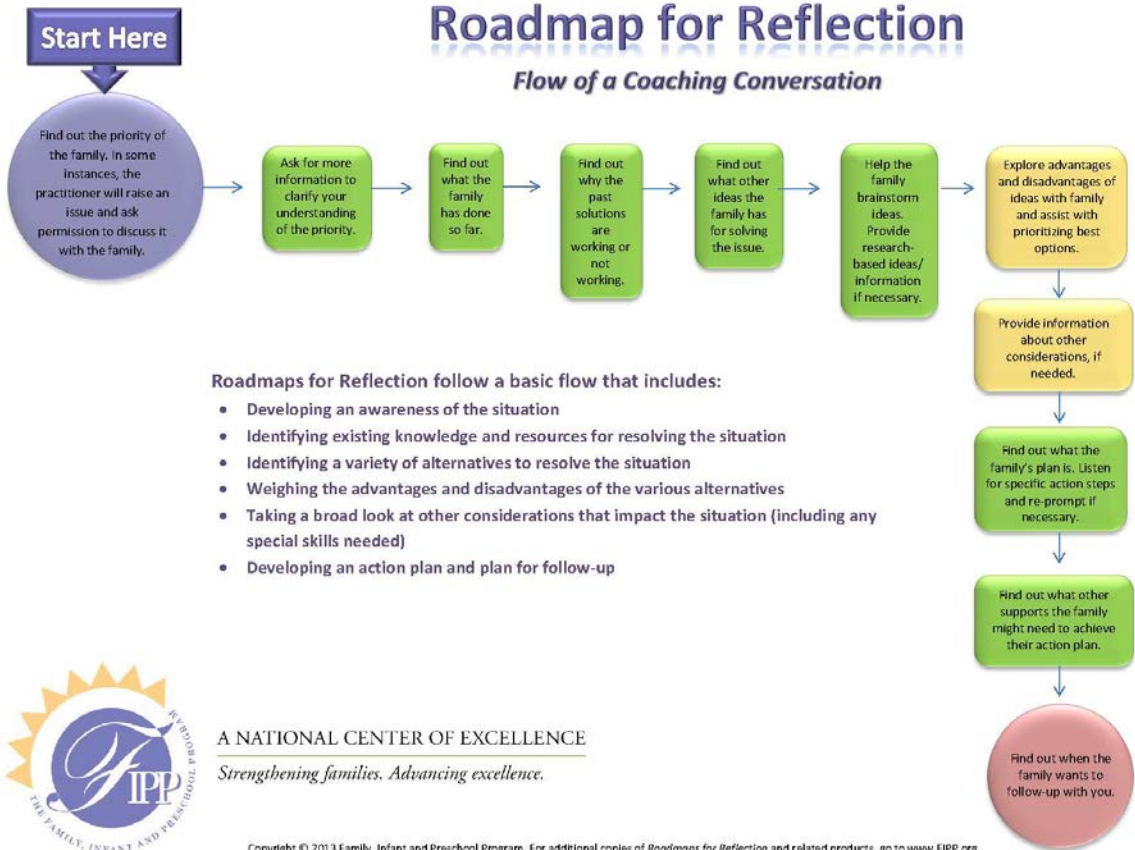
Practitioners should review the *Roadmaps for Reflection* that correspond to topics they encounter and become familiar with the pattern for reflection and feedback used in each *Roadmap*. The information in the *Roadmap* should be used as a guide or a reference skill during conversations. Practitioners may initially read from the *Roadmaps for Reflection* during an interaction, until the conversation becomes more natural for him/her.

- Every *Roadmap for Reflection* begins with a question or issue that triggers the conversation.
- The green boxes represent the questions that prompt the family's reflection.
- The yellow boxes represent the questions that provide information to the family.
- Red circles represent the questions that prompt the family to follow-up.

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Roadmap for Reflection

Flow of a Coaching Conversation



Roadmaps for Reflection follow a basic flow that includes:

- Developing an awareness of the situation
- Identifying existing knowledge and resources for resolving the situation
- Identifying a variety of alternatives to resolve the situation
- Weighing the advantages and disadvantages of the various alternatives
- Taking a broad look at other considerations that impact the situation (including any special skills needed)
- Developing an action plan and plan for follow-up



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Hard laminated Roadmaps and other materials are available for purchase at www.FIPP.org.

FAMILY-CENTERED PRACTICES

Look like...

Do not look like...

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communicate clear and complete information in a manner that matches the family's style and level of understanding.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell the family what you think is best for them.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interact with the family in a warm, caring, and empathetic manner.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell the family to come in and meet with you because you have things you need to go over.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treat the family with dignity and respect and without judgment.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Judge the parent's choices as "good" or "bad."
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communicate to and about the family in a positive way.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell your colleagues information about the family that they don't need to know.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Honor and respect the family's personal and cultural beliefs and values.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Expect the family to see the world from your perspective.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus on individual and family strengths and values.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focus on the individual's and family's weaknesses and deficits.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Acknowledge the family's ability to achieve desired outcomes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell family members their dreams are not realistic or possible for them.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work in partnership with family members to identify and address family-identified desires.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell the family members what their goals should be and how they should reach them.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encourage and assist the family to make decisions about and evaluate resources and/or strategies best suited for achieving desired outcomes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell family which resources they should use and/or call and make arrangements for the family to use the resources.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seek and promote ongoing family input and active participation regarding desired outcomes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell family members why their plan didn't work and revise the plan for the family.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Encourage and assist the family to use existing strengths and assets as a way of achieving desired outcomes.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Take action (e.g., filling out applications, making phone calls, setting up appointments, etc.) for the family.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Provide family participatory opportunities to learn and develop new skills.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Do things for the family that the family members can do for themselves.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Support and respect the family members' decisions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell the family, "that's not the best decision."
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Work with the family in a flexible and individualized manner.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tell the family when and where the meetings will occur. Lecture families when they are late.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Offer help that is responsive to and matches the family's interests and priorities.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Talk about what you think should be important to the family.

Adapted from: Wilson, L. & Dunst, C.J. (2005). Checklist for assessing adherence to family-centered practices. *CASETool*, 1(1).

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