

Module: **Family-Centered Practices
for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments**

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Module Overview

The Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, in partnership with families, faculty members, and practitioners from throughout the United States, developed the *Family-Centered Practices* module to prepare personnel to serve infants and toddlers with visual impairments and their families. The content for this module was drawn primarily from the fields of visual impairment and early childhood special education.

We believe that family-centered practices are the foundation for effective early intervention. The *Family-Centered Practices* module relies as well upon the following assumptions.

- Early intervention takes place in the context of relationships. Therefore, learning about early intervention in partnership with multiple disciplines, human service agencies, and family members is important. The module is designed to promote the relationships and skills that are essential for building and sustaining reliable alliances.
- Early intervention is an evolving and complex field. Acquiring information now may not be as important as learning how to find information about new developments in the field.
- Effective practitioners are questioners, critical thinkers, and life-long learners who continuously strive to engage in effective practices and seek innovative methods for addressing issues and concerns.

The purpose of the module is to provide participants with the basic knowledge and skills required to provide effective early intervention and to collaborate with other professionals in the field of early intervention.

The module consists of seven sessions. Four sessions have sufficient content for two 3-hour classes while three sessions have approximately 3 hours of content each. The entire series of seven sessions should provide sufficient content for a 3-semester-hour graduate level course.

Below are suggested lengths of instruction time for each session within the module.

Session Title	One 3-hour class	Two 3-hour classes
Session 1, Building Reliable Alliances		X
Session 2, Teams and Service Coordination		X
Session 3, Support-Based Early Intervention and Developing Ecomaps	X	
Session 4, Eligibility and Routines-Based Assessment		X
Session 5, Functional Outcomes and the IFSP Process		X
Session 6, Effective Home Visits	X	
Session 7, VI-Specific Issues	X	

Session 1: Building Reliable Alliances

Introduction

In Session 1, “Building Reliable Alliances,” of the *Family-Centered Practices* module, participants will acquire the knowledge, skills, and expertise required to demonstrate competence in building effective alliances with families. In addition, participants will be able to identify and describe the legal, theoretical, and research bases for family-centered early intervention. Finally, participants will recognize and implement recommended practices upon which reliable alliances are built—knowing themselves, knowing families, honoring diversity, affirming and building on strengths, promoting family choices, affirming great expectations, communicating positively, and warranting trust and respect.

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. describe the legal basis for family-centered practices in the context of early intervention.
2. identify and implement the key features of family-centered practices: focusing on family strengths, promoting family choice, and collaborating with families and other professionals, while respecting and honoring diversity within the context of families, communities, and cultures.

3. describe the rationale for using family-centered practices and demonstrate the ability to initiate and sustain a reliable alliance with families based on effective help-giving practices.
4. describe their overall philosophy for working with families including the basic assumptions and principles that guide their approach. Participants will develop self-awareness of personal values, assumptions, and biases related to childrearing and interactions with families and understand how those affect relationships with families and children.

Session 2: Teams and Service Coordination

Introduction

Welcome to Session 2, “Teams and Service Coordination,” of the *Family-Centered Practices* module. In this session, participants will acquire the knowledge, skills, and expertise required to be effective service coordinators and members of teams using a family-centered approach.

Objectives

After the completion of this session, participants will

1. identify, observe, and describe factors that contribute to effectively functioning teams.
2. contrast the three team models and cite the advantages and disadvantages of each.
3. recognize families as key members of teams and describe factors that contribute to family participation on early intervention teams.
4. identify, observe, and describe the possible collaborative roles of TVIs on early intervention teams. Identify their own strengths and areas of potential growth regarding teamwork and collaboration.
5. describe the potential roles of the official service coordinator and the required elements of service coordination.

Session 3: Support-Based Early Intervention and Developing Ecomaps

Introduction

In Session 3, “Support-Based Early Intervention and Developing Ecomaps,” of the *Family-Centered Practices* module, participants will acquire the knowledge, skills, and expertise needed to demonstrate competence in planning and implementing support-

based early intervention. Because exemplary early intervention is family centered and based on family ecology, practitioners will learn how to develop an ecomap—a graphic portrayal of a family’s informal, formal, and intermediate supports. Developing the ecomap helps determine the supports, rather than the services, that will be important in developing and implementing the intervention plan for the family and child. After completing this session, participants will be able to distinguish between support and services; demonstrate a strengths-based approach to families; and collaborate effectively with others to provide high-quality early intervention to families and children.

Objectives

After this session, participants will

1. describe why all high-quality early intervention practices are considered support; contrast support and services; and describe the three types of support that early interventionists should provide families.
2. discuss the importance of focusing on family strengths.
3. describe why a teacher of children with visual impairments (TVI) in early intervention should learn about family members, friends, and other natural supports.
4. demonstrate the completion of an ecomap and describe its advantages.
5. describe how TVIs work in collaboration with other professionals in the early intervention system to provide support to families.

Session 4: Eligibility and Routines-Based Assessment

Introduction

Welcome to Session 4, “Eligibility and Routines-Based Assessment,” of the *Family-Centered Practices* module. In this session participants will acquire knowledge, skills, and expertise regarding eligibility for early intervention services and assessment of both children and families. This knowledge and expertise will enable participants to effectively implement Part C of IDEA while also addressing the priorities of families and needs of children. Participants will acquire the skills necessary to conduct a routines-based assessment (RBA) in which families share their concerns and identify priorities for early intervention within the context of everyday activities and routines.

