

FAMILY-DIRECTED ASSESSMENT

Introduction

A major focus of the Kansas Infant-Toddler Services/tiny-k is that services are family-centered; that is, they emphasize parent choice, a strengths-based perspective, and recognize the family as a unit. In order to maintain a family-centered focus, a key portion of the required early intervention assessment process must be directed toward the family. As a result of this “family-directed assessment,” early intervention professionals are better able to assist the family in designing a program that will build upon and reinforce the family’s strengths and resources to meet their child’s needs.

I. Family-Directed Assessment [34 C.F.R. 303.322(d)]

Assessment of the family must be:

- family-directed and designed to determine the resources, priorities, and concerns of the family and identify the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of the child;
- voluntary on the part of the family;
- conducted by personnel trained to utilize appropriate methods and procedures;
- based on information provided by the family through a personal interview; and
- incorporate the family's description of its resources, priorities, and concerns related to enhancing the child's development.

II. Time Frame for Family-Directed Assessment

The initial family assessment is conducted within the 45-calendar-day timeline as part of the evaluation prior to the development of the initial Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP). Similar to the child assessment, family-directed assessment is an ongoing process (noting that families choose the type and amount of information they voluntarily share). The family-directed assessment process should continue throughout the duration of service delivery to the child and family and be formally conducted at least annually in preparation for the annual review of the IFSP.

III. Conducting the Family-Directed Assessment

- A. The family-directed assessment should be conducted in a nonintrusive manner that is respectful of the family. This includes respecting cultural and linguistic diversity. If English is not the family’s first language, an interpreter should be used to assist in gathering family information (at no cost to families). Parents may also invite the participation of others (e.g., grandparents, siblings, other extended family members, and others who are important in the care of the child). Personnel must be knowledgeable about appropriate methods and procedures of conducting family assessment. Creative arrangements may be necessary to ensure an appropriate place and time for the family-directed assessment to take place.

- B. The parent and/or family members must be informed that they have discretion regarding what information they choose to share and include in the IFSP. Participation in the family-directed assessment will enhance the ability of early intervention professionals to fully address the family's concerns. The extent or lack of information shared by the family in no way impacts the child's eligibility.
- C. Sensitivity to parent preferences is fundamental in determining the appropriate means of obtaining family information. The process of gathering family information is not necessarily formalized. Information can be gathered from informal interviews or discussions with the family. The interviewer may or may not use a formal questionnaire. Some parents prefer the use of a form whereas others find its use objectionable.

IV. Areas to Address

- A. The family's concerns about the child may include circumstances or areas that cause worry, distress, or difficulty related to the child or the family's ability to care for and support their child's development. Problems that prevent the family from fully participating in daily home and community routines and activities can also be concerns.
- B. Family priorities for the concerns or needs they want addressed first must be taken into consideration. This includes how families want early intervention services to be integrated into their family life.
- C. Family strengths and resources may include other family members and friends, community resources, and health care providers.

Federal Regulations 1997

34 C.F.R. 303.322 Evaluation and assessment.

(d) Family assessment. (1) Family assessments under this part must be family-directed and designed to determine the resources, priorities, and concerns of the family and the identification of the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of the child.

(2) Any assessment that is conducted must be voluntary on the part of the family.

(3) If an assessment of the family is carried out, the assessment must —

(i) Be conducted by personnel trained to utilize appropriate methods and procedures;

(ii) Be based on information provided by the family through a personal interview; and

(iii) Incorporate the family's description of its resources, priorities, and concerns related to enhancing the child's development.