

This guide provides information about the slide contents and background information for presenters. Estimated time to present this module is just over three hours.

Some activities require self-reflection and discussion of potentially sensitive topics. Reading the slides, notes, discussion topics, and activities ahead of time will help prepare the instructor to present topics more fully and anticipate areas that may require more guidance.

References throughout the presenter notes and in this module's accompanying resource list can also help instructors prepare to present this module.

The presenter may want to download the included videos in advance of the presentation to have them ready for viewing.

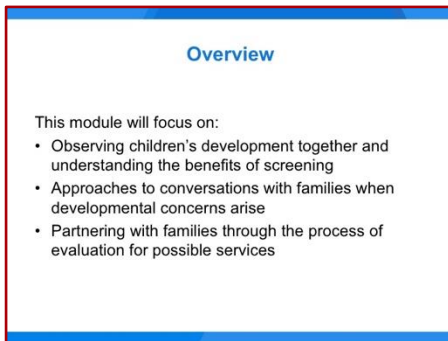
It is recommended that presenters be familiar with the Framework and complementary materials developed by the Office of Head Start's National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement>.



## SLIDE 1 FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION: RESPONDING WITH FAMILIES TO DEVELOPMENTAL CONCERNS

The focus of this module, “Family Engagement in Early Care and Education” explores engaging families when they or educators have concerns that a child is at risk for a disability or developmental delay. Some information in this module may also refer to children with disabilities as *children with special needs*. The module is designed for educators working with children ages birth to 5.

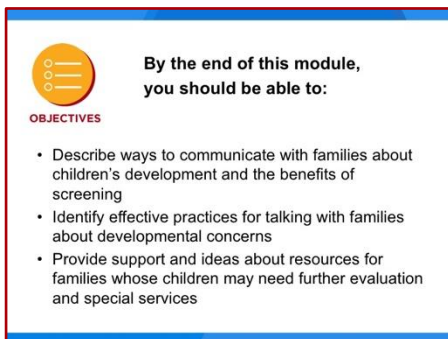
Begin by sharing background information about yourself. Provide an opportunity for participants to introduce themselves.



## SLIDE 2 OVERVIEW

This module will focus on:

- Observing children’s development together and understanding the benefits of screening
- Approaches to conversations with families when developmental concerns arise
- Partnering with families through the process of evaluation for possible services



## SLIDE 3 OBJECTIVES

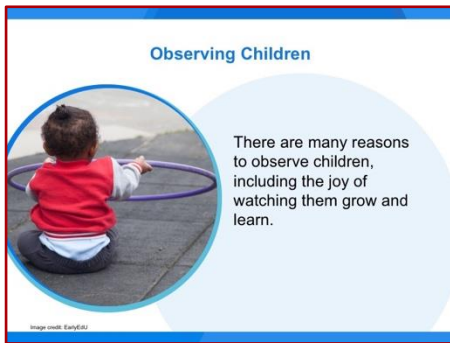
By the end of this module, participants should be able to:

- Describe ways to communicate with families about children’s development and the benefits of screening
- Identify effective practices for talking with families about developmental concerns
- Provide support and ideas about resources for families whose children may need further evaluation and special services



## SLIDE 4 OBSERVING CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT TOGETHER

The first section of this module focuses on observing children's development with families and sharing observations.



## SLIDE 5 OBSERVING CHILDREN

Watching children grow and learn can be a joyful experience for parents and early childhood educators.

Positive relationships between educators and families can help support close relationships between parents and children. A strong parent-child bond is associated with a wide variety of positive outcomes for children and families and can boost parents' ability to appreciate their child's progress and development.

Educators and other staff can provide a safe and supportive place for families to explore their hopes and pursue goals. Positive relationships between educators and families benefit family-child relationships and contribute to better outcomes for children and families.

Each child and family has unique strengths that can be the foundation of partnerships and discussions between educators and families. Early learning professionals should consider these strengths as a base from which to explore potential challenges.

The terms *parent* and *family* can be defined this way:

- Parents can be biological, adoptive, or step-parents, as well as primary caregivers like grandparents, foster parents, and other adult family members.
- Families may be biological or non-biological. Their connections may include culture, language, tradition, and shared experiences.

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## REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Building partnerships: Guide to developing relationships with families.*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Parent involvement and family engagement: For early childhood professionals.*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/parent-involvement-family-engagement-for-professionals.pdf>



## SLIDE 6 NOTICING DEVELOPMENT

Children develop at their own pace. Their development is dynamic, interactive, and a variable process.

Families and educators can watch children's development closely and collaborate to provide opportunities for children to grow and learn at home and in the early learning environment. Working together can provide a solid foundation for children's optimal development.

There are a variety of sources of information about child development and developmental milestones available for parents. One source of this information is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website.

Educators can share information about development with families, and can also encourage families to discuss their children's development with their child's pediatrician or health care provider.

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Sharing information about key skills and the age ranges when they typically develop can help families to have realistic expectations about children's development and better understand behaviors. It may also reassure parents who are worried about their children's development. For instance, if parents notice that their 2-month-old child is not rolling over, they can learn that rolling over from stomach to back is typical at 4 months old.

Sharing information about typical development can also cause anxiety for some parents. Educators should use caution when sharing standardized information that provides averages for when children will develop skills.

Mother and fathers may have different expectations and goals for their children's development based on their cultural values and child-rearing practices. For instance, copying others or making eye contact may be skills not prioritized in some cultures.

Educators should invite families to share their goals for their child and recognize that many standardized developmental monitoring tools are culturally informed.