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. describe the eligibility criteria—established condition, developmental delay, atypical development, or being at risk for developmental delay—for children entering Part C of IDEA.

2. describe what IDEA says about multidisciplinary assessment and assessment of the child's current level of functioning.
3. describe the difference between evaluation for eligibility and assessment for intervention planning.
4. describe what IDEA says about assessment of families' priorities and concerns as related to their capacity to meet the developmental needs of the child. Describe the difference between assessment of families' needs and priorities and assessment of families.
5. contrast the benefits and drawbacks of using questionnaires and interviews to assess families' priorities.
6. describe the rationale for routines-based assessment (RBA) and identify and demonstrate sensitive and appropriate interactions with families in the process of RBA. Review major concerns and help parents select their priorities.
7. identify and demonstrate the six questions to ask caregivers in the context of each routine.
8. describe the role of the TVI in determining eligibility and conducting an RBA.

Session 5: Developing Functional Outcomes and the IFSP Process

Introduction

Welcome to Session 5, "Developing Functional Outcomes and the IFSP Process," of the *Family-Centered Practices* module. In this session, participants will acquire the knowledge, skills, and expertise needed to develop functional outcomes in the context of an individualized family service plan (IFSP), and to develop and monitor an IFSP in an effective, efficient, and family-centered manner. Participants will also be able to plan and implement effective transitions and contrast IFSPs and individualized education programs (IEPs).

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. identify and describe the benefits and required components of an individualized family service plan (IFSP).
2. describe the importance of functional outcomes and strategies for children and families. Describe functionality—engagement, independence, and social relationships within daily activities and routines—for very young children.
3. describe the importance of assessing current level of functioning in developing functional outcomes.
4. describe the role of the team in developing the IFSP according to IDEA (1997).
5. describe the process by which the IFSP is monitored and reviewed.

6. use ecomaps and routines-based assessments (RBAs) to identify functional outcomes and strategies and the natural environments in which they are most likely to be implemented.
7. develop a successful IFSP that includes functional outcomes; strategies for achieving the outcomes; specification of any necessary early intervention services and supports; and requirements for coordination and accountability.
8. describe the transition process from Part C (infant and toddler) to Part B (preschool) services.
9. describe the structure of effective and efficient IFSP meetings, including preparing families.
10. describe differences between an IFSP and an individualized education program (IEP).

Session 6: Effective Home Visits

Introduction

Welcome to Session 6, “Effective Home Visits,” of the *Family-Centered Practices* module. In this session, participants will become familiar with the major goals for home visits and with recommended practices for making effective home visits. Additionally, we will share information about the role of the teacher of children with visual impairments (TVI) in making home visits. The TVI may serve as the primary home visitor or as a consultant to the primary home visitor, other team members, and the family. We will contrast the differences in these two roles, as well as suggest strategies for implementing each role.

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. identify the major goals of home visits—providing informational, material, and emotional support that promotes functional outcomes based on family priorities within the context of daily routines and activity settings.
2. describe the importance of developing an awareness of cultural diversity and cultural reciprocity.
3. describe the rationale for a transdisciplinary, collaborative, routines-based approach to home visits; the difference between regular home visits and consultative home visits within the transdisciplinary approach; and the role of the TVI in each.
4. use modeling appropriately to facilitate the acquisition of functional outcomes.
5. structure home visits around family priorities as identified in a routines-based assessment (RBA) in order to promote the acquisition of functional outcomes for the child and family within the context of daily routines and activity settings.
6. identify situations when outside assistance must be sought.

Session 7: VI-Specific Issues

Introduction

Welcome to Session 7, “VI-Specific Issues,” of the *Family-Centered Practices* module. The purpose of this session is to review the basic knowledge and skills that are required to provide effective early intervention through the implementation of family-centered practices, including collaboration with families and other professionals. Family-centered practices provide the foundation for effective early intervention. In this session we will synthesize key concepts and provide VI-specific examples of the topics listed below.

1. Building Reliable Alliances
2. Teams and Service Coordination
3. Support-Based Early Intervention and Developing Ecomaps
4. Eligibility and Routines-Based Assessment
5. Functional Outcomes and the IFSP Process
6. Effective Home Visits

Objectives

After completing this session, participants will

1. describe strategies that will assist TVIs as they build reliable alliances with families and professionals and implement family-centered practices.
2. describe strategies that TVIs use as members of teams to effectively communicate and collaborate with families and other professionals; and identify the benefits of the transdisciplinary method of service delivery and the responsibilities of the service coordinator.
3. describe the three types of support that are important for families of young children with visual impairments and explain the advantages of developing an ecomap, a graphic representation of a family’s existing supports.
4. describe the criteria for eligibility for Part C services under IDEA (1997) and the rationale for family-centered, routines-based assessment and identification of the family’s priorities, strengths, and concerns.
5. identify the eight required components of individual family service plans (IFSPs) and strategies for developing functional IFSP outcomes and assuring smooth transitions from Part C to Part B services.
6. contrast the roles of TVIs who serve as primary home visitors to those of TVIs who serve as consultants to primary home visitors and families.