



LEARNINGbyte

IFSP Outcomes

Ask Good Questions, Get Good Answers



PURPOSE OF ACTIVITY

The purpose of this activity is to provide practitioners with examples of questions they can ask families to learn about family activities and routines, child interests, important people and places, and family priorities for their child's development and intervention. This activity also encourages practitioners to examine their interactions with families and extend their interview skills.



RESOURCES NEEDED

- Handout – *Exploring Routines & Activities with Families: Good Questions to Ask*
- Flip chart and markers (optional) if facilitator chooses to record any discussion key points



SPECIFIC STEPS

1. Discuss the information on the handout (below) and ask the group to share how they gather information from families about their activities, routines, and priorities for their child.
2. Review the list of questions on the handout. Choose several questions and discuss with the group what information families might share and how it could be used for outcome development.

TALKING POINTS:

- Service coordinators and providers must listen closely and be alert to key information families may share related to the child's abilities to regulate, participate, and interact in his or her environment. When this information is shared, the service coordinator or provider can then help the family explore these situations in more depth to learn about how intervention may be most helpful to the family.
- Not all families will readily provide the information needed to develop good outcomes. The responsibility for gathering this information is on the service coordinator or provider, not on the family. With skillful conversation and good questions, service coordinators and providers can engage families who share less information to discuss their priorities and needs at their comfort level.
- Sharing this information with other team members can be very useful as the team prepares for the IFSP meeting and can help the team approach outcome development from a family-centered perspective (rather than from a deficit or discipline-specific perspective).
- Service coordinators and providers can also use this information as an "ice breaker" to begin the IFSP meeting. The service coordinator or provider can support the family in reviewing this information by reminding the family and team about what was previously shared ("When we spoke earlier, I recall that you mentioned..."). Helping family members share information about their priorities helps define their roles as active participants in the process and reminds the team of the focus for outcome development.

3. Instruct practitioners to answer the three questions on the handout, either individually or through group discussion. Debrief by inviting practitioners to share their answers and thoughts about each question, using the talking points below.

TALKING POINTS:

- Asking families about their schedule or their concerns is likely to yield information that is of limited use when preparing for outcome development.
 - Questions that explore what the child is like, the relationship between the child and family members, as well as the specifics of family routines and activities are more likely to lead to information that reveals family priorities and needs related to the child.
4. If possible, follow-up with the group during a future meeting to reflect on their experiences using their new question and using what they learned from this discussion.

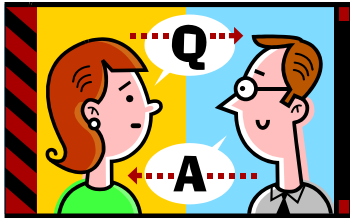


ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more information about Outcome Development, check out:

- [**Writing Functional IFSP Outcomes and Goals**](#) (online module)
VA eLearning Center site
- [**IFSP & Outcome Development Topic**](#) page
VA EI Professional Development Center site
- [**Want to Write a Good IFSP Outcome?**](#) (quick reference guide)
VA EI Professional Development Center site
- [**Checklist – Key Characteristics for Well-Written IFSP Outcomes**](#)
VA EI Professional Development Center site
- [**Enhancing Recognition of High Quality, Functional IFSP Outcomes**](#)
(training activity from ECTA Center)

Exploring Routines and Activities with Families: Good Questions to Ask



Service coordinators and providers who interact with families within the context of intervention have the opportunity to share and receive information relevant to IFSP outcome development. Simply listening to families and discussing basic routines is not enough when trying to prepare for outcome development. Developing truly individualized, family-centered outcomes requires that service coordinators and providers explore how families work, how family members interact, and get to know specifically what makes them “tick!”

Here are some examples of questions that service coordinators and providers can use to help families explore their routines and activities in depth. These questions are also useful for learning about family priorities for their child’s development and the natural learning opportunities that occur during daily family life.

- What does your child enjoy doing during the day?
- What do you enjoy doing with your child?
- What parts of the day go well for you and your child?
- Are there parts of the day or things you and your child do that are difficult?
- Tell me about bathtime/bedtime/taking your child to the grocery store, etc.
(use this open-ended statement to explore routines with families)
- What happens before/during/after bathtime/bedtime (or other challenging routine)?
(use this question to break down a routine to identify problem areas and learning opportunities)
- What makes your child laugh?
- What frustrates your child? What frustrates you?
- What would make your life easier with your child?
- Are there places you and your child like to go?
- Are there places that you would like to be able to go?
- Who does your child interact with during the day?
- How will you know when your child has met this goal?

ACTIVITY

1. What other questions do you ask to explore child and family routines, activities, and priorities?

2. Consider the difference between asking a family “What are your concerns?” versus “Could you tell me about your child?” What types of information are likely to be gathered from each question? Which question is more likely to give you richer information that you could use for outcome development?

3. Which question will you try using with families in preparation for outcome development? Record that question below.