## **REFERENCES**

Croft, C. (2010, January). Talking to families of infants and toddlers about developmental delays. *Young Children*, 65(1), 44-46.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Developmental milestones*. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Watch me! Celebrating milestones and sharing concerns, Module 4: How to talk with parents about their child's development*. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/module4.html>



## SLIDE 7 SHARING OBSERVATIONS

Sharing observations about children's growth and development and about parents' connections to the children helps you build strong relationships with parents.

Educators can ask parents if they have observations they would like to share. This practice invites families to guide conversations about their children and to share their goals and hopes for their children.

One relationship-based practice (introduced more fully later in the module) from the Office of Head Start's National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement is to observe and describe children's behavior.

Invite participants to describe examples of positive observations about:

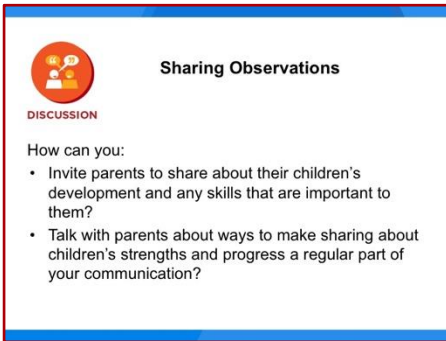
- Children's strengths and growth.
- Interactions between parents and children that highlight their close relationship.

These could be observations that participants have shared with parents in the past or ones that they think would be helpful to share.

### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Building partnerships: Guide to developing relationships with families.*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>



**Sharing Observations**

DISCUSSION

How can you:

- Invite parents to share about their children's development and any skills that are important to them?
- Talk with parents about ways to make sharing about children's strengths and progress a regular part of your communication?

## SLIDE 8 DISCUSSION: SHARING OBSERVATIONS

Ask participants to think about these questions in small groups.

How can you:

- Invite parents to share about their children's development and any skills that are important to them?
- Talk with parents about ways to include children's strengths and progress as a regular part of your communication?
- Participants may be able to share steps they are already taking in these areas or ideas about new practices.

After 5 to 10 minutes, bring the whole group together and ask for volunteers to share thoughts from their small groups.

Possible responses are:

- Ask parents questions like: "We've been talking about Manuel's physical abilities. Do you have particular goals for him? What physical skills do you hope he has when he is older?" This may lead to discussions of what the parents see the child doing now that they are passionate about.
- Invite parents to create a joint book with photos taken when a child demonstrates a new skill. Both educators and parents could choose important developmental steps to photograph and contribute.

Participants may have other ideas as well.

Each family is unique and may see development differently. Communicating regularly about development, skills, and goal-setting can help educators understand parent perspectives.

### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Watch me! Celebrating milestones and sharing concerns, Module 4: How to talk with parents about their child's development.*

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/module4.html>





## SLIDE 9

Celebrating together, when children show new skills or reach goals, can build relationships between families and educators. It is also a way to ensure that everyone is noticing children's development and that development is progressing.

### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Birth to five: Watch me thrive! A community guide for behavioral and developmental screening*.  
[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/ece\\_providers\\_guide\\_march2014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/ece_providers_guide_march2014.pdf)



## SLIDE 10

### TALK REGULARLY ABOUT DEVELOPMENT

Early childhood educators are in a unique position to talk with families regularly. This allows them to build trusting and respectful relationships that focus on children's growth and well-being. Engaging in frequent conversations about children's skills and behaviors creates an environment where development is a common topic, making any concerns that arise easier to address.

Educators should take a strengths-based approach, sharing observations with families about children's behaviors, skills, and abilities, and inviting families to do the same.

Conversations about developmental concerns are more successful in the context of a trusting relationship.

### REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Relationship-based practices: Talking with families about developmental concerns* [Simulation].  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/learning-module/relationship-based-practices-talking-families-about-developmental>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Tips for talking with parents about developmental concerns*.  
[https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents\\_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf)



**Relationship-Based Practices**

You can use these six practices to build trusting relationships with parents:

- Observe and describe children's behavior
- Reflect on the family's perspective
- Support competence
- Focus on the family-child relationship
- Value a family's passion
- Reflect on your own perspective

## **SLIDE 11**

### **RELATIONSHIP-BASED PRACTICES**

Educators can use these six relationship-based practices to build partnerships with families:

- Observe and describe children's behavior
- Reflect on the family's perspective
- Support competence
- Focus on the family-child relationship
- Value a family's passion (both positive and negative).
- Reflect on your own perspective.

The first strategy was already introduced in Slide 7. Reviewing the relationship-based practices in more detail may be helpful if participants have not encountered these already. They are highlighted in the reference below.

These strategies can be particularly important when conversations become challenging. Talking with families about potential concerns is the topic of the next section.

#### **REFERENCE**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Building partnerships: Guide to developing relationships with families.*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>



## **SLIDE 12**

### **CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILIES WHEN CONCERNS ARISE**

In this section, participants will explore effective practices for talking with families when concerns arise about children’s development.

Educators should check their early learning program’s policies about talking with families about developmental concerns. Some programs require that a program administrator or director be the one to talk with families about concerns.

Educators may want to consult with their supervisor when they have a concern to share with parents. Depending on the relationship and the circumstances, early learning professionals may find it helpful to have a supervisor or team member join the meeting.

The team should consider what will make the family most comfortable in talking about what may be a challenging issue.

#### **REFERENCE**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Watch me! Celebrating milestones and sharing concerns, Module 4: How to talk with parents about their child’s development.*

<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/module4.html>



## SLIDE 13 WHEN CONCERNS ARISE

Both families and educators may have concerns about children's development. Parents know their child best. Educators are in a unique position to know many children and to notice differences that may become potential concerns.

It is important that educators listen to parents' concerns and communicate their view that parents are experts on their children. Supporting a parent's competence and validating concerns demonstrates respect and contributes to a more productive conversation.

Educators can encourage families to bring up concerns about development with their children's pediatricians or health care providers.

