

Tips Sheet

Assessment for Service Planning

Take time to warm-up and help the child get comfortable – If you are the assessment facilitator, take a few moments to play with the child to help him or instead, engage the child in something fun and interesting first. Allowing for time to help the child (and parent) get to know you and warm up to the activities makes everyone more comfortable and increases the likelihood of an accurate assessment.

Allow the child to stay near the parent – Never remove a child from his or her parent for the assessment. You can conduct most assessment items with the child in the parent's lap. Enlist the parent's help by coaching the parent in how to administer assessment items as needed.

Have one team member be the primary person to engage the child – Avoid overwhelming the child (and parent) by having too many people engaging the child. One team member should conduct the play-based items, while other team members observe. If the child chooses to engage others, that's fine but the assessment facilitator should continue to take the lead with administering assessment items.

Invite the parent to share first – To help the parent get comfortable and realize his or her importance on the team, invite him/her to share information about the child's favorite things to do, games, and activities. Or, begin by helping the parent describe a typical day for the child and use this as a "jump-off" point to ask assessment questions.

Offer to let the family review any notes you take – Ask for permission to take notes about information you gather from the family and invite the parent to review anything you write down. Explain how assessments work, what short-hand notes mean, and how the information will be used (e.g., for IFSP development).

Summarize the assessment results using common language – When sharing assessment findings, do so without using technical jargon. When jargon is used, be sure to explain it. Show examples of what you mean, such as explaining a "w" sit by pointing out when the child uses it or demonstrating that position yourself.

Take breaks as needed – Watch for signs from the child and parent that a break is needed for a diaper change, snack, or just a hug.

Begin with something easy – Start the assessment with an item that you think the child will be successful completing. This may require beginning with an item that younger children can do.

Pace the assessment – Administer assessment items at a pace that is unhurried and comfortable for the child.

Be a good observer – Observing the child during daily routines can reveal a great deal of information that is helpful for the assessment. Observing the parent-child interaction, how the child communicates, engages others, moves and thinks are all important for gaining an accurate picture of his or her developmental strengths and needs.

Listen to the family – Ask the family questions about the child's development and genuinely listen to their input, concerns, and observations. When you are unclear about something the family shares, ask for an example to help you understand.

Support the family's active participation – Help the family share information and participate during the assessment by making them feel welcome and showing that you value their input. Respect their comfort levels and acknowledge their expertise as the only team member with knowledge of the child's abilities and interests.

Relate assessment information to the child's unique abilities and activities - Avoid listing skills from the assessment and instead, link assessment findings to the child's functional, everyday activities, abilities and challenges. Help families understand how the child's performance on assessment items demonstrates his understanding of concepts, ability to move or communicate, etc.

Ask if the parent has any questions – Throughout the assessment, invite the parent to ask questions. At the end of the assessment, ask if the child's performance was typical of his everyday skills and abilities.

Leave the parent with a copy of the assessment results immediately following the assessment – After or as the findings are reviewed, be sure to take notes to leave with the parent so that he or she does not have to remember all of the information shared.

Explain the next steps in the EI process and provide prior notice as needed – Describe the next step, such as offering IFSP development, and provide the parent with a copy of the Notice of Family Rights document and any other procedural safeguards forms.

