

TATS eUpdate
Evaluation and Assessment of Young Children

**Gathering Data from Families:
Using Parent Interviews**
January 2008

Best Practice:

Parents as partners

Information families have about their child can assist with the evaluation and assessment process as well as inform methods of instruction. One way of gathering information from families is through the use of a parent interview. Having a good relationship with the family and the use of good communication skills facilitates this process.

Preparing for an interview with parents and family members

Inform families that part of the evaluation and assessment process will include asking information about their child. When inviting parents to participate in an interview, clearly communicate the purpose of the interview or desired outcome: gathering information in order to determine the course of the assessment or evaluation process; developmental or background information about the child; clarification or explanation related to a behavior observed by the child. When planning the interview identify any special accommodations that may be needed for the parent or family members, such as an interpreter.

Good listening skills include focusing on what the other person is saying and the ability to ask clarifying questions in an accepting manner. Turnbull and Turnbull (2001) identified some other effective strategies for interviewer responses:

- Furthering responses – strategies to encourage others to continue to speak about a certain topic
- Paraphrasing – restating information in your own words for clarification
- Response to affect – understand and respond accordingly to the parent’s feeling
- Questioning – using open-ended and close ended questions as appropriate for the information needed
- Summarizing – may facilitate identification of concerns and problem solving, or can be used to conclude an interview or meeting

Using the information provided during the interview with parents and family members

Information shared by family members during the interview can be shared in assessment or evaluation reports. The information should be interpreted to address educationally relevant data that can be used to address behavior, skill level, motivation, reinforcement,

or development of a functional educational plan. All information must be shared with family members.

Reflection:

1. What information from families about their child would be helpful for you to know for an evaluation/assessment? For program planning purposes?
2. What active listening skills do you use when conducting family interviews?

*“Never discourage anyone...who continually makes progress,
no matter how slow.” - Plato*

References and Resources:

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Technical Assistance & Training System (TATS)

Statewide project providing technical assistance and training to programs in Florida serving prekindergarten children with disabilities. Website provides information and resources on curriculum and instruction, evaluation and assessment, family involvement, inclusion, program effectiveness/quality, and transition, as well as, linking early childhood partners. www.tats.ucf.edu

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