

## Evaluation, Family Information Gathering Meeting and Initial IFSP Observation Activity

Description of the Activity: The service coordinator orientee will observe an eligibility evaluation performed by the targeted evaluation team, the family information gathering meeting and the initial IFSP meeting for one child who has been newly referred to early intervention.

The accompanying Evaluation, Family Information Gathering Meeting and Initial IFSP Observation worksheet will be completed by the service coordinator orientee and reviewed with the Regional Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator following the completion of this activity and the Service Delivery Observation Activity.

### Procedures

1. Work collaboratively with Unit Coordinator and Evaluation Team Coordinator to identify a family who would be willing to have the orientee observe their child's evaluation, family information gathering meeting and initial IFSP meeting. The child/family chosen should not be from the orientee's own service coordination caseload to preserve his/her ability to be an observer in these visits and meetings. The evaluation team coordinator and unit coordinator must be asked to try to identify a child who has a high probability of being eligible, based on intake information, so that we increase the likelihood of the orientee being able to observe the sequence of eligibility evaluation, family information gathering meeting and initial IFSP for one child/family.
2. Arrange necessary scheduling and obtain directions to the location of the eligibility evaluation.
3. Review the completed intake (obtain from child/family's service coordinator) and any outside information available prior to the eligibility evaluation.
4. Read the attached handout from the TaCTICS Project, "What Families Want to Know about Assessment".
5. Contact one member of the Targeted Evaluation Team prior to the scheduled evaluation to confirm your attendance at the evaluation as an observer.

6. Complete section 1 of the attached observation worksheet.
7. Attend the evaluation as an observer.
8. Complete section 2 of the worksheet.
9. Review the written evaluation report when it is received by the child/family's service coordinator.
10. Complete section 3 of the worksheet.
11. Coordinate with the child/family's service coordinator to attend the family information gathering meeting with him/her. Obtain copies of any assessment tools s/he may be planning to use.
12. Attend the family information gathering meeting as an observer.
13. Complete section 4 of the worksheet.
14. Attend the initial IFSP meeting as an observer.
15. Complete section 5 of the worksheet.
16. Schedule a conference with your Regional Training and Technical Assistance Coordinator to review your Evaluation and Initial IFSP Observation Worksheet and your Service Delivery Observation Worksheet, when you have completed both.

## Evaluation, Family Information Gathering and Initial IFSP Observation Worksheet

Name of Service Coordinator Orientee\_\_\_\_\_

First Name of Child to be Observed:\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Eligibility Evaluation\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Family Information Gathering Meeting \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Initial IFSP Meeting\_\_\_\_\_Child's Date of Birth\_\_\_\_\_

Chronological Age/Corrected Age (if applicable)\_\_\_\_\_

### Section 1: Preparing for the Eligibility Evaluation and Assessment (to be completed prior to the evaluation)

- A. After reviewing the intake form, summarize, in your own words, the family's reason(s) for requesting an early intervention eligibility evaluation.

### Section 2: Observing An Eligibility Evaluation/Assessment (to be completed after observing the evaluation)

- A. List the major steps you observed during the evaluation/assessment.

B. How was the parent included?

C. Which disciplines were present? How well did that match with the needs of the child and family?

D. How did the evaluators gather information about the child? (interview, observation, direct interaction, etc)

E. What tools were used to guide and record information gathered?

F. How was eligibility determined?

G. How was it explained to the parent?

H. How was the parent supported during the process?

I. What parts of the evaluation/assessment process went very well?

J. What might have improved this process?

K. Give specific examples of family-centered practices that you observed.

L. What practices could have made this evaluation more family-centered?

Section 3: Reviewing the Written Evaluation/Assessment Report  
(to be completed after reading the report)

A. How well does the report match what you observed at the time of the evaluation/assessment?

B. How might the family use the written report to help them prepare for the IFSP meeting?

C. What family information would be useful to the service coordinator to try to obtain during the family information gathering meeting?

D. Give specific examples of family-centered practices that you observed in writing the report.

E. How could this report have been written in a more family-centered manner?

Section 4: Observing the Family Information Gathering Meeting

(to be completed after observing the family information gathering meeting)

A. What techniques or strategies did the Service Coordinator use to elicit the family's concerns, priorities and resources during the meeting?

- B. What information did the Service Coordinator obtain about the family's daily routines that may be useful for planning intervention?
- C. How did the Service Coordinator help to prepare the family for the IFSP meeting?
- D. Give specific examples of family-centered practices that you observed during the family information gathering meeting.
- E. Describe any strategies that could have been used to make this meeting more family-centered.

Section 5: Observing the IFSP Meeting  
(to be completed after attending the IFSP meeting)

- A. Describe the Service Coordinator's role during the IFSP meeting.

