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Early Intervention Family Resource Portal

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Abstract

Research shows that actively engaged parents have higher satisfaction with home intervention services than more passive participants. A major component of Family Guided Routines Based Intervention is building capacity within families. Busy families have limited time to spend reading parenting and child development books. This family resource portal is designed to meet the needs of busy families who are interested in learning about child development and issues related to early childhood. The sites presented in this information portal have been researched for relevancy of content and reliability of information ensuring that families can quickly and easily access accurate information about their child. This portal allows parents to be life-long learners and empowers them to seek knowledge regarding their child while improving their parenting skills.
Early Intervention Family Resource Portal

Per the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) Part C Infant and Toddler Program (IDEA of 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-446, 118 Stat. 2647, 2004), early intervention is designed “to enhance the development of infants and toddlers, to minimize the potential for developmental delay” (Sec. 631) (a) (1) by “enhancing the capacity of families to meet the special needs of their infants and toddlers” (Sec. 631) (a) (4). This family capacity-building is essential to the success of early intervention. Parent and child outcomes are positively affected when parents are involved in early intervention family capacity-building (Dunst, Bruder, & Espe-Sherwindt, 2014).

Family Guided Routines Based Intervention (FGRBI) in conjunction with the Primary Service Provider (PSP) model has been adopted by the state of Iowa as the delivery system for early intervention services for children either delayed or at risk for delays in their development. A major component in FGRBI is capacity-building in families. Since its inception, professionals have sought highly involved parents in early intervention. “The under-involved family was blamed for the under-involvement with scant little attention paid to what the professionals had done to set the stage for family under-involvement” (McWilliam, 2010). As a home intervention teacher, the author sees the importance of building capacity in families, and strives to find ways to engage them in home intervention. The purpose of this family resource portal is to encourage and empower families to be involved in the early intervention process, to actively seek reliable information about their children, and to build confidence and capacity in their parenting skills.
Literature Review

Historically, families involved in the early intervention system were treated as passive recipients of services. Interventionists were in control of the decision-making process while families had little direct influence. Over the past thirty years, the delivery model for early intervention services has gradually shifted from a focus on family deficits to a focus on family empowerment (Xu, 2006). In preparation for this project, research on the coaching model of early intervention as well as the importance of empowering and building capacity within families was reviewed.

The early intervention delivery model practiced in Iowa is Family Guided Routines-Based Intervention. This is a coaching model in which the interventionist acts as a coach to the family rather than a direct teacher to the child. In supporting families of children with special needs, coaching was found to be an effective practice (Hanft, Rush, & Sheldon, 2004). The purpose of coaching is to work with families to celebrate and build on their existing knowledge, develop new skills, and encourage them to be life-long learners who continuously look to meet their child’s developmental needs (Rush & Sheldon, 2011). A major premise of the coaching model is that families spend more time with the child than the interventionist. Therefore, interventions designed to be embedded within a family’s daily routine, with the family and child as the participants, will be implemented daily through natural routines rather than only during scheduled home visits (McWilliam, 2010). Coaches work with families to determine their priorities for their children, identify what they already know about child development, and share new ideas and information about their child’s development. Coaching has been found to build the confidence and competence in a family by improving the family’s skills in self-reflection, self-correction, and their ability to further their child’s development (Hamren & Quigley, 2012).
Families serve many roles in regards to their children. At any given point in time, they are “advocates, information seekers, spokespersons, and public educators for their sons and daughters” (Dunst & Dempsey, 2007). Throughout the early intervention process, the relationship between the family and the intervention professionals either enhances or impedes the IFSP outcomes (Fine & Nissenbaum, 2000). Maintaining a respectful and equal relationship between the interventionist and the family is an important goal in early intervention. Emphasizing strengths rather than weaknesses and encouraging family control over resources and supports is a principle of practice that is empowering to families. Dunst & Dempsey (2007) found that activities designed to strengthen a family’s existing competencies, as well as providing opportunities for joint decision-making were important in promoting family empowerment.

The author’s experience working with families participating in early intervention services has shown that families genuinely want to be involved in promoting their child’s development. Confidence and time are two of the largest hurdles the families that I serve face. Families have expressed to me that they like to search for information relevant to their child’s specific needs, but are unsure what resources are accurate. They have also shared that the time that they have available does not allow them to sit and read a lot of books. Although they appreciate the content, they prefer to read quick-to-locate information online. These experiences formed the foundation for me to create this family resource portal.

