

Family Symbols/Family Panel Presentation and Team Activity

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Objectives:

- Provide a demonstration of how the experiences of families can be used to convey key early childhood and early intervention concepts and values
- Illustrate the effectiveness of family members using symbols to describe the hopes and dreams of their child/children with special needs
- Share resources for supporting the participation of family members and individuals with disabilities in instructional settings

Handouts:

- Family & Consumer Symbols Activity
- Telling Your Story (Thomas & Jeppson, 1997)
- *Telling Your Story: Training for Family Faculty* (Moss, 1997)

Resources:

Moss, J. (1997). *Telling your story: Training for family faculty*. Oklahoma City, OK: University Affiliated Program of Oklahoma, College of Medicine, University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center.

Thomas, J., & Jeppson, E.S. (1997). *Words of advice: A guidebook for families serving as advisors*. Bethesda, MD: Institute for Family-Centered Care.

Family & Consumer Symbols Activity

Version 1: Panel Activity

Instructions to Panelists

Please bring with you something significant (i.e., tulip bulb, bride doll, puzzle piece, etc.) that is symbolic of your family. Please feel free to think of family in any way that is comfortable for you (e.g., family by birth, family by marriage, family by choice, pets, life partners, etc.). Be prepared to explain briefly (2-3 minutes) the significance of the family symbol you've chosen.

Possible Questions for Panelists (after sharing their symbols):

1. Has there ever been a place you/your family wanted to go and couldn't as a result of someone's disability?
2. Receiving difficult news about a diagnosis or disability can be a devastating experience. What were you told? How was the news delivered? What do you remember as helpful? What was not?
3. IFSP and IEP meetings are a recurring feature of the lives of families of young children with disabilities. Share one or two ways in which these meetings have been hurtful or unproductive. Share one or two ways in which these meetings have been helpful or effective.
4. How have you/has your family financed different services that were needed (assistive technology, etc.)? Has this ever been a hardship for your family?
5. Coping with loss comes in different ways and styles. What were some of the ways you coped initially and how have these strategies evolved over time? How do you remember feeling perceived by others?
6. What has or has not been helpful from your spouse, extended family or the community? What has the impact been on any siblings?
7. What kinds of disability services did you/your child/your family receive? How did you learn about them, access them and express what you felt your/child's/family's needs were?
8. What has your experience with assessment been? What kinds of interviewing experiences have/have not been positive?
9. If your role was reversed and you found yourself as a service provider, what would you try to keep in mind in working with families based on your journey/your family's journey?
10. Has there been any humor through this experience? Would you care to share any memorable moments?

Developed by Sally Sloop for the Southeastern Institute for Faculty Training (SIFT). Modified by Camille Catlett (9/98).