

Module 1: Early Identification: Newborn Infant Hearing Screening and Evaluation; The Importance of Ensuring Early Access to Language

Section: The Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)



Activity 1.5: Supporting Families in Becoming an Informed and Integral Member of Their Child's IFSP Team

A. Review the following concepts related to an IFSP:

- For what does *IFSP* stand? (Answer: Individualized Family Service Plan)
- Explain that the IFSP is a legal document, essentially a contract, describing supports that will be offered to the family, and that it is individualized (specific to their family's circumstances, strengths, and needs).
- Discuss how an IFSP is family-centered and should contain both family (parent/sibling) and child goals.

B. Review the various sections of the child's IFSP with his or her family. Guide families in expanding their understanding of what is included in each area. Include discussion of the following:

- Point out what is included in the strengths and concerns statements from their child's IFSP.
- Review the outcomes and objectives listed in their child's IFSP.

- Periodically review IFSP progress informally. For example, ask the family, “At the IFSP meeting, we identified X as something to work on. Have you noticed how we’ve worked on X during our home visits?” Discuss what activities and discussions you have addressed or will be addressing in your services to work on the IFSP goals.
- Review the services page with the family. Discuss each of the services and how frequently they are/will be happening. Review the name of each service provider, what he or she will be doing, and where the service will be provided. Sometimes parents know the name of the service provider but not necessarily the person’s title or on what that person is supposed to be working.
- Review the signature page with the family, making sure they understand what they are agreeing to at each place they initial or sign.

C. Provide parents with tools to develop their advocacy skills:

- Discuss the parent role on the IFSP team. Explain that while other team members may be experts in how the ear works, sign language, speech development, or other areas, the parents are the experts on their child and are therefore the most important team members. Their contributions are important in every part of the IFSP.
- Make sure parents have a copy of their rights. Go through the document with the parents, especially the steps they can take if they have any concerns about their child’s IFSP or its implementation.
- Provide parents with information on local and online IFSP/IEP workshops, special education advocates, and parent groups.

D. IFSP supports for families with a primary language other than English:

- If possible, provide the family with a fully translated IFSP.
- Use an IFSP template in the family’s home language. Allow the family to keep it as a reference.
- Use an interpreter for IFSP meetings as needed.

E. IFSP family supports for families not able to fully comprehend the written IFSP (i.e., low literacy):

- Provide a video or audio recording of the IFSP meeting. If parents have a cell phone with video or audio recording capability, consider use of this avenue for saving the recording in a format they can access.
- Use an interpreter if there is a concern that a family cannot access the IFSP through print.

F. IFSP supports for families of children with identified disabilities:

- Encourage parents to think about all areas of their child’s development. Some parents may tend to limit their discussion to only hearing, speech, and language. Encourage parents to think about everything that may be relevant (e.g., motor skills, social skills, feeding, sleeping). Ensure all areas of development are represented in the IFSP.
- Pay special attention to making sure parents know who is working with their family and what is included in their area of expertise (e.g., physical therapist, feeding specialist, social worker).

Additional Resources:

- [Early Intervention \(Part C of IDEA\)](#) (Wrightslaw)
- [Part C of the IDEA: What You Need to Know](#) (Hands and Voices)

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