Families and educators may be able to make changes, sometimes with the help of other professionals, to address concerns about children's behavior or development. Other times, families may need to seek a more comprehensive evaluation.

The next slide highlights developmental screening, which is one way to identify potential developmental concerns.

### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Birth to five: Watch me thrive! A community guide for behavioral and developmental screening*.  
[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/ece\\_providers\\_guide\\_march2014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/ece_providers_guide_march2014.pdf)



## SLIDE 14 DEVELOPMENTAL SCREENING

In some programs, such as Head Start and Early Head Start, educators and other staff do regular developmental screenings with formal, research-based tools that check children’s development.

Developmental screenings play an important role in identifying potential concerns and linking children and families with appropriate services. Screening tools do not provide diagnoses. They can indicate that children need further evaluation.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that children receive general developmental screening at 9, 18, 24, and 30 months of age or whenever a parent, educator, or caregiver has a concern.

Educators can engage parents in conversations about screening as part of an ongoing, collaborative relationship. Educators can explain that screenings are routine, brief checks of children’s development that can indicate that a child needs further evaluation. Parents need to give their consent for children to receive developmental screenings.

### REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Relationship-based practices: Talking with families about developmental concerns* [Simulation].

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/learning-module/relationship-based-practices-talking-families-about-developmental>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education. (2014). *Birth to five: Watch me thrive! A community guide for behavioral and developmental screening*.

[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/ece\\_providers\\_guide\\_march2014.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ece/ece_providers_guide_march2014.pdf)



**Talking With Families About Concerns**

DISCUSSION

Think about conversations you may have had with families about developmental concerns.

- What was successful?
- What did you find challenging?

## SLIDE 15

### DISCUSSION: TALKING WITH FAMILIES ABOUT CONCERNS

Ask participants to consider their experiences discussing concerns about children's development with families. Invite them to think about these questions:

- What was successful?
- What did you find challenging?

Think about your own experiences and possible examples to share.

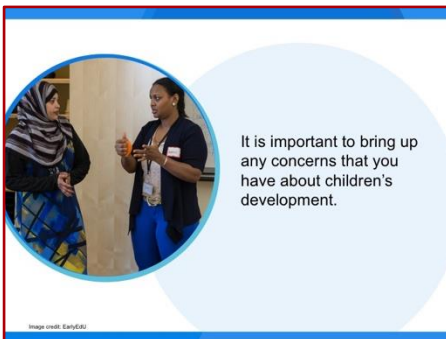
Possible positive outcomes that participants may describe include:

- Working together with families to help children progress and learn
- Helping families take steps to possibly get special services for their children

Challenges that participants may share are:

- Responding to families' emotions when they learn about concerns
- Experiencing their own emotions about the potential challenges that families and children may be facing
- Accepting that families may not be ready to address concerns
- Understanding families' perspectives about their children

If participants do not have experiences to draw on, ask them to imagine what might be rewarding and what could be challenging. They may also want to discuss their fears and hopes for those conversations



It is important to bring up any concerns that you have about children's development.

## SLIDE 16

It can be important to act early when concerns arise about children's development.

Receiving special services early can minimize children's potential delays. For infants and toddlers, early intervention can reduce the need for special education services when they are school age. Early services have a record of positively impacting outcomes across developmental domains.

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## REFERENCES

The National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (2011, July). *The importance of early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families.*

<http://www.nectac.org/~pdfs/pubs/importanceofearlyintervention.pdf>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Tips for talking with parents about developmental concerns.*

[https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents\\_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf)

### Planning to Talk With Families

- Ask parents about a time that works well
- Choose a private, comfortable location
- Have developmental information available
- Bring copies of information about the child and possible resources for evaluation
- Include someone who speaks the parents' home language, if needed

## SLIDE 17 PLANNING TO TALK WITH FAMILIES

When planning to talk with families about a developmental concern, early learning professionals can partner with families by respecting their preferences and needs, creating a safe and comfortable environment, and presenting clear information.

Some strategies to make such conversations collaborative and effective are:

- Ask parents to meet at a time that works well for them
- Choose a private, comfortable location for the meeting
- Have developmental information available
- Bring copies of any information about their child, such as screening results or videos, that might show the concern clearly, plus possible resources for evaluation
- If parents speak another language, include someone who speaks their home language. Clear and natural communication is essential for these types of conversations

The next few slides will give more guidance for collaborative conversation and elaborate more on sharing information effectively.

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## REFERENCES

Croft, C. (2010, January). Talking to families of infants and toddlers about developmental delays. *Young Children*, 65(1), 44-46.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Relationship-based practices: Talking with families about developmental concerns* [Simulation]. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/learning-module/relationship-based-practices-talking-families-about-developmental>



## SLIDE 18 CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES

Not all cultures see development and developmental expectations the same way.

Share an example that comes from the book *Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five* (a featured resource on the next slide):

Staff at a program mainly serving children from Hispanic families had a number of Hmong children enrolling in their program. (Hmong families are an indigenous people of China.) Two children were particularly active - climbing and jumping and often endangering themselves and other children. The children did not respond to educators' attempts at redirection. In frustration, educators began to raise concerns about potential cognitive deficits due to the children's lack of response to directions provided.

Attempts to communicate with the children's parent were met with silence. Over time, and with the help of a professional who understood Hmong culture, staff began to understand that vigorous play was valued in the children's home and in their culture.

This marked the start of the staff's efforts to better understand this family's perspectives and values.

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Staff perspectives shape conversations with families. Before talking with parents, educators may want to reflect on their views about child development.

Reflecting on their own perspectives is one of the six relationship-based practices highlighted on Slide 11. It is important for educators to consider their own views and cultural biases in working with families. This practice encourages early childhood educators to choose what they say and do.

