

# Guidance for Using the Coaching-in-Action Checklist for Fidelity Assessment

MAY 2019

## COACHING-IN-ACTION CHECKLIST

The [Coaching-in-Action Checklist](#) is Virginia's tool for assessing fidelity to coaching practices. All certified EI Professionals and EI Specialists who provide EI services other than eligibility determination and assessment must complete fidelity assessment requirements using this tool.

### Fidelity Assessment Requirements

Service Provider Requirements*			
Providers Hired Prior to 10/1/17		Providers Hired on or After 10/1/17	
Time Period	Required Tasks	Time Period	Required Tasks
10/1/17 to 9/30/18  (1st Year of Implementation)	Complete at least two (2) self-assessments using the <i>Coaching in Action Checklist</i>	1st Year of Employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete two (2) self-assessments using the <i>Coaching in Action Checklist</i></li> <li>2. Be observed at least once by a qualified observer.</li> </ol> <p>* Note that one of the self-assessments may be completed using the <i>Orientation to Coaching and Natural Learning Environment Practices</i> checklist</p> <p>** If a provider changes employment agencies, he/she can provide copies of the self-assessments and/or observation conducted at the previous agency to the new employer.</p>
10/1/18 to 9/30/19  (2nd Year of Implementation)	Complete two (2) self-assessments using the <i>Coaching in Action Checklist</i>	2nd Year of Employment	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Complete two (2) self-assessments using the <i>Coaching in Action Checklist</i></li> <li>2. Be observed at least once by a qualified observer.</li> </ol>
10/1/18 to 9/30/19 (1st and 2nd Year of Implementation)	Be observed at least once by a qualified observer		
(After 2nd Year of Implementation)	Frequency of additional self-assessments and observations determined by the practitioner's direct supervisor based on the results of the 2nd year of self-assessments, observation(s), record reviews and ongoing supervision	2nd Year of Employment	Frequency of additional self-assessments and observations determined by the practitioner's direct supervisor based on the results of the practitioner's 2nd year of self-assessments, observation(s), record reviews and ongoing supervision

## Qualified Fidelity Observers

Fidelity observation is conducted according to the schedule above by providers who are qualified. The table below explains the requirements for fidelity observers:

Qualified Fidelity Observer Requirements*	
1.	a. Master coach <b>and #2 below, or</b> b. At least six (6) months experience using Rush and Shelden or similar model of coaching plus 8 hours of professional development on coaching <b>and #2 below, or</b> c. At least four (4) months experience plus four (4) hours of professional development on coaching and observed and approved by master coach or other qualified observer, <b>and #2 below</b>
2.	Completion of the <i>Texas Coaching Families</i> module

\* Special thanks to the ITC of Virginia Beach for formatting the tables above.

## Clarifications and Considerations in Deciding Between Yes and No When Completing the Checklist

The Coaching-in-Action Checklist is designed to help service providers reflect on their practices, identify their strengths, and identify any areas where additional support or professional development is needed in order to implement a practice. The checklist lists the five coaching characteristics and indicators for when each characteristic is implemented with fidelity. Practitioners or their fidelity observers mark yes or no beside each indicator and use the Notes/Comments column to provide information that explain their observations.

It is important to remember that the fidelity assessment process is a part of professional development. Replying yes should reflect a high level of confidence, based on this observation, that the provider is using the given practice as intended. Until that level of confidence is reached, additional support to the provider is appropriate.

The following information can guide practitioners and fidelity observers as they use the Checklist:

1. **Knowing what you're looking for:** The first step in ensuring consistency is a shared understanding of what you're looking for when completing the Coaching in Action checklist as a self-assessment or observation. Each of the following resources help to explain and illustrate what the components of coaching look like:
  - [Coaching Families Module](#) (Texas ECI)
  - [Key Principles of Fidelity Assessment: Looks Like/Doesn't Look Like](#)
  - [Foundations of Coaching in Early Childhood: Partnering with Parents and Professionals](#) (Video Series, Connecticut Birth to Three)
2. **Documenting evidence:** Use the Notes/Comments column on the checklist to elaborate on the yes/no responses. This is the place to:
  - Explain exceptional circumstances;
  - Note missed opportunities (e.g., that the provider did a great job asking what the caregiver had already tried before modeling a strategy on one occasion during the visit but forgot to ask the caregiver first on another occasion later in the session);
  - Comment on something to work on more; and
  - Document that there was not an opportunity to address that particular item during this session.
3. **Monitoring consistency:** Finally, look for opportunities to check for consistency across fidelity observers.
  - Local system managers and/or private agency directors can look at data across fidelity observers within or across systems to identify differences in patterns or possible inconsistencies based on information in the Notes/Comments column. If there are differences, hold a meeting among observers to discuss and clarify.
4. **Deciding if it's enough for a yes:** Once you're confident you know that you're looking for, you have to decide if you've seen enough of it during the visit to say yes (i.e., the provider is using the given coaching practice as intended). The following resources and tips will help you consider your decision:
  - Be sure to review the [Coaching in Action Checklist: Tips & Clarifications](#) document for clarification, which includes the following tips:
    - **Consider the intent of the item when responding yes or no.**  
 For example, consider the item, "Asks the caregiver what they would like to work on today." Maybe you have been working with a family for a while, they have gotten used to the way you start a visit, and they say what they would like to work on during today's visit even before you have a chance to ask. You can respond yes to that item.

- **There are a number of items on the checklist that have two parts to take into account when responding yes or no.**  
*For example, consider the item, "Intentionally modeled/coached a strategy after observing/learning what caregiver has already tried." In order to respond yes to that item, you need to have intentionally modeled/coached a strategy and you need to have done that after observing/learning what the caregiver has already tried.*
  - **Generally, the item needs to be true 100% of the time during the visit in order to be marked yes.**
    - Again using the item "Intentionally modeled/coached a strategy after observing/learning what caregiver has already tried" as an example: If you did that in one instance during the visit and in another instance forgot to observe/learn what the caregiver has already tried before modeling a strategy, then that item would be marked no.
    - An exception to the tip immediately above is the item, "Used open-ended questions to help the family reflect on past and/or new strategies." In this case, answer yes if the majority of questions used were open-ended.
  - **Answer yes if the provider gave the caregiver the opportunity to practice, even if the caregiver did not practice the strategy**  
*For example, when responding to the item "Gave caregiver the opportunity to practice the intentionally modeled/coached strategy," consider only whether the opportunity was given.*
- Review the instructions for [Using Virginia's Coaching in Action Checklist with Texas Coaching Module](#), which includes answer keys with notes/justification for selection of yes or no response.

The table on the next page provides additional guidance to help you make choices when using the Coaching-in-Action Checklist.

## Guidance for Scoring the Coaching-in-Action Checklist

Coaching Characteristic	Items	Tips and Examples for Choosing Yes or No
<b>JOINT PLAN:</b> Agreement by the coach and coachee on the actions they will take or the opportunities to practice between coaching visits	Referenced from last session and used to check in/begin?	<b>YES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider reviews the previous visit's joint plan and checks in with the caregiver about the implementation of the plan since the previous visit.</li> <li>The caregiver begins the discussion about the previous session's joint plan before the provider has a chance to ask.</li> </ul> <b>NO</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider does not reference the previous joint plan and/or does not check in with the parent for an update.</li> <li>The provider begins the session with his/her own agenda rather than referencing the joint plan.</li> </ul>
	Asked the caregiver what they would like to work on today?	<b>YES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider directly asks the caregiver, "What would you like to work on today?" or a similar question.</li> <li>The caregiver says what he/she would like to work on during the visit before the provider has a chance to ask.</li> </ul> <b>NO</b> The provider does not ask the caregiver for input on what to work on during the current visit.
<b>OBSERVATION:</b> Examination of another person's actions or practices to be used to develop skills, strategies, or ideas	Asked the caregiver what has been tried before showing a strategy?	<b>YES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider asks the caregiver, "What have you already tried to help your child ___?" or a similar question.</li> <li>The caregiver shares what he/she has already tried before the provider has a chance to ask.</li> </ul> <b>NO</b> The provider does not ask the caregiver to share what has already been tried before showing a strategy.
	Gave caregiver an opportunity to demonstrate what they've tried before showing a strategy?	<b>YES</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider offered the caregiver the opportunity to show what he/she tried to address the child's development before showing a strategy.</li> <li>The provider asks, "Can you show me how you ....? Or "What does it look like when you...?" or a similar question to invite the caregiver's demonstration.</li> </ul>

