

# Functional Assessment:

## Examples of Questions to Ask Families

When we look at different routines during a functional assessment, we are looking at how the child is moving, transitioning, what interactions with caregivers or others is occurring, and what makes that routine different to that child and family. Here are some examples of questions you might ask a parent/caregiver to gather detailed information:

### Example #1:

When family brings up breakfast, ask *“What did he eat for breakfast?”* If there were any feeding concerns, bring up now. For example, *“I see his has trouble drinking a bottle and takes 30 minutes. How many ounces of a bottle will he drink from? What about a cup? Describe what happens when he gags. Can I see him eat a cheerio? When Johnny sees the food, what is his expression like?”* (for younger child) For older children, ask, *“How does he feed himself (fork, spoon, stuffing, textures, gagging). What would he eat for lunch or dinner? How do you know when he is finished eating?”*

### Example #2:

When discussing naptime, ask *“What does naptime look like? Where does he sleep? What happens if you lay him down alone?”* (We are looking at the attachment to caregiver and self-regulation as well.)

### Example #3:

When discussing play routines, ask *“What does Johnny like to do when he plays? What are his favorite toys/activities/games?”* Bring up specific toys from Activities section on IFSP. *“How does he get to things he wants in the home? What makes him laugh? What does he do to make you laugh with him? Does he repeat an activity if you laugh?”* (younger child) For older children, look at carrying large objects, climbing to get to things, pretend play, cause and effect, etc.

### Example #4:

When discussing communication, ask *“What sounds does he make when he is playing?”* (younger child) Ask about words for older children. *“You reported he will say mama, dada, and no. Any other words or sounds? What about saying hello or bye? How about nursery songs or on television? What is his favorite television show? What happens when it comes on? When he hears you make sounds, is he repeating any sounds or gestures? What happens if you tell him no? What simple directions can he follow? What happens when you call his name? What does he do if you ask ‘where is the ball?’”* For older children, ask about retrieving items in another room, labeling, calling family members, etc.

### Example #5:

When discussing activities that involve Johnny’s mobility, ask *“How is Johnny getting around? I see he is .....*” For a younger child, ask about cruising or what happens if he drops a toy. *“What about stairs? Couch? Car Seat?”* (Can he/she walk to and from car, car to store, alternating feet or climbing on stairs, jumping off bottom step, climbing on couch, climbing in car to get to car seat, pushing arms through straps, transitioning on different surfaces, looking back to parent for help or support, etc.) Find out about car rides and being out in community as well as anyone else he may interact with outside of the home.

**Example #6:**

To get a picture of the family's life outside of the home, ask about places the family likes to go or would like to be able to go. For example, ask *"What does Johnny do to participate when at grocery store, mall, beach, etc."*

**Example #7:** When gathering information about the child's social-emotional development, ask questions like:

*"How does he play with his brother? What about mom and dad? I see when he is at the church nursery, he cries at drop off? How long does this last? I see you are concerned that his tantrums are long and he cannot calm himself. What worries you most?"* Bring up anything you have previously discussed with the family or read from the intake. For older children, ask about defending ownership of toys, tantrums, and interest in other children.

**Example #8:**

When discussing adaptive skills, ask questions like: *"How do you know when Johnny is tired? What does a typical nighttime routine look like? Before bath, does Johnny try to take any of his clothes off by himself? What about when he is getting dressed? How is bath time? What does he like to play with in the bath? How about brushing his teeth? Any interest in potty training? He wakes one time per night for feeding. Describe what happens."* You also want to look for any communication or imitation including pointing to items Johnny wants, sounds or words, and/or showing remembering steps in routines, etc.

**Example #9:**

To wrap up the discussion, ask: *"What parts of your child's day did we miss? Tell me any other concerns you or anyone else may have that we have not discussed."*