- B. Did anything that occurred or was said at the IFSP meeting surprise you?  
Describe what surprised you.
- C. What parts of the IFSP meeting went well?
- D. What parts of the IFSP meeting need improvement?
- E. Give specific examples of family-centered practices that you observed during the IFSP meeting.
- F. Describe any family-centered practices that could have been used during the IFSP meeting to enhance the development of the IFSP.

## Evaluation, Family Information Gathering Meeting and Initial IFSP Observation Activity

### Competencies Addressed

- 1.1 Demonstrate understanding of theories of infant and toddler development, including content, sequences, range and variability within developmental domains and their implications for developmentally appropriate practice.
- 1.2 Demonstrate knowledge of variability in development, including risk factors, developmental variations, developmental patterns with specific disabilities, medical aspects, and neurological factors and their effect on early development within the context of the child and family relationship.
- 1.3 Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of environmental, cultural, and familial influences on child growth and development, as well as how to access information sources and techniques to address the impact.
- 1.4 Demonstrate awareness of family and child interactions as the primary context for development and learning.
- 1.5 Describe how a child learns skills through play and identify strategies that promote play skills.
- 3.1 Demonstrate understanding of the complex job of families in caring for and providing learning opportunities for young children, and the additional responsibilities that accompany having a child with special needs.
- 3.2 Understand that the core of family-centered practice recognizes the family as the center of a young child's life, and is the child's constant support, decision-maker, and advocate
- 3.3 Apply family-centered principles so that early intervention supports families in their task of enhancing their children's learning and development.
- 3.4 Respond appropriately to family strengths and individuality and respect different coping methods.
- 3.5 Interact appropriately with families challenged by mental illness, abuse, chronic illness, developmental disabilities and other environmental influences that impact their ability to participate in early intervention.
- 3.6 Promote the family's acquisition of knowledge, skills and confidence in identifying and implementing outcomes for their child and family.

- 3.7 Support families to make informed decisions by sharing complete and unbiased information in a professional manner.
- 3.8 Provide information and support to promote the family's active participation as a member of the team in developing outcomes and strategies for their IFSP.
- 4.1 Understand and explain the IFSP process to encourage a family's understanding of, and informed participation in the process.
- 4.2 Facilitate the IFSP meeting and accurately record information shared and decisions made regarding child strengths and needs, family concerns, priorities and resources, outcomes, strategies, services, and supports.
- 4.3 Demonstrate skills and knowledge to generate functional and family-centered outcomes and strategies that are implemented in the everyday routines, activities, and places of the child and family. This process occurs with the team, which always includes the parents.
- 4.4 Develop, implement and monitor IFSPs in a manner that meets IDEA regulations and New Jersey's Policies Procedures and Guidelines.
- 4.5 Participate in the development of IFSPs that are unique to each family, represent their current needs and priorities and serve as the blueprint for intervention activities.
- 5.1 Demonstrate effective communication skills to gather and understand information from families, providers and the larger community.
- 5.2 Demonstrate ability to recognize signs of emotional distress, abuse and neglect with families and identify appropriate referral sources for support.
- 5.4 Maintain confidentiality, obtain informed consent and explain the family's right to confidentiality throughout their enrollment in early intervention.
- 5.5 Maintain child records and data collection according to agency standards.
- 5.6 Demonstrate knowledge of NJDHSS funded providers, fee-for-service vendors and their rules and requirements in order to increase options for children and families.
- 5.7 Collect, interpret and share relevant information from available records.
- 5.8 Demonstrate knowledge of state eligibility criteria and ability to interpret information to the family and team.
- 5.9 Conduct family interview and incorporate information into other team assessment data.
- 5.10 Initiate pre-assessment planning with the family, including facilitating the participation of the family in the assessment at the level desired by the family.

- 5.11 Collaborate with the family to identify current level of functioning, strengths and needs of the infant/toddler.
- 5.12 Interpret assessment findings in consideration of cultural/linguistic influences, other environmental influences, and varying learning styles.
- 5.13 Demonstrate knowledge of the functions of various evaluation and assessment procedures and instruments.
- 5.14 Coordinate and facilitate the scheduling of evaluations, IFSP meetings and reviews to meet timelines.
- 5.15 Implement county and regional procedures for referral to Targeted Evaluation Team or Early Intervention Provider (in the case of presumptive eligibility), following completion of intake.
- 5.17 Utilize procedural safeguards components with and on the behalf of families.
- 5.18 Demonstrate strategies for locating, gaining access to and obtaining funding for services, resources and supports on the IFSP, including fee-for-service, NJ FPG, insurance, community organizations, Medicaid, etc.
- 5.19 Identify and assist families to access financial resources in order to provide for their personal welfare, including Medicaid, SSI, DDD, and private agencies.
- 5.20 Effectively refer families to parent groups, and state and local advocacy organizations to increase their opportunities for support.
- 7.1 Participate as an effective team member to implement New Jersey's model of Early Intervention. Team models may include: (multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary)
- 7.3 Demonstrate ability to effectively communicate with a variety of people in a jargon-free and culturally sensitive manner.
- 7.5 Demonstrate ability to utilize effective problem-solving, decision-making and conflict management strategies.
- 7.6 Demonstrate understanding of different roles and skills of different disciplines.
- 8.1 Demonstrate a basic knowledge of relevant federal legislation, policies, and procedures (including IDEA, FERPA, etc...) that impact services and supports to children and families.
- 8.2 Demonstrate the ability to implement New Jersey Early Intervention System Policies, Procedures and Guidelines as specified in the NJEIS Policies, Procedures and Guidelines document.
- 8.3 Demonstrate knowledge of procedural safeguard components and the ability to communicate the purpose, content, and process of each to all families served.