Coaching Characteristic	Items	Tips and Examples for Choosing Yes or No
		<p><b>YES</b> <i>(continued)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider gave the caregiver the opportunity to demonstrate but the caregiver chose not to do so.</li> <li>The caregiver demonstrates what he/she has tried before the provider has the chance to facilitate the opportunity (such as when a provider has been working with a family for a while and observation is a regular part of the visit).</li> </ul> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No opportunity was offered to the caregiver to demonstrate what he/she had already tried to address the child’s development.</li> <li>The provider gave the caregiver the opportunity to demonstrate before showing a strategy in one instance, but in other instances forgot or missed opportunities to give the caregiver a chance to demonstrate what the caregiver had already tried.</li> </ul>
<p><b>ACTION/PRACTICE:</b> Spontaneous or planned events that occur within the context of a real-life situation that provide that coachee with opportunities to practice, refine, or analyze new or existing skills</p>	<p>Intentionally modeled/coached strategy after observing/learning what caregiver has already tried?</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <p>After asking what the caregiver has already tried:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider intentionally describes what he/she is going to model while the caregiver is actively observing.</li> </ul> <p><b>OR</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider coaches the caregiver while the caregiver practices using a strategy with the child. (In this case, modeling may not be necessary if the caregiver is ready to try a strategy without it being demonstrated by the provider first).</li> </ul> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider intentionally modeled/coached without observing/learning what the caregiver had already tried.</li> <li>The provider interacts with the child without intentionally explaining the strategy being modeled, what is being done (or will be done), and why.</li> <li>The provider asks about what the caregiver had already tried once during the visit but in another instance forgot or missed an opportunity to observe/learn what the caregiver had already tried before modeling a strategy.</li> <li>The provider intentionally models in one instance, but in other instances forgot or missed opportunities to intentionally model for the caregiver.</li> </ul>

Coaching Characteristic	Items	Tips and Examples for Choosing Yes or No
	Gave caregiver the opportunity to practice the intentionally modeled/coached strategy?	<p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The caregiver practices using the strategy with the child.</li> <li>The provider gave the caregiver the opportunity to practice, even if the caregiver did not practice the strategy.</li> </ul> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider did not offer any opportunities for the caregiver to practice using a strategy.</li> <li>The provider did this in one instance during the visit but in another instance forgot or missed an opportunity to give the caregiver the opportunity to practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>REFLECTION:</b> Analysis of existing strategies to determine how the strategies are consistent with evidence based practices and how they may need to be implemented without change or modified to obtain the intended outcome(s)</p>	Used open-ended questions to help the family reflect on past and/or new strategies	<p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Majority of questions or statements used were open-ended and invited the caregiver's reflection.</li> <li>The caregiver began reflecting before the provider had a chance to use open-ended questions (such as when a provider has been working with a family for a while and reflection is a regular part of the visit).</li> <li>The provider used open-ended questions or statements to facilitate reflection but the caregiver did not respond or did not reflect.</li> </ul> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No open-ended questions or statement were used to facilitate reflection.</li> <li>The provider asked one or two open-ended questions but most other questions or statements were closed-ended or yes/no.</li> <li>The provider did not allow the caregiver time to think and respond before asking the next question.</li> </ul>
	Asked caregiver what differences they noted (previous practice vs. current practice)?	<p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider asks the caregiver about differences noted related to previous practice, changes in the child's behavior, etc. after practicing a strategy.</li> <li>The caregiver began reflecting before the provider had a chance to ask about differences (such as when a provider has been working with a family for a while and reflection is a regular part of the visit).</li> <li>The provider asks the caregiver about what differences were noted but the caregiver did not respond or did not reflect.</li> </ul>

Coaching Characteristic	Items	Tips and Examples for Choosing Yes or No
		<p><b>NO</b> <i>(continued)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The caregiver was not asked to reflect on differences noted.</li> <li>The provider did not allow the caregiver time to think and respond before asking the next question.</li> </ul>
	<p>Asked caregiver how they felt implementing the strategy?</p>	<p><b>YES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The provider asked the caregiver for input about his/her experience implementing the strategy.</li> <li>The caregiver began sharing how it felt to implement a strategy before the provider had a chance to ask (such as when a provider has been working with a family for a while and reflection is a regular part of the visit).</li> <li>The provider asks the caregiver but the caregiver did not respond or did not reflect.</li> </ul> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The caregiver was not asked about his/her experience implementing the strategy.</li> <li>The provider did not allow the caregiver time to think and respond before asking the next question.</li> <li>The provider asked leading questions about how the caregiver should feel or what they should work on.</li> </ul>
<p><b>FEEDBACK:</b> Information provided by the coach that is based on his/her direct observations of the coachee, actions reported by the coachee, or information shared by the coachee and that is designed to expand the coachee's current level of understanding about a specific evidence based practice or to affirm the coachee's thoughts or actions related to the intended outcomes</p>	<p>Verbally coached the caregiver while practicing, by providing informative feedback?</p>	<p><b>YES</b> During or after observation of a practice opportunity, the provider shared informative feedback in response to the caregiver's practice.</p> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No informative feedback was provided based on the caregiver's practice.</li> <li>Feedback was non-specific and evaluative (e.g., "Great job!") rather than informative (i.e., sharing knowledge and information that is directly related to an observation, action, reflection, or direct question from the caregiver – Rush &amp; Sheldon, 2011, p 71).</li> <li>The provider provided informative feedback once or twice during the visit but missed multiple opportunities to provide informative feedback.</li> </ul>



