Questions for Eliciting Family Interests, Priorities, Concerns & Everyday Routines and Activities[1]

ECTA Center

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center

Improving Systems, Practices and Outcomes

updated May 2014

Gathering information from families regarding their interests, priorities, concerns and everyday routines and activities is best accomplished through conversations with families rather than through a formal interview or solely by the family completing out a needs assessment form. Gathering this information is critical in order to develop meaningful child and family outcomes/goals and to design intervention strategies that build on family strengths and capacity. The following questions are the kinds of questions that can be used in conversations to elicit family responses:

- Can you tell me about your day?
- What happens most mornings? Afternoons? Nights? Weekends?
- Where do you and your child spend time?
- What activities do you and your child like to do (e.g., hiking, going on picnics, paying games at home)?
- What activities do you and your child have to do on a regular basis (e.g., go to the store, give kids a bath, feed the horses, prepare meals, walk the dog)?
- What are activities that you and your child have to do?
- What are your child's interests?
- What does your child enjoy and what holds your child's attention? (e.g., people, places, things such as toys, dog, being outside)
- What makes your child happy, laugh and/or smile?
- What routines and/or activities does your child not like? What makes this routine and/or activity difficult and uncomfortable for your child? What does your child usually do during the routine/activity?
- Who are key family members, other caregivers, or important people who spend time with your child and in what settings does this occur?
- Are there activities that you used to do before your child was born that you would like to do again?
- Are there new activities that you and your child would like to try?

The focus of intervention has been shifting from the practitioner as the expert with the toy bag as the means for enhancing the child's learning and development. Intervention strategies now focus on enhancing family/caregiver capacity and competence in facilitating their child's

[1] Questions were compiled from resource materials by Robin McWilliams, Juliann Woods, Barbara Hanft, M'Lisa Shelden and Dathan Rush by NECTAC, 2005, 2012 / ECTA Center, 2014

learning through naturally occurring learning opportunities and participation in routines and activities that families “need and want to do”. Strategies used in intervention should build on the strengths and interests of both the child and family/caregivers. Intervention sessions incorporate opportunities to reflect with the family/caregivers on what is working and where additional problem solving may be needed. As a result, conversations with families and caregivers need to occur during each session in order to provide appropriate support and enhance family/caregiver capacity. The following questions are the kinds of questions that can be used in conversations to elicit family/caregiver responses during intervention sessions:

- How have things been going since my last visit?
- Do you have anything new you want to ask about?
- Is there a time of day that’s not going well for you?
- What would you like help with? What supports would be helpful for you and your child?
- What have you thought about doing or trying?

When families/caregivers identify a specific challenge, the following questions can be used to facilitate problem specific with them:

- What have you tried?
- What has worked for you in the past? What hasn’t worked?
- When does this behavior occur?
- Who is involved?
- What happened when…?
- What do you mean by…?
- What do you want to see happen?
- I remember when you did… for…, do you think something like that might work for…?

The following general statements can promote discussion and more information:

- Tell me more…
- Tell me more about…

This document is available online at:
http://ectacenter.org/~pdfs/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals/QuestionsEverydayActivities.pdf

It also appears as a part of the ECTA Center’s *Developing High-Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes and IEP Goals Training Package* at:
http://ectacenter.org/knowledgepath/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals/ifspoutcomes-iepgoals.asp