The module *A Relationship-Based Approach to Family Engagement* offers opportunities for educators to reflect on their cultural perspectives.

## REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Building partnerships: Guide to developing relationships with families*.

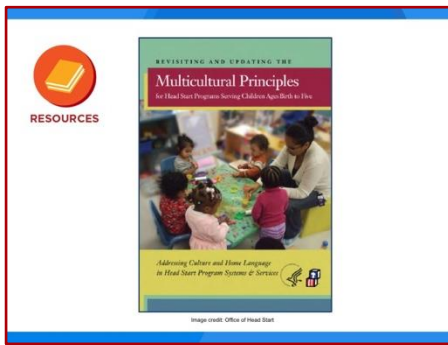
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2010). *Revisiting and updating the multicultural principles for Head Start programs serving children ages birth to five*.

[https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/principles-01-10-revisiting-multicultural-principles-hs-english\\_0.pdf](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/principles-01-10-revisiting-multicultural-principles-hs-english_0.pdf)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Tips for talking with parents about developmental concerns*.

[https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents\\_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf)



## SLIDE 19 RESOURCES

Share the resource *Revisiting and Updating the Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five* with participants. This book provides research and perspectives on multicultural principles and offers guidance to early childhood educators on how to implement the principles within their programs.

It includes reflective activities to help educators think about their own cultural practices and their perspectives as they interact with families and children.

### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2010). *Revisiting and updating the multicultural principles for Head Start programs serving children ages birth to five*.

[https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/principles-01-10-revisiting-multicultural-principles-hs-english\\_0.pdf](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/principles-01-10-revisiting-multicultural-principles-hs-english_0.pdf)



## SLIDE 20 INVITE FAMILIES TO SHARE

Families share their children and themselves as soon as they join an early care setting. Early learning professionals can work toward strong partnerships by showing genuine interest in families. This practice is particularly useful when cultural differences emerge.

Early childhood educators can invite families to share what they see children doing and what they think that means. This approach mirrors one of the six relationship-based practices—reflecting on the family’s perspective by inviting them to share about their children.

Educators may ask families what concerns them or if they have questions about their child’s development. This gives educators a chance to see family perspectives and observations.

Early learning professionals should start with talking about children’s strengths.

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## REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Building partnerships: Guide to developing relationships with families.*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>

### Sharing Information

- Provide details of your observations, using objective descriptions
- Show families concrete information, such as pictures and photos
- Do not diagnose or suggest a possible diagnosis for children

## SLIDE 21 SHARING INFORMATION

The child is the common focus for families and staff. When educators ask for parents' observations of a child's behavior and share their own, they create opportunities for discussion.

In addition to inviting families to share information, educators can use these strategies to describe children's behavior, one of the six relationship-based strategies introduced in Slide 11:

- Provide factual, specific observations, such as, "I have noticed that Abdul is working hard to grasp small objects like pencils or scissors but isn't able to hold on tightly."
- Show anything that may make these observations more concrete for families, such as photos, written observations, checklists, or screening results.
- Do not diagnose children or suggest a possible diagnosis.

Educators can build on a child's strengths, even when addressing a challenge or concern. Beginning with a shared appreciation for a child's skills and unique gifts can build common ground at the start of the conversation. This strategy can be effective if it is sincere and builds on an established relationship. Educators should remember that developmental concerns are often a sensitive and emotional topic for families.

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## REFERENCES

Croft, C. (2010, January). Talking to families of infants and toddlers about developmental delays. *Young Children*, 65(1), 44-46.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Relationship-based practices: Talking with families about developmental concerns* [Simulation]. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/learning-module/relationship-based-practices-talking-families-about-developmental>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Tips for talking with parents about developmental concerns*. [https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents\\_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf)

### Shifting Perspectives

- Sometimes you and parents may see the same concerns and agree on next steps
- Other times, you may need to work hard to see parents' perspectives and value what they are passionate about
- If parents see the concerns differently, highlight common ground to build on

## SLIDE 22 SHIFTING PERSPECTIVES

Sometimes, educators and parents see the same developmental concerns and agree about next steps. Other times, parents either do not see the same concerns or have different ideas about how to address them.

It is important for educators to invite parents, with an interpreter if needed, to share their values about and approaches to children's behavior and development.

As an example, in the scenario presented in Slide 18, the parent responded with silence to educators' attempts to discuss concerns about the children's development. The staff interpreted the parent's response as a lack of understanding or language barrier, possibly even disengagement due to feeling overwhelmed as parent. Not until a meeting with the parent and a professional who understood Hmong culture did staff begin to understand the parent's response and perspectives. Staff's willingness to understand the family and explore their cultural perspective helped to build a strong partnership over time.

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Early childhood educators may find it difficult to see parents' perspectives. When educators are worried about children, they may need to work to make a shift to see and value parents' perspectives. One step that educators can take is to listen carefully to family concerns, rather than to justify their own position. They can repeat and summarize what parents say to let them know they heard. It can also help to build on common ground they may share.

Telling parents what they should do can disrupt the partnership and will likely interfere with efforts to work together for effective outcomes for the child. Parents may need time and reflection before they are able to revisit the conversation.

## **REFERENCES**

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2010). *Revisiting and updating the multicultural principles for Head Start programs serving children ages birth to five.*

[https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/principles-01-10-revisiting-multicultural-principles-hs-english\\_0.pdf](https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/principles-01-10-revisiting-multicultural-principles-hs-english_0.pdf)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Relationship-based practices: Talking with families about developmental concerns* [Simulation].

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/learning-module/relationship-based-practices-talking-families-about-developmental>



## SLIDE 23 OBSERVING THE CHILD TOGETHER

After a parent or educator has shared a potential developmental concern about a child, they may want to engage together in a process of observing the child. This can also mean that the educator and parents will observe the child's development at home and in the early learning setting.