**Methods**

**Procedure**

Before creating the family resource portal, several online resources were reviewed. To locate the desired information, many sites were visited. While some families may have the time
and confidence to search and decipher which sites are accurate, many do not. The author’s intention is to create a site that includes links to reliable sources, appropriate for the families participating in early intervention services. The information portal is designed to contain information specific to the early intervention process as well as links to issues common among the families participating in early intervention. The portal is a one-stop-shop for information relevant to these families.

**Analysis**

To generate interest in the portal, fliers promoting the resource were produced and distributed to four families participating in Early ACCESS home intervention within Northwest AEA (Appendix A). The platform of the portal allows for the developer of the portal to track the number of hits via a counter which tracks the number of times the portal has been visited. At the completion of the construction of the parent resource portal, the number of views or hits for the portal was at zero. As of November 24, 2016, the portal has been visited seventy-nine times. The hit counter is reviewed weekly and documented to track patterns in viewers. An increasing number of hits over time will indicate the perceived usefulness of the family resource portal. Every six months, a family’s Individualized Family Service Plan is reviewed with their Early ACCESS team. At these reviews, families will be offered a survey addressing their thoughts and experiences with the family resource portal (Appendix B). Families will be asked for suggestions to grow the number of topics within the portal.

After six months of limited distribution, fliers promoting the portal will be distributed to early childhood staff within Northwest AEA, service coordinators with Child Health Specialty Clinics, preschools and childcare centers, and WIC offices. These providers will be asked to share the fliers with the families they serve. The hit counter will continue to be monitored and
the portal will be expanded based on feedback from users. Families on Individualized Family Service Plans will be offered a family resource portal survey at each IFSP review. The portal will continue to evolve over time based on this feedback. The collaboration between these family service providers is a natural expansion of the portal audience due to the population of the families and children they serve.

**Future Development**

Ideas for future expansion of the portal audience include hospitals, physician offices, Child Care Resource and Referral, AEAs across the state, and neighboring states’ early intervention programs. The portal currently contains categories for two areas of development that are evaluated during the IFSP process: motor development and speech and language development. In addition to the suggestions made by users of the portal, categories that will be added include other areas of development evaluated during the IFSP process: social-emotional, adaptive, and cognitive development. This addition will allow families of children who experience a delay in a specific area of development to access accurate information about that area. A category covering medical conditions, syndromes, vision, and hearing impairments will also be added.

In conclusion, this family resource portal meets the goal of creating a reliable, easy to access site for families to locate information about their child’s development and the IFSP process. This portal is an on-going, evolving site that will grow with families’ needs. The author believes that users of this portal will find that they are empowered to delve into their child’s development at times that work for them, and will gain confidence in their ability to seek information.
Annotated Bibliography

US government website. Includes a "developmental screening passport" that can be printed and shared with the child's physician showing skills they have acquired. Activities and milestones as well as what parents should do if they are concerned about their child's development are included.

Activities and strategies for parents to use with their children to promote speech and language development. From eye contact, to appropriate book selection, a variety of strategies are included.

This is the recommended immunization schedule for children from birth through age 18. This is handy for families to plan for their doctor's visits.

Several different parenting topics are covered here including, ADD-ADHD, a parenting blog, expert parenting articles, and resources for families. All levels of child development and learning are covered.
CHSC is a partner in Iowa's Early ACCESS system. This website has resources for families to access information about their child's health needs. Nutrition services as well as several medical based services are available. Website has contact information for their regional centers.

Comprehensive speech and language site addressing speech and language disorders, early detection, and medical and developmental concerns that may affect communication. Include information about ADHD and autism. Augmentative communication options are discussed.

Focus on parental involvement in early intervention. Main finding of this research is that parents are more involved in the intervention when the services are provided within the natural home environment.


Research related to professional practices which build family capacity and confidence. Relationship building between families and their providers is essential to empowerment.


This website has a link for parents to make a referral to Iowa's early intervention system, Early ACCESS. Provides links to children and family services in the state of Iowa. One stop shop for Iowa early intervention.


This resource provides information specific to families of children who have disabilities. Useful information about the importance of family involvement in these situations is provided. Planning for family and child outcomes is also addressed.


Fine motor skills milestones and activities divided by age group are provided. A foundation for developing fine motor skills is included. Defines fine motor skills and helps parents determine if their child's fine motor skills are appropriate for their age.
Helps families understand their rights under IDEA. Also, includes general information about Part C special education services.


