



Early Intervention Clearinghouse

<http://eiclearinghouse.org>

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What Is Family Engagement?

By Chelsea Guillen

Family engagement is an essential component of early intervention services and is driven by the use of family-centered practices. When your team uses family-centered practices, you can expect to be treated in particular ways, be involved in informed decision-making, and be an active participant in identifying outcomes and developing strategies for your child and family.

These practices also can help you advocate for your child, understand your choices, and grow your leadership skills. They support the development of critical family-professional partnerships, too. Ultimately, the practices help professionals tailor their approaches to each unique family.

Out of all the members on your child's EI team, you have the most knowledge about your child, your family, and what you want to happen as your child learns and grows. Team members will look to you to share information during your child's evaluations and for ideas about what you'd like to work on.

It is important to share information about your child's likes and interests with your team. Only you know what is best for your family and the things you already do

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to help your child. Your knowledge and experience are unique.

Your conversations with team members help them learn about your family. As they understand more about your concerns and priorities, they become better prepared to offer helpful information. To aid understanding, they need to provide opportunities to really listen to you. You should feel comfortable asking questions about anything you don't understand and should expect the information they share to be complete and unbiased.

Information about your family's concerns and priorities should be included in your child's Individualized Family Service Plan. Team members will use this plan to guide their interactions with your family. Intervention visits provide opportunities for expanding what your team knows.

Interacting with your team members during visits provides opportunities for trying out strategies, sharing ideas about what to address next, and providing feedback on what is or is not working.

Because family engagement is so critical to successful early intervention services, the Division for Early Childhood (DEC), an organization for families who have children with delays and disabilities and the professionals who support them, has developed a subset of its

Ways that your EI provider may be using family engagement practices

- Asks about new experiences your child has had since the last visit
- Encourages you to perform tasks with your child
- Offers advice on how to prepare for upcoming family outings
- Asks about concerns you have about your child
- Shares tips for improving a daily routine your child struggles with
- Asks for more details when you describe a challenging behavior
- Makes eye contact and listens closely when you share information
- Helps find ways to include your cultural practices where applicable

recommended practices that focuses on families. Although these recommended practices were developed to guide practitioners' behavior, understanding the practices can help you know what to expect from your team and how to work together successfully. You can see the full set of [DEC Recommended Practices](#) on the DEC website.

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center has developed several family practice guides to help families understand the practices and know when they are working. They can be found on the [ECTA website](#). Four particular guides of interest include:

- [Professional Roles in Early Childhood Intervention](#) helps you tell whether your team members are using family-centered practices.
- [Making Good Family Choices](#) helps you identify behaviors team members may use to ensure the strategies they recommend apply to your particular situation.
- [Participating on Your Child's Team](#) has ideas for how you can partner with your team members.
- [Sharing What You Know with Professionals](#) provides suggestions for sharing information with other team members.

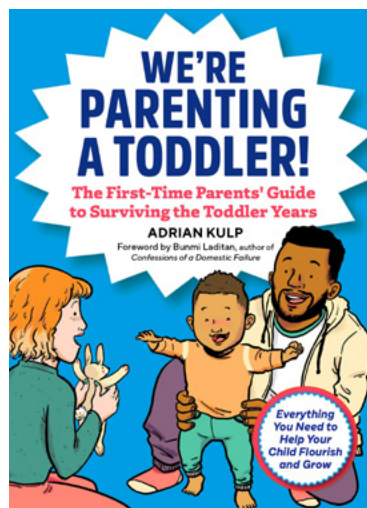
New Books Available From the Clearinghouse

We're Parenting a Toddler! The First Time Parents' Guide to Surviving the Toddler Years

By Adrian Kulp
Rockridge Press, 2020
HQ 774.5 .K9633 2020

The Art and Practice of Home Visiting

Ruth Cook and Shirley Sparks
Paul H. Brookes, 2022
HV 697 .C772 2021



Our Skin: A First Conversation About Race

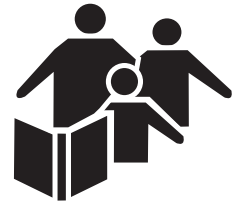
Meghan Madison, Jessica Ralli, and Isabel Roxas
Penguin Young Readers Group, 2021
Also available as an eBook

The Early Intervention Teaming Handbook

M'Lisa Shelden and Dathan D. Rush
Paul H. Brookes, 2022
LC 4019.3 .S54 2022

Talking With Your Family About Your Child's Disability

Within your immediate family, siblings play an important role in their brother's or sister's development. Extended family members may not understand your child's delay/disabilities or your day-to-day lives and responsibilities. It is up to you to decide whether to share information about your child's needs with family members.