Sharing observations can be a powerful way to create an understanding or identify different perspectives about the same behavior.

### REFERENCES

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Building partnerships: Guide to developing relationships with families*.

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Relationship-based practices: Talking with families about developmental concerns* [Simulation].

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/learning-module/relationship-based-practices-talking-families-about-developmental>

### Empathizing With Parents and Families

Parents and families may feel concerned or frustrated after conversations about their child's progress or development. Educators can partner with families to move through this challenging time.

- Express and demonstrate an ability to share an understanding of the feelings and concerns of parents and families
- Communicate your confidence in the family's ability to make the best choices for their child
- Maintain a non-judgmental, non-defensive approach
- Be available to the family, allowing them to take the lead in decision-making

## SLIDE 24 EMPATHIZING WITH PARENTS

If parents become concerned or frustrated after conversations about progress or development, the educator can:

- Express and demonstrate an ability to share an understanding of the parents'/families' feelings
- Communicate confidence in the family's ability to make the best choices for their child
- Maintain a non-judgmental, non-defensive approach
- Be available to the family, allowing them to take the lead in decision-making

Conversations may become challenging because parents care deeply about their children. Their emotional response shows the depth of their connection to their children.

Educators can work with parents' feelings instead of against them to help the family move through a challenging time. The power of this emotional connection can help parents cope with the situation.

### REFERENCES

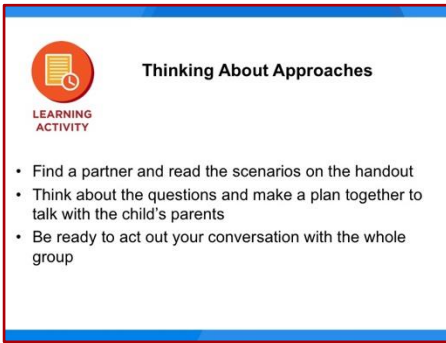
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Relationship-based practices: Talking with families about developmental concerns* [Simulation].

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U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Tips for talking with parents about developmental concerns*.

[https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents\\_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/pdf/parents_pdfs/tipstalkingparents.pdf)





**Thinking About Approaches**

LEARNING ACTIVITY

- Find a partner and read the scenarios on the handout
- Think about the questions and make a plan together to talk with the child's parents
- Be ready to act out your conversation with the whole group

## SLIDE 25

### LEARNING ACTIVITY: THINKING ABOUT APPROACHES

**Materials:** Thinking About Approaches handout

Ask participants to find a partner and read the scenarios on the handout. Encourage them to think about the questions and write responses together, making an imaginary plan to talk with parents. They should use a strengths-based approach and rely on relationship-based practices, as discussed earlier in this module.

Give participants about 20 minutes to develop their responses. Encourage them to be detailed about exact language and anticipated responses.

If time permits, ask pairs to act out the conversation they drafted. It may help participants to practice actually using strengths-based language and relationship-based practices as they imagine themselves talking to a parent about a concern.

Take time to establish with the group some ground rules for feedback.

If the group feels too large to promote effective discussion because of discomfort or time constraints, pairs could present their conversation to smaller groups.

#### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Building partnerships: Guide to developing relationships with families.*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/building-partnerships-developing-relationships-families.pdf>



Partnering When Children May Need More Help

## SLIDE 26

### PARTNERING WHEN CHILDREN MAY NEED MORE HELP


If parents have decided to seek help to find out more about a developmental concern, educators and other program staff can help families find potential resources for further evaluation.

**Partner with Families to Explore Resources**

Families may want to seek evaluations or find out more about developmental concerns. Stay informed about the resources in your community.

Sources of information that parents and families can begin to explore include

- Pediatrician or health care provider
- Local school districts
- Part C Lead Agencies in your state/jurisdiction



## SLIDE 27

### PARTNER WITH FAMILIES TO EXPLORE RESOURCES

Early childhood educators are among the professionals that can refer families for evaluations for their children. These are sometimes called *Child Find* evaluations. As part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), states are required to seek out children who need evaluation and possibly special services. Families can also seek out evaluations on their own and do not need referrals.

Families can visit their child's pediatrician or health care provider. Families can also turn to their local lead agency, if children are birth to 3 years old, or local school district, if children are 3 and older.

Local lead agencies administer Part C of IDEA. They are key players in each state's referral system for infants and toddlers. Local school districts are the contact for evaluations for children ages 3 to 21.

Some resources for finding information about state lead agencies for early intervention are The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA) website and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) web page with state early intervention contacts.

Evaluations are typically done by teams of professionals to determine if children are eligible to receive early intervention or special education services. Each state has its own guidelines.

Once a child has been evaluated, an individual assessment will take place. This assessment will help with the development of an individualized plan. It is important to note that parents must provide written consent for their children at every stage of the process.

You may want to know and share your state's particular guidelines. It is important for early learning professionals to understand the process of referrals and additional steps so that they can help families to navigate it.

#### REFERENCES

The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center. (2016, October). *Part C lead agencies*. <http://ectacenter.org/partc/ptclead.asp>

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Parent Information & Resources. (2010, September 9). *Special education services for preschoolers with disabilities*. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/preschoolers/>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Infographic: Young children with special needs*. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/infographic/infographic-young-children-special-needs>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Early intervention contacts*. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/parents/states.html>

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). Module 3: Objective and engaged developmental monitoring [Online learning module]. In *Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns*. <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/watchmetraining/index.html>

**IDEA: One System, Two Parts**

The Individuals With Disabilities Act (IDEA) requires that all eligible children receive services.

