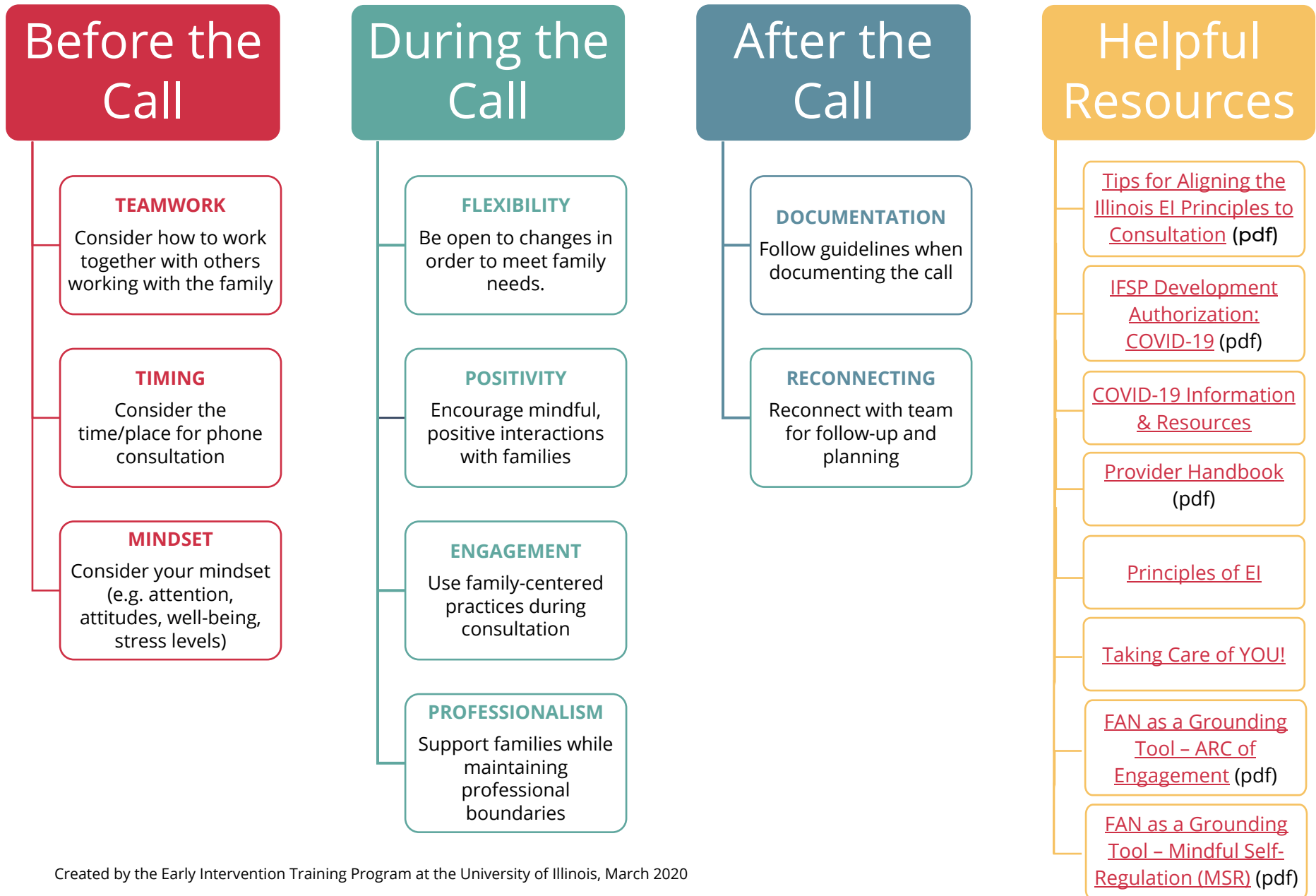


Partnering with Families through Consultation Time (telephone only)

The purpose of consultation time with families is to continue to provide support to families in implementing and modifying strategies within daily routines and activities. This guide offers practical tips & strategies for conducting phone-based consultation and submitting claims under IFSP development time during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Click on a topic below to learn more!**



Before the Call

TEAMWORK

Consider how to work together with others working with the family

- **Determine how much IFSP development time you have already used** and contact the service coordinator *only* if you need a new authorization.
 - Remember IFSP time accumulates through the IFSP period.
- **Connect with fellow team members** to determine how, when and who should contact the family. Perhaps one team member makes the call each week and updates the rest of the team.
- **Ensure the messages are consistent and unified.** Remember the service coordinator may also be able to help the family access additional resources/support as needed.

