

Module: **Developmentally Appropriate Orientation and Mobility**

Session 1: Foundations of Developmentally Appropriate Orientation and Mobility

Handout F: Strategies That Facilitate Independent Movement in Daily Routines

Lowry, S.S. (2004). *Strategies that facilitate independent movement in daily routines*. Chapel Hill, NC: Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-CH.

- **Hands-on involvement.** Encourage direct hands-on involvement with all materials, objects, equipment, visual displays, pictures, and books during group and individual structured activities such as morning circle or dressing, eating, and household chores at home.
- **Helping.** Allow children to assist with small or large actions during preparation and clean-up sequences for activities such as lunch, toy play, story time, or arts and crafts. Include this approach during self-care times such as diaper change, toileting, or hand washing. For example, let children locate the soap and throw the used paper towel in the trash independently.
- **Reaching.** During playtime, encourage children to reach for nearby toys and provide sound clues if needed instead of giving objects directly to children. If necessary, make this easier for the child by discreetly moving an object closer; this may provide more immediate success and promote subsequent efforts on the part of the child.
- **Orientation.** Through mediated play, gradually familiarize children with small areas of the room by identifying prominent landmarks, furniture, and interesting toys. Instead of taking objects and toys to children, help them move as independently as possible to the play area where favorite toys or objects are stored.
- **Play space.** Set up one or more play spaces that include toys, objects, and sensory materials that are favorites and keep them in predictable positions and locations. Families and caregivers should assume primary responsibility for replacing these items two or three times a day so that children with visual impairments can find them again. Older toddlers can learn to help put these objects away. Use a mat or throw rug of a distinct texture to mark the area for children with visual impairments.

- **Room arrangement.** Arrange furniture, equipment, and toys in predictable and stable locations, especially when children are introduced to a room and when independent walking is emerging or newly acquired. Later, small alterations in room arrangement may not confuse the child or interfere with orientation. When furniture rearrangement is necessary, involve the child in the rearranging if possible, or show the child the changes as soon as possible. Evaluate the room for hazards and remove them or relocate minor ones to areas of the room where there is little movement or traffic. Provide supervision, verbal reminders, and encouragement to use appropriate protective methods when children are moving about the room.

- **Exploration and play.** Provide adult-mediated play where the child makes choices and is allowed to play independently, with the adult adding verbal descriptions and occasional demonstrations of expanded actions. This mediated play will expand the child's repertoire of play, social, and cognitive abilities and will provide opportunities for purposeful movement to a particular destination. For example, the child may not choose to locate the block center if building with blocks is not familiar and meaningful to the child. Frequent opportunities for broad exploration, free-choice play, and floor time without adult interference are equally important. Avoid overstructuring the child's day.

- **Miniroutes.** Use very short miniroutes to move to motivating daily events, such as meal times, bath time, and "morning circle," until independent travel to these destinations begins to occur spontaneously. Early miniroutes are often most successful if the child uses a trailing surface to the destination landmark, rather than stepping across open space. Previous cruising experiences provide a good foundation for the use of trailing or cruising during miniroutes. Initially, this approach relies on very short distances dictated by the child's motor and postural readiness. Children who are not taking steps independently can still participate in short miniroutes. For example, one might position a child adjacent to his highchair for snack time and encourage him to reach toward the highchair.