

Participating on Your Child's Team

Early childhood staff that work with your family work as a team. YOU are an important member of this team. You are the most knowledgeable person about your child, your family, and what you want to see happen to help your child learn and grow. As a team member, it is important to share information about your child during your child's evaluation and assessment and to identify what you want to work on with your child. Helping to develop your child's intervention plan— Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP)—is also important. Your interactions with other team members provide opportunities to try out ideas, make suggestions, and provide feedback about what is or is not working. This practice guide includes different things that can help you be involved actively and meaningfully with other team members.

[Watch a video of this guide](#)

Families Becoming Active Team Members

- At first, you might not know the other members of your child/family early intervention team, and it might feel awkward to participate in meetings. It takes time to build trusting relationships, and, over time, everyone on the team will become more comfortable with one another.
- Always feel free to ask team members about their roles, professional training, and what they like about working with young children. Besides getting to know them better, you'll learn how team members may be most helpful to you and your child.
- Avoid information overload! You will be getting lots of verbal and written information. Feel free to ask other team members about words or terms you may not understand. This is a new journey for your family.
- It is important that you understand your child and family's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or Individualized Education Program (IEP) and other documents and information you receive from the team. If you need more information to understand what other team members are saying, do not hesitate to ask them to explain it to you.
- Whenever possible, suggest times to meet with other team members that work best for you and your child. Ask about the purpose of the meeting or visit so you can be prepared to provide input or ask questions. If you are requesting a meeting or visit, share your reasons so others will be prepared as well.
- Your family is the final decision maker on what goals and activities are the focus of your child's intervention. Other team members are available to assist you as you learn new strategies and build confidence in helping your child successfully participate in everyday activities and learn and grow.



Together they talk about what may be happening. Marcy says it's close to lunch time and asks Karen to stay and observe her trying to feed Amelia. After several minutes, Karen suggests they ask the team's speech and occupational therapists to come assess Amelia to see if there are any physical reasons for her strong reaction to some foods. And they could also advise Marcy how she might help Amelia try new foods. Marcy says that is a good idea. Karen thanks Marcy for speaking up about these new concerns saying this is why Marcy is the most important member of Amelia's team!

A Quick Peek

Karen, an early intervention provider, arrives at a home visit and begins to address the IFSP goal on assisting two-year-old Amelia to use single words. Marcy, her mom, says it's nice to have a "conversation" with Amelia, but she just wishes Amelia wouldn't shriek at mealtime and would eat more varied foods. Marcy tells Karen the screaming at mealtimes is a serious problem, and she's worrying whether Amelia is even getting enough food as she only wants pureed baby food.

You'll know the practice is working when...

- You feel your questions and concerns are answered to your satisfaction
- You are comfortable making suggestions and providing your input
- You feel supported in the decisions you make

This practice guide is based upon the following *DEC Recommended Practices*: Teaming and Collaboration 1, 2, 3, 5

The DEC Recommended Practices are available at <http://dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>

Access this practice guide and other products at

<http://ectacenter.org/decrp>

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