If you want to share information with family members, here are ways you can interact with extended family members and siblings to help them better understand your child's delays/disabilities and your everyday life as their parent.

Simple and effective ways to talk with your extended family

- **Teach family members:** You can talk with extended family members about your child's strengths, personality, therapies, appointments, and the activities they enjoy. You also can answer questions family members may have about your child's delays/disabilities.

Example: If your child spends the day with an aunt and she is uncomfortable using the child's orthotics, make a short video on your phone to show how to put the orthotics on.

- **Explore and use family resources:** Each family has its unique informal resources. These are people who provide parents with information and emotional support. Informal resources can be extended family, friends, coworkers, or community members. They may have helpful information and experiences.

Example: You may have a friend who works in childcare or a brother who is a nurse. You can use these personal connections to find more information about available supports in the community.

- **Invite individuals to appointments:** Invite extended family members or friends to participate in medical and/or EI appointments and visits. This may help them understand your experiences, your child's development, and how they can support you and your child in everyday life.

Simple and effective ways to talk with your child's siblings

- **Talk with sibling(s) in their language:** Talk with them using words and phrases they will understand. When talking about your child with a disability, emphasize their strengths and what they like to do and enjoy. Also talk about simple ways to include their brother or sister in everyday life, routines, and activities.
- **Read books:** Share books with the sibling(s) about their brother or sister's disability. Check out your local library or the Early Intervention Clearinghouse for books.
- **Meet other siblings:** Consider attending Sibshops, which are events for siblings of individuals with disabilities. Sibshops provide opportunities for siblings to meet other siblings who may have shared experiences. To find a Sibshop event near you, visit www.siblingsupport.org/about-sibshops/find-a-sibshop-near-you

 For more information, visit the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse at <https://eicclearinghouse.org>

Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Illinois Department of Human Services, Bureau of Early Intervention.



Check Out Our New Speech Kits

In collaboration with the Governor's Office of Early Education and using Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funding, the Early Intervention Clearinghouse is excited to expand its lending library to include 50 early childhood speech book kits for Illinois families.

Delays in language are the most common types of developmental delay. Each kit includes two books for caregivers with information and activities to promote communication skills and two books to share with children to encourage shared communication and relationship building.



Early Childhood Speech Kit 1

1. *I Went Walking* by Sue Williams
2. *Small Talk: How to Develop Your Child's Language Skills from Birth to Age 4* by Nicola Lathey and Tracey Blake
3. *Talking on the Go: Everyday Activities to Enhance Speech and Language Development* by Dorothy Daugherty and Diane Paul
4. *The Snail and the Whale* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Sheffler

Early Childhood Speech Kit 2

1. *We're Parenting a Toddler! The First-Time Parents' Guide to Surviving the Toddler Years* by Adrian Kulp
2. *I Love You to the Moon and Back* by Amelia Hepworth
3. *100 Concepts for Preschoolers: Important Ideas for 3- to 4-year-olds* by Julie Merberg
4. *You Make the Difference In Helping Your Child Learn* by Ayala Manolson

Early Childhood Speech Kit 3

1. *Talking with Your Toddler: 75 Fun Activities and Interactive Games That Teach Your Child to Talk* by Teresa Laikko and Laura Laikko
2. *First 101 Words: A Highlights Hide-and-Seek Book with Flaps* by Highlights for Children
3. *The Gruffalo* by Julia Donaldson and Axel Sheffler
4. *My Toddler Talks: Strategies and Activities to Promote Your Child's Language Development* by Kimberly Scanlon

Early Childhood Speech Kit 4

1. *Motor Goose* by Rebecca Colby
2. *The Gift of Gab: 65 Fun Games and Activities to Help Encourage Speech* by Francine Davids
3. *It Takes Two to Talk* by Elaine Weitzman
4. *100 Phrases for Toddlers* by PBS Kids

Want to Check Out a Speech Kit?

Two kits are also available in Spanish. Fill out our [Materials Request Form](#) and tell us which kit you would like to have sent to you.

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Champaign, IL 61820-7469

Borrow an iPad, Hotspot for Live Video Visits



Many EI families are receiving services by live video visits. To help families with technology needs, the EI Clearinghouse has added several technology devices to the lending library:

- iPads with a cellular data plan (device and Internet access)
- iPads without a cellular data plan (device)
- Hotspot with cellular data plan (Internet access)

To request a device, please complete our [Device Loan Request Form](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)).

For more information about live video visits, see our tip sheet [Introduction to Early Intervention \(EI\) Live Video Visits: Frequently Asked Questions](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)).

Follow Us on Facebook and Twitter!

Receive regular updates on library news, resources on the Web, and materials at our library.



Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse

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