<b>Part C</b> provides early intervention services for children birth to age 3 with special needs.	<b>Part B</b> provides special education services to preschool children with special needs.
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## SLIDE 28

### IDEA: ONE SYSTEM, TWO PARTS

Children with disabilities are served under federal legislation known as IDEA: the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Part C of the law guides evaluation processes and services for infants, toddlers, and their families. Part B of this law guides evaluation processes and special education services for children ages 3 through high school.

### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Infographic: Young children with special needs*. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/infographic/infographic-young-children-special-needs>

Who Is Eligible?	
<b>Part C (Birth to 3)</b> Infants and toddlers with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established conditions</li><li>• Developmental delays</li></ul>	<b>Part B (3 to 5)</b> Preschoolers with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Disabilities in certain categories</li><li>• Developmental delays</li></ul>

Eligibility rules vary by state.

## SLIDE 29 WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Each state determines criteria for eligibility for early intervention and special education services.

In general, infants and toddlers are eligible for early intervention services if they have:

- A diagnosed condition at birth.
- Developmental delays.

Children ages 3 to 5 can be eligible due to developmental delays or these disability categories:

- Autism
- Deafness
- Deaf-blindness
- Developmental delay
- Emotional disturbance
- Intellectual disability
- Multiple disabilities
- Orthopedic impairment
- Other health impairment
- Specific learning disability
- Speech or language impairment
- Traumatic brain injury
- Visual impairment, including blindness

Some children have disabilities that do not make them eligible for special education services. However, sometimes these children are eligible for other services.

### REFERENCES

Center for Parent Information & Resources. (2010, August 18). *Overview of early intervention*. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/ei-overview/>

Center for Parent Information & Resources. (2010, September 9). *Evaluating children for disability*. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/evaluation/#idea>



## SLIDE 30 DEVELOPMENTAL DELAYS

Children from birth to 5 (and older) may experience *developmental delays*, as defined by each state, in one or more of these areas:

- Cognitive (intellectual abilities)
- Physical (fine and gross motor skills)
- Communication (speech and language)
- Social or emotional (social skills, emotional control)
- Adaptive (self-care skills)

The term *developmental delay* is important because it is often used in early intervention and special education services for young children. It usually refers to a rate of development that is slower than typical in the areas described.

### REFERENCES

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Parenting matters: Supporting parents of children ages 0-8*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.  
<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/21868/parenting-matters-supporting-parents-of-children-ages-0-8>


Center for Parent Information & Resources. (2012, December 3). *Key terms to know in early intervention*.  
<http://www.parentcenterhub.org/keyterms-ei/>

Center for Parent Information & Resources. (2016, September 16). *Developmental delay*. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/dd/>



## SLIDE 31 MEET FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE

Early childhood educators should be respectful of parents' choices for their children. Some families may decide not to seek an evaluation. Others may find their children qualify for special services but decide not to use them. Some families may need more time to process new and emotional information about their children and the impact on their lives.



**Reflecting on Responses**

DISCUSSION

- Have you had experiences where parents chose not to seek an evaluation or use special services for which their child was eligible?
- What was your response?
- What would you do differently, if anything, in the future?

## SLIDE 32

### DISCUSSION: REFLECTING ON RESPONSES

Ask participants to think about a time when parents chose not to get their child evaluated further or to use special services for which their child was eligible.

Invite them to share their responses first with a partner to these questions:

- Have you had experiences where parents chose not to seek an evaluation or use special services for which their child was eligible?
- What was your response?
- What would you do differently, if anything, in the future?

If participants do not have experiences like this to draw on, ask them to imagine such a scenario and possible responses. Be ready to share your own experiences and responses in this area.

Often, educators' strong feelings for children and families make it challenging when parents see concerns about a child's development differently or make different choices about what steps to take. Educators can support families by being patient, respectful, and available for further discussion through this process. It will not help children or families to show judgment or demonstrate disappointment. Educators can seek support from peers or supervisors if they need to process negative emotions about the family's decisions.

**Services: The Basics**

Each child receiving services must have a written plan developed by a team that includes the family:

- Infants and toddlers and their families have an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP)
- Preschool children have an Individualized Education Program (IEP)

**SLIDE 33**  
**SERVICES: THE BASICS**

Each child receiving special services in an early childhood program must have a written plan developed by a team that includes the family. Some details about these plans are:

- Infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families receive an IFSP, or Individual Family Service Plan. This plan identifies child and family goals and specific services to achieve those goals. A guiding principle is that families are children’s most important resource.
- Preschoolers with disabilities receive an IEP, or Individualized Education Program. This focuses on the child’s individualized levels of performance, goals, and progress.

Both kinds of plans must be completed according to federal guidelines. They describe the kinds and amount of services each child or family will receive and are legal documents. States have their own guidelines as well.

**REFERENCES**

Center for Parent Information & Resources. (2016, September 8). *Writing the IFSP for your child*. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/ifsp/>

Rebhorn, T. (2017, March 3). *Developing your child’s IEP*. Center for Parent Information & Resources. <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/pa12/>

**Why Services Are Important**



- Special services can:
- Strengthen brain and physical development
  - Reduce the amount of ongoing and future challenges for these children

**SLIDE 34**  
**WHY SERVICES ARE IMPORTANT**

All children deserve high-quality early learning experiences, and early intervention and special education services are part of those for children with or at-risk for disabilities.

Special services can strengthen brain and physical development. High quality, appropriate services can reduce the amount of ongoing and future challenges that children may experience.