TIMING

Consider the time/place for phone consultation

- **Flexibility is key** in order to be fully present. You may have to be creative in timing your calls, as they might be outside of your typical workday (e.g. on an evening, during the weekend after your needs and your family's needs have been met).
- **Schedule the call for a time that works best for family.**
- **Be understanding** if the family chooses not to connect during this time. They may have other higher priorities right now. This is understandable and acceptable.

MINDSET

Consider your mindset (e.g. attention, attitudes, well-being, stress levels)

- **Be present.** Remain mindful, open, ready and willing to listen.
- **Consider your own well-being.** Are you in a place to hold space for the family? Have you put on your own "oxygen mask" before helping others?
- **Take a deep breath.** It's your body's built-in stress reliever.
- **Be positive and smile.** Even if they can't see you, it will impact how you speak/present yourself and may even change your mood.

During the Call

FLEXIBILITY

Be open to changes in order to meet family needs.

POSITIVITY

Encourage mindful, positive interactions with families

ENGAGEMENT

Use family-centered practices during consultation

PROFESSIONALISM

Support families while maintaining professional boundaries

- **Be open to changing your planned conversation** to discuss what they need most at this time.
- **Embrace unplanned questions.** You may have prepared some questions to ask, but as you listen to the family's responses, consider asking new or additional questions to get better information from the conversation. Follow-up questions show you're listening!
- **Reschedule if necessary.** Families are likely managing new routines and priorities during these uncertain times, and flexibility in your schedule demonstrates empathy for their changing needs.

- **Be mindful in your language.** Knowing words can create happiness or suffering reminds us to choose words and express a tone that reflect support and respect.
- **Listen without judgement.** The key to listening without judgment is to listen empathetically.
- **Be curious and ask questions to learn more.** You might say *"I understand you're coping with a lot of changes. How would you like me to help?"* or *"What time of the day is particularly difficult for your child?"*

- Use **family-centered practices** throughout your call.
 - **During check-in, celebrate the positives:** *"Tell me what is working well. Is there anything you want to celebrate?"* or *"Anything new from last time that you are feeling good about/proud of?"*
 - **During consult, be responsive and engaged:** Revisit outcomes and strategies, jointly problem solve, or suggest revisions to strategies. Make connections with other resources, as needed.
 - **During wrap-up, be thoughtful of needs:** Recap strategies to use until you talk again and plan for future calls (e.g. how often to call, best date and times).

- **We are here for the families.** Please avoid discussing frustrations you may be experiencing during this difficult time in your personal or professional life.
- **Refer families to other resources and supports if they ask questions outside your scope of practice** (e.g. their pediatrician, mental health providers, Center for Disease Control (CDC) website, etc.).
- **Be kind to yourself!** This is an unprecedented time and stress can challenge providers and families alike. Be aware and accepting of the health and safety needs of all involved that may take priority over early intervention at this time.

After the Call

DOCUMENTATION

Follow guidelines when documenting the call

- Use [Documentation Tips \(pdf\)](#) from EITP.
 - Record the date, start/end time, names of all participants in the call.
 - Include specifics of what you talked about, strategies put in place, and plan for next call.
 - Only bill for the number of minutes of the call (don't round up, per Provider Handbook).
 - Sign and date the note.
- Refer to the [Provider Handbook](#) for details on how to bill for IFSP development time
 - Download [IFSP Development Authorization: COVID-19 \(pdf\)](#) from EITP.

RECONNECTING

Reconnect with team for follow-up and planning

- **Reconnect with your team.** Teaming remains a critical aspect of early intervention! Follow-up with team members, and devise plans for future calls based on family priorities.
- Refer to the [Teaming and Collaboration resource page](#) for more recommended practices.