

Coaching and Telehealth: Implementing the DEC Recommended Practices Successfully

— FOR PRACTITIONERS —

“The DEC Recommended Practices were developed to provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through age 5, who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities. The purpose is to help bridge the gap between research and practice by highlighting those practices that have been shown to result in better outcomes for young children with disabilities, their families, and the personnel who serve them” (DEC, 2014). Each letter and number following the statement under the Recommended Practices (RP) column corresponds to the topic and number of the RP. More information can be found at <https://www.dec-sped.org/dec-recommended-practices>

Recommended Practices	Description
Practitioners build trusting and respectful partnerships with parents that are sensitive and responsive to their family’s diverse needs. (F1)	Consistently ask families about their priorities and concerns and explore what those things might look like within their family unit. Practice cultural humility to mitigate implicit bias when assessing with the family to learn what natural support exists and what additional support they feel they need.
Practitioners remain open and honest providing parents with the most up-to-date-, comprehensive and unbiased information so they can make informed choices and decisions that best meet the needs of their family. (F2, INS3)	Share information about each child’s development with their family while acknowledging their diversity and understanding that the decisions they make are in the best interest of the family as a whole. Recognize that educating families isn’t a once-and-one event but rather a process.
Practitioners will respond to the family’s concerns, priorities, and changing life circumstances throughout the early intervention process. (F3)	Be flexible. Life is unpredictable and unscripted. Take the approach that every family is doing the best they can with what they have and support them when and where needed throughout the early intervention process.
Practitioners value the knowledge parents have about their child’s interests and abilities. Practitioners build on the parents’ knowledge and individualize services to meet the needs of their child and family. The goal is to continue to build on the family strengths and jointly solve problems, plan, and implement interventions to promote their child’s participation in activities and routines. (F5, F6, TC2)	Actively listen to the information that families share about what their child likes and can do. Ask clarifying questions to gain a better understanding of the child’s interests and abilities.
Practitioners work with families to identify and ensure access to any formal and informal resources and supports their child needs to achieve outcomes. (F7)	Empower families to look within their own support system to identify formal and informal resources. Assist them in accessing those resources when needed. Provide information about additional community support and make referrals as appropriate and desired by the family.
As a parent helps to identify their child’s strengths, preferences, and interests, practitioners support the caregiver and their child to engage in meaningful activities. The more learning opportunities practiced to support their child in learning a skill, the more neural connections are made in their child’s developing brain. (INS1, INS5)	Explore natural opportunities in the child and family’s daily routines to support development. Implement embedded learning practices with the family when appropriate to promote child and family participation. Consider not only current routines but also routines that the family desires to do individually with the child and as part of the family unit. Support the family in identifying ways to support the child’s engagement in non-preferred activities that may be necessary to the child’s development and ongoing skill development such as taking turns, putting together a zipper, or tasting a new food.

Recommended Practices	Description
<p>The practitioner observes, provides feedback, and models while parents' support their child during routines and activities. These coaching strategies will promote your child's learning and development. (INS7, INS13)</p>	<p>Be a coach and a cheerleader to families as they navigate ways to support their child's development within the course of daily routines. Leave space for families to problem solve and support them with appropriate feedback that encourages them to think about other strategies that might be helpful. Utilize modeling only when other strategies and supports are not available or to support the caregiver's learning in an effort to reinforce that families bring knowledge and abilities to the team as well.</p>

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