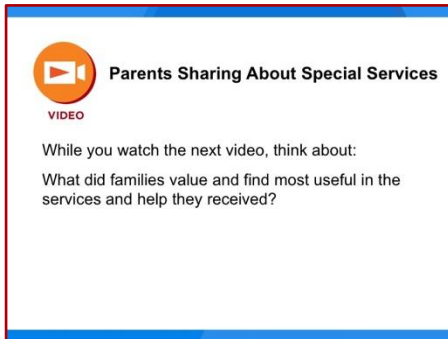
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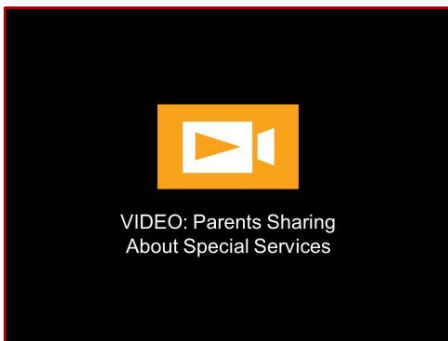
## REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Infographic: Young children with special needs*. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/children-disabilities/infographic/infographic-young-children-special-needs>



## SLIDE 35 PARENTS SHARING ABOUT SPECIAL SERVICES

Ask participants to think about this question while watching the video on the next slide: What did families value and find most useful in the services and help they received?



## SLIDE 36 VIDEO: PARENTS SHARING ABOUT SPECIAL SERVICES

This video features three parents of young children talking about how special services impacted their lives and their children's lives.

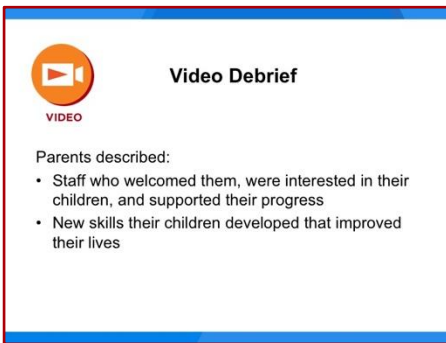
One of the children, Eli, who is in the video, passed away suddenly in August of 2017. His parents have given permission for this video to be used to support inclusion of children with disabilities in programs with typically developing children. The video is 8 minutes, 34 seconds long.

Click the icon to access the video *Parents Sharing About Special Services*.

Note: The PowerPoint presentation must be in Slide Show mode to link to the video.

## REFERENCE

EarlyEdU. (2017). *Parents sharing about special services* [Video file]. <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/responding-families-developmental-concerns-parents-sharing-about-special-services>



**Video Debrief**

VIDEO

Parents described:

- Staff who welcomed them, were interested in their children, and supported their progress
- New skills their children developed that improved their lives

## SLIDE 37 VIDEO DEBRIEF

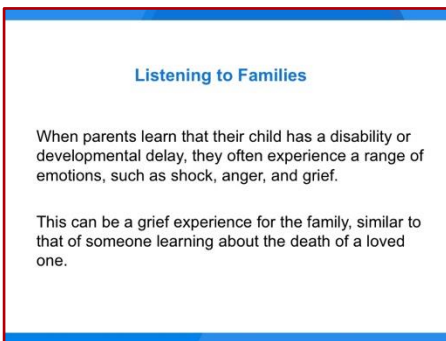
This slide is animated so the points come up one by one, giving participants an opportunity to develop their own responses first.

Participants may share that parents described:

- Staff who welcomed them, were interested in their children, and supported their progress
- New skills that their children developed which improved their lives

Ask participants if they heard parents describe anything they were passionate about. This refers to one of the relationship-based practices from the Office of Head Start's National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. Possible responses are:

- Paige describes appreciating the high expectations that the staff has for Eli.
- Dave describes amazement at the sudden progress his daughter has made in talking clearly.
- Katie tells how her child with special needs could go to school with her other children, who are developing typically.



**Listening to Families**

When parents learn that their child has a disability or developmental delay, they often experience a range of emotions, such as shock, anger, and grief.

This can be a grief experience for the family, similar to that of someone learning about the death of a loved one.

## SLIDE 38 LISTENING TO FAMILIES

Parents may feel a range of emotions, such as shock, anger, and grief, after learning their child has a disability or developmental delay. This can be similar to the experience of someone learning about the death of a loved one.

### REFERENCE

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Parenting matters: Supporting parents of children ages 0-8*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.  
<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/21868/parenting-matters-supporting-parents-of-children-ages-0-8>

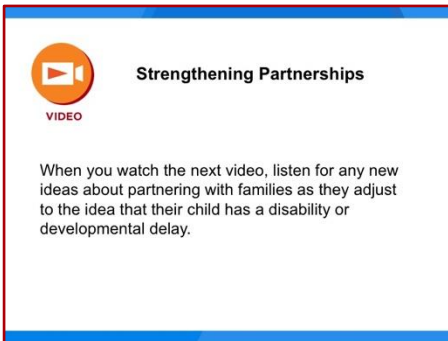


## SLIDE 39

Parents experiencing strong emotions after learning that their child has a disability or developmental delay may need a period of time to adjust. In general, parents of children with disabilities also face more stress than parents of typically developing children.

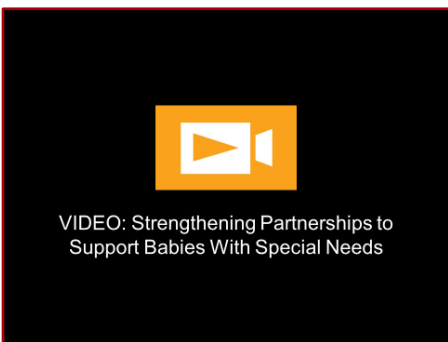
### REFERENCE

National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. (2016). *Parenting matters: Supporting parents of children ages 0-8*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press.  
<https://www.nap.edu/catalog/21868/parenting-matters-supporting-parents-of-children-ages-0-8>



## SLIDE 40 STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Ask participants to listen for any new ideas about partnering with families as they adjust to the idea their child has a disability or developmental delay. Participants may also note some concepts highlighted in the video that have been discussed in the module.



