INTRODUCTION

As a parent of a child with a disability and a professional in the Early Intervention system, I have learned from personal experiences how important building personal relationships with Providers and the family are. Healthy personal relationships aid in family engagement, better understanding of parent sensitivity, and effective communication.

Early Intervention has key Principles. The top key principle that has directly impacted my life are:
1. Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions.
2. Families, with the necessary supports, can enhance their children's learning.
3. Early intervention needs to be individualized to reflect family preferences.
4. IFSP outcomes must be functional and based on children's and families' needs.

The feedback has shown there is still work to do in the field of disability. There is a gap that needs to be bridged between family and Provider perspectives. As a Parent Liaison I educate Providers to help understand how they and families can work together in achieving the Mission of Early Intervention.

THE NEED TO ACHIEVE THE EARLY INTERVENTION MISSION

As a Parent Liaison part of my job for the past 4 years has been to survey families during their process with EI. Those who conducted trainings with Providers and the parent perspectives based on my personal experiences, ongoing interactions with EI families and Parent Liaison surveys. The feedback has shown there is still work to do in the field of disability. There is a gap that needs to be bridged between family and Provider perspectives.

Early Intervention Parent Liaison Satisfaction Survey

Surveys are conducted by phone monthly. Questions are based on the families current level of participation in the Early Intervention system.

Level of participation includes:

1. Do families feel they have a voice and understand their rights in EI.
2. Do families feel they are a valuable member and treated as an equal on their child's IE team.
3. Has their IE team helped them to be an advocate for their child.
4. Do families have close working relationships with members on their child's IE team.
5. Were their questions and concerns handled appropriately.
6. Has EI met their expectations.
7. Would they recommend EI to a concerned parent.
8. What was their child's greatest accomplishment during EI.
9. How satisfied are they with the level of service they are receiving.
10. To what suggestions/families have you improved our services to them.

The objective is simple: Education on bridging the gap between families and Providers.

THE OBJECTIVE

The objective is simple: Education on bridging the gap between families and Providers. What factors are impacting the "GAP"?

Family Priorities

• Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions.
• Families, with the necessary supports, can enhance their children's learning.
• Early intervention needs to be individualized to reflect family preferences.
• IFSP outcomes must be functional and based on children's and families' needs.

COMMON PARENT EXPERIENCES IN RAISING A CHILD WITH A DISABILITY

• Anxiety
• Grief
• Sense of urgency in obtaining services
• Lack of communication with Providers
• Feelings of being overwhelmed
• Reliability of Providers

COMMON CHALLENGES PROVIDERS FACE WORKING WITH FAMILIES

• Lack of active engagement and follow up on the part of the family.
• “Fixing” the child
• Lack of Communication with the families

CONCLUSIONS

FAMILIES AND PROVIDERS FACE COMMON CHALLENGES

A. Communication
B. “Fixing” the child
C. Expectations
D. Frustration
E. Active engagement

FINDINGS BASED ON FEEDBACK

As a Parent Liaison I have found family feedback get is different than what is given to Providers. I can see as a neutral person other than a professional. With me families share freely their honest feelings and quality of services they are receiving. Working as EIS in interdisciplinary team, all sides of feedback is important to learn full family picture. This knowledge improves better quality of service.

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