- 8.4 Demonstrate knowledge and display the ability to perform responsibilities concerning the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.
- 9.2 Demonstrate flexibility and resiliency in response to diversity and change in both families and the New Jersey Early Intervention System.
- 9.3 Demonstrate knowledge of procedural safeguard components and the ability to communicate the purpose, content, and process of each to all families served.
- 9.4 Demonstrate ability to manage multiple priorities and responsibilities of the job.
- 9.5 Demonstrate ability to manage personal and professional boundaries, including early intervention families, program and agency boundaries.
- 9.7 Consistently uses "people first" language, e.g. saying "a child with Down syndrome" instead of "a Down's child".

**SCHS LETTERHEAD HERE**

Dear Early Intervention Family,

Thank you for agreeing to allow a newly hired service coordinator to observe (fill in activity to be observed) with your child and family on (fill in date and time).

All newly hired service coordinators participate in a variety of orientation activities designed to help them better understand and carry out the responsibilities of their job.

Some of the activities require that they observe another professional who may be conducting an eligibility evaluation, family information gathering session, IFSP meeting or direct service delivery session.

During these observations the newly hired service coordinator will observe the activity described above, but will not participate.

All information that the observer hears and sees about your family will be held in strictest confidence, just as your ongoing service providers and assigned service coordinator protect your family's personal information. If you have any questions or concerns about agreeing to participate in an observation please contact your child/family's service coordinator.

Thank you for assisting us in meeting the ongoing training needs of early intervention service coordinators.

Sincerely yours,

SCHS Unit Coordinator

## A Note on Being an Observer

Completing your service coordinator orientation activities will require you to make a number of observations of children, families, other service coordinators, evaluators and service providers engaged in a variety of early intervention activities.

All observations will be arranged, and the family will be asked for verbal consent for you to observe, by the provider of the service. The provider of the service will make note in their chart/progress notes that the family gave verbal consent for the observation to occur.

At the time of the observation you should introduce yourself to the family and explain that you are present to observe the early intervention activity. Thank the family for being willing to share their family's early intervention activity with you in order to help you gain new skills as a service coordinator. Consult with the family and early intervention professional as to the best place for you to sit to observe.

No matter how tempted you may feel to participate during the session, please remember that your role is strictly that of observer. If you have a question or observation please share it with the early intervention professional outside of the session, either immediately following the session, (if time allows) or over the telephone.

All information that you see, hear or read about a child/family must be held in the strictest of confidence. As you complete your observation worksheets please use only the child's first name.

Your review of the evaluation reports, intakes and IFSPs of children/families who are served by other service coordinators within your unit is permitted by FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) without additional written consent.

Appendix C

January 2004

Dear Early Intervention Providers and Evaluation Team Members,

The NJEIS Comprehensive System of Personnel Development has begun to implement an exciting new orientation program for Service Coordinators. Two of the learning opportunities that new Service Coordinators will be experiencing are observations of intake meetings, evaluations, initial IFSPs and service delivery sessions.

Arrangements for these observations will be made through TET Coordinators and Program Administrators with verbal consent from the family to be observed. Service Coordinator orientees will be observing and will not participate in these activities in any way. They may take notes during the session as part of their learning experience.

Attached are the instructions and worksheets the orientees are required to complete. The purpose of completing the observations is to familiarize them with important early intervention activities. The worksheets are designed to help them analyze what they observed and consider the impact on the family. Most importantly, the emphasis is on helping the orientee to analyze how family-centered practices are embedded into early intervention.

Please be assured that the providers and evaluators involved in the activities are not being monitored in any manner through these observations.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely yours,

Brenda Dater  
CSPD Project Specialist  
908-964-5303  
[brendad@njeis.org](mailto:brendad@njeis.org)

Pam Schachter  
CSPD Project Specialist  
908-964-5303  
[pams@njeis.org](mailto:pams@njeis.org)