## SLIDE 41 VIDEO: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT BABIES WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

The video describes the way that Early Head Start staff, part of the Office of Head Start, partners with families through successes and challenges. It focuses on supporting parents when they learn their child has a developmental delay or disability. This video is 4 minutes, 7 seconds long.

Click the icon to access the video *Strengthening Partnerships to Support Babies With Special Needs*.

Note: The PowerPoint presentation must be in Slide Show mode to link to the video.

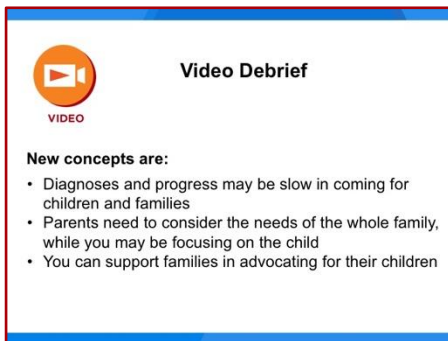
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## REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (n.d.). *Strengthening partnerships to support babies with special needs* [Video file].

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/strengthening-partnerships-support-babies-special-needs>



The slide features a red border and a blue header bar. On the left, there is a video icon with the word "VIDEO" below it. To the right of the icon, the text "Video Debrief" is displayed. Below this, the heading "New concepts are:" is followed by a bulleted list of three points.

**Video Debrief**

**New concepts are:**

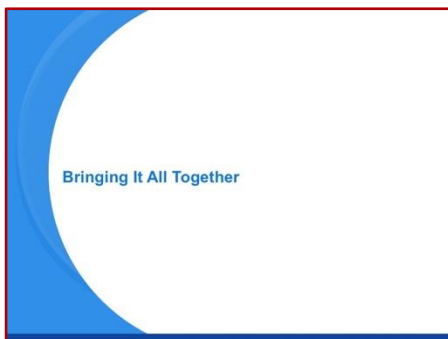
- Diagnoses and progress may be slow in coming for children and families
- Parents need to consider the needs of the whole family, while you may be focusing on the child
- You can support families in advocating for their children

## SLIDE 42 VIDEO DEBRIEF

This slide is animated so the points come up one by one, giving participants an opportunity to develop their own responses first.

In thinking about points in the video, participants may share that:

- Diagnoses and progress may be slow in coming for children and families
- Parents need to consider the needs of the whole family, while educators may be focusing on the child
- Educators can support families in advocating for their children

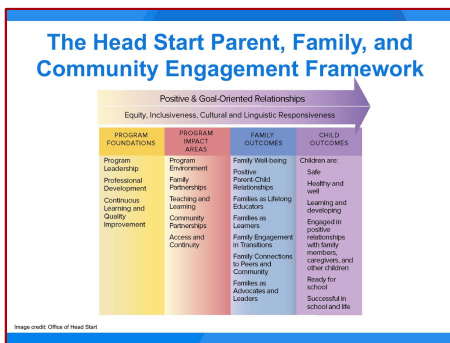


The slide has a blue header bar with a white circular graphic on the left side. The text "Bringing It All Together" is centered on the slide.

**Bringing It All Together**

## SLIDE 43 BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

This section summarizes the main points of this module.



## SLIDE 44

### THE HEAD START PARENT, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

With a solid program foundation in place for parent, family, and community engagement, program leadership and staff can partner with parents, families, and communities to promote family engagement and family goals in areas that include program environment and family partnerships.

A comprehensive approach to family engagement can help programs partner with families to foster children’s development and learning.

The next slide will ask participants to think about this module’s topic and practices and their connection to the Framework.

### REFERENCE

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center. (2011). *The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework: Promoting family engagement and school readiness, from prenatal to age 8.*

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/docs/policy-im/pfce-framework.pdf>

**Where Does It Fit?**

DISCUSSION

Which part of the Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework does this topic relate to?

- Form a small group and share ideas
- Be ready to share your thoughts with the whole group

## SLIDE 45

### DISCUSSION: WHERE DOES IT FIT?

**Materials:** Flip chart and marker

Ask participants to review the Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and identify where they think this module topic (*Responding with Families to Developmental Concerns*) fits within it. Invite participants to share guidance they see about this topic in the Framework’s Program Impact Areas section, in particular.

You may want to print out a few copies of the Framework, ask participants to look at it online, or review it as a group. Write participants’ responses on the flip chart for the group to see.

This exercise can serve as a reflective activity for participants as they think about what they learned during the module.

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Participants may identify three impact areas—Family Partnerships, Teaching and Learning, and Community Partnerships—as three that this module topic aligns with. They may also identify Family Connections to Peers and Community and Positive Parent-Child Relationships as family engagement outcomes that this module supports.



**SESSION SUMMARY**

- Exchanging observations helps you to reach a shared understanding of children's development with parents and family
- Adopting relationship-based practices can help to guide potentially challenging conversations about developmental concerns
- Listening, and helping families to find specialized services, can positively impact children's outcomes

## SLIDE 46 SESSION SUMMARY

The main points of this module are:

- Exchanging observations helps you to reach a shared understanding of children's development with parents and family
- Adopting relationship-based practices can help to guide what can be challenging conversations about developmental concerns
- Listening, and helping families find specialized services, can positively impact children's outcomes



**CONCLUSION**

This concludes the module *Responding With Families to Developmental Concerns*.

For more information about this resource, please contact us:  
[PFCE@ecetta.info](mailto:PFCE@ecetta.info) | 1-866-763-6481

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Developed in collaboration with EarlyEdU Alliance: A Higher Education Collaborative for Head Start and Early Childhood Teaching.

## SLIDE 47 CONCLUSION

This concludes the module *Responding With Families to Developmental Concerns*.

For more information about this resource, please contact us:  
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