Coaching Characteristic	Items	Tips and Examples for Choosing Yes or No
	<p>Provided feedback that affirms the family's strengths and capacity to support their child's learning and development?</p>	<p><b>YES</b> During or after observation of a practice opportunity, or in response to information shared or actions reported by the caregiver, the provider shared feedback that affirms the family's strengths and capacity.</p> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No affirmative feedback was provided based on the caregiver's practice, shared information, or reported actions.</li> <li>• Feedback was non-specific and evaluative (e.g., "Great job!") rather than affirmative (i.e., acknowledges what the caregiver said or did without judgment, affirms strengths and capacity).</li> <li>• The provider provided affirmative feedback once or twice during the visit but missed multiple opportunities to provide affirmative feedback.</li> </ul>
<b>JOINT PLAN</b>	<p>Supported the family in making a joint plan for in between sessions?</p>	<p><b>YES</b> The discussion and plan focused on what the family plans to do between sessions and not just on what they want to do in the next session.</p> <p><b>NO</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No joint plan is developed.</li> <li>• The provider prescribes what the family should do or gives the family "homework" to do between sessions.</li> <li>• The plan only addresses what the caregiver wants to do in the next session and not what he/she plans to do with the child between sessions.</li> </ul>

## Considerations in Providing Effective Feedback

Fidelity observers are expected to meet with service providers after observations to discuss the session and provide performance feedback. Here are some considerations for providing feedback.

1. **Make it timely:** Research shows that feedback must be given within 1 week to be effective. Strategies used locally include scheduling the observation visit and feedback time ahead so that both are on the schedule; using time in the car after the visit to provide feedback; and providing a brief email summary right away and then meeting within one week to discuss.
2. **Make it reflective and conversational:** One effective strategy used at the local level is to keep the follow-up feedback conversational, using the Coaching in Action checklist as a framework for discussion rather than going through it from top to bottom. This is more in line with the intended professional development approach and helps providers not feel like they are being “graded.”
3. **Take detailed notes during the session:** Use the Notes/Comments column to take detailed notes to help you remember specific examples of interactions, conversations, and other uses of coaching practices. Use this information to help you complete the checklist and provide specific feedback after the session.
4. **Record the session:** If possible, record the session and watch the recording later with the practitioner to discuss feedback and reflect on what went well and any missed opportunities or possibilities when coaching practices could have been used.

## Resources for Initial and Ongoing Training

Practitioners who are new to providing early intervention and/or those who need information about coaching practices are encouraged to:

- Review the [Instructions for Using Virginia’s Coaching in Action Checklist with Texas Coaching Module](#)
- Complete the [Coaching Families](#) online module (hosted by Texas’s Early Childhood Intervention Program) using VA’s Coaching-in-Action tool.
- Review the [Key Principles of Fidelity Assessment: Looks Like/Doesn’t Look Like](#) resource document, developed by the EI Leadership Group of Northern Virginia.
- Observe intervention visits with a master coach or other service provider who consistently uses coaching practices.
- Watch the [Foundations of Coaching in Early Childhood: Partnering with Parents and Professionals](#) video series (Connecticut Birth to Three).
- Watch the [Coaching Support videos](#) on the Making Access Happen site for detailed descriptions and in-depth discussions with Dr. Dathan Rush and Dr. M’Lisa Shelden about coaching practices.
- Visit the [Coaching in Early Intervention](#) topic page on the VA Early Intervention Professional Development Center website for additional resources and information.
- Read *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook* (Rush & Shelden, 2011) for detailed information about coaching.