Research supporting the use of coaching to build competence and confidence in families. The use of technology is shown to serve families more consistently than face-to-face sessions. The use of videotaping in early intervention is also supported by this article.


Research and support for the coaching model of early childhood intervention. Useful for providing history of the coaching model.


Ideas and activities for parents to use with their children to promote fine motor development. Activities as simple as pouring to as complex as writing are discussed in detail. An area of the site has several parent comments expanding on the suggestions.

This is an article that explains the importance of embedding interventions within a child's routines. Explains how services are integrated into a family's daily life. Details what early intervention looks like in the home.


A book focused on using routines embedding in a family's daily schedule to provide early intervention. This book forms to framework for the Family Guided Routines-Based Intervention practiced by Iowa's home interventionists.


This webpage details the qualities families should look for when choosing child care for their young children. Operates as a checklist of what should be seen in child care settings and what should not.


This is a US government website providing information about newborn care and safety. Information from SIDS to babysitters and child care is available through this site.

This is a resource portal dealing with a wide-range of early childhood topics. This portal was created specifically for Linn and Benton county in Oregon, but some of the links pertain to all children and families. Links to local parenting support groups are provided. Although there are a few links to academic resources, this portal contains more health and social development links. This portal is organized alphabetically by resource name, making it difficult to locate resource about a specific topic.


This website provides a thorough overview of the early intervention process throughout the United States. It is not geared toward on state's process. Links are provided for families to access information about the laws pertaining to early intervention, developmental milestones for children, and the referral and evaluation process. This site uses family-friendly language and is helpful as an introduction to early intervention.


This is resource portal with sections for parenting tips, preparing for school, child safety, nutrition, health and fitness, STEM, and links for children. More links are provided for preparing for school than any other topic. Assembled by the Utah Education Network, region specific resources are listed. There are also sections for all levels of schooling as well as TV programs. Although well organized by topic, this portal is weighted too
heavily toward the school-age population rather than the early childhood population which I serve.


This portal provides families with general early childhood resources. Early literacy, nutrition, health and development, infant-toddler, special needs children, and parent support resources are all provided. Resources specific to the state of Massachusetts are given. This resource is organized by topic, making it easily searchable. This resource provides a helpful list of early childhood acronyms beneficial to families and providers alike.


General checklist for child development as well as articles addressing specific needs and interests. Articles change frequently. Behavioral development as well as giftedness are topics covered.


This is the publication of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004. A full description of the public law reauthorizing IDEA. Useful in defining the purpose of Part C, Infant and Toddler Program.
This resource portal provides links for parents and families as well as early childhood educators. Several links promoting reading and early literacy are given. Although a wide variety of topics are covered, child care and health and safety are emphasized. PDF documents are provided in English as well as Spanish. This portal is organized alphabetically by resource name rather than group according to topic, making it difficult to search for specific information.


Research and professional practices demonstrating the value of the coaching model in early childhood intervention. Used as a manual by the state of Iowa's home interventionists.

This webpage addresses a variety of speech and language disorders as well as feeding disorders that may affect communication skills. Delayed speech and language, hearing evaluation, stuttering, and cleft lip and palate conditions are discussed.
Speech, language, and communication therapy information, activities and products.

Provides a list of apps for parents to use with their children to promote speech and language development.


This webpage divides motor development into three stages; infancy, early childhood, and later childhood. Tables show the average age that motor skills are acquired by children. Activities and milestones in both gross and fine motor are detailed for children from birth to 12 years. Newborn motor reflexes are also covered.


Defines gross motor skills for children. Covers 11 gross motor skills developed by toddlers. Provides activity suggestions for each of the gross motor skills. Very thorough list of activities for parents with well-detailed information.


With the population of children and families with disabilities increasing, it is important not to generalize about a family's needs and priorities. Discusses the history of family involvement in early intervention services.

This is a very comprehensive webpage. Early development and well-being, early learning, parenting, and advocacy for early childhood are easily accessible. This site is very user-friendly and easy to search.
Appendix A

Family Resource Portal

https://guest.portaportal.com/hlc4xblessed

Find links to a variety of information about children and early intervention including...

- General Early Intervention and IFSP Info
- Child Health & Safety
- Child Development
- Early Communication
- Early Motor Skills

Links reviewed for relevance and accuracy and updated regularly

✔️ IT OUT!!!!

Appendix B
This is a screenshot of the survey that will be given to families participating in Early ACCESS home intervention. The survey will be provided electronically and was created using Google Forms.