Service Coordination & Family Assessment: Setting the Stage for Functional IFSP Development

Resource Packet

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Updated 5/2019

Using Eco-Mapping to Understand Family Strengths and Resources

As professionals and families work together to identify and celebrate the strengths and resources unique to each family, new and innovative ways to describe and discuss family characteristics are needed. The eco-map, borrowed from social science disciplines, is one method used to describe family strengths and resources. The eco-map was developed in 1975 by sociologist Hartman (1978) to help social workers in public child welfare practice better understand the needs of the families with whom they worked. An eco-map is a graphic representation or visualization of the family and linkages to the larger social system, including informal (e.g., friends, extended family members) and formal (e.g., early care and education providers, early intervention providers) supports. It illustrates how the family exists within the context of its

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relationships with other individuals and institutions with which the family has contact. Utilizing an ecological model (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the eco-map provides a visual display of any group of interconnections and relationships, providing a graphic image of the family system within the larger social matrix.

Eco-maps have been used in multiple ways by early intervention providers and rehabilitation specialists and within the clinical practice of social workers, psychologists, and other mental health professionals (Bailey & Simeonsson, 1988; Mattaini, 1995). Originally developed as a schematic "thinking tool" (Hartman, 1978, p. 117) for the social worker to use as a visual representation of the family system at the beginning of intervention, clinicians quickly came to value its use as a mechanism to (a) foster collaboration between families and professionals and (b) jointly organize and depict information. More recently, eco-mapping has been used in clinical practice to evaluate outcomes and to measure change and monitor progress by completing an eco-map at multiple points in time (Chatters & Taylor, 1994; Horton & Bucy, 2000).

In short, practitioners use eco-maps as a mechanism to establish rapport with families (Cox, 2003), learn more about the perceptions of the family at their initial meeting (Hartman, 1978), organize information and facts (Hanson & Boyd, 1996), set goals in intervention (Horton & Bucy, 2000), and monitor progress (Mattaini, 1995). For each purpose, the primary value of the eco-map is in its visual impact and simplicity.

That is, the eco-map provides a unique method to organize and present concurrently factual information and the relationships between variables in the family's current ecology.

Given the positive history of eco-maps within the area of social work, its usefulness as a technique to increase early interventionists' awareness of the family within its community, assist in the assessment and planning phase of intervention, and evaluate the effectiveness of services (Swanson & Niles, 1997) holds great promise for the field of early intervention, specifically, the family needs assessment component of Part C of the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2004). The eco-map provides an opportunity to visually represent the family's perspectives about the absence or presence, and nature and strength, of linkages to friends, coworkers, religious or spiritual institutions, schools, social service agencies, community groups, recreational activities, health care networks, legal systems, and volunteer or advocacy organizations (Cox, 2003). The eco-map provides an opportunity to initiate early intervention services and Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) processes in a family-centered manner, respectful of the diversity and individual resources and needs of families. The purpose of this article is to (a) provide a brief overview of the eco-map process, (b) describe the key steps in completing eco-maps with families, and (c) share implications for early intervention practice. The eco-mapping process will be illustrated through the use of a family vignette.

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The Eco-Map Process

The eco-map is a simple paper-and-pencil simulation that was developed as an assessment, planning, and intervention tool (Hartman, 1995). It maps in a dynamic way the ecological systems in which the family lives and interacts. The eco-map facilitates an informal, conversational approach to family information gathering, including identification of immediate and extended family members, friends, and neighbors; recreational, employment, and community supports; and formal resources accessed by the family. Simple strategies are used to diagram identified resources and supports and relationships between the family and these other systems.

In most instances, interventionists sit with the family and introduce the activity as a way of identifying the family's current members, friends, and supports. Together with the family, they begin the process by putting a circle in the middle of the page with the child's name in it. The eco-map can be designed simply with circles, or multiple symbols can be used to denote differences (e.g., circles for females, squares for males). In addition, metaphoric symbols or faces can be used to represent people or agencies (Van Treuren, 1986). It also helps to document who is completing the eco-map by putting a symbol such as a star in the respondent's circle. The steps in the process include identifying informal supports, identifying strengths of relationships, and identifying formal supports.

Identifying Informal Supports

The interventionist should first describe how supports are defined and then ask the family members to think about the informal supports currently available to them. An example script of this initial step follows:

I would like for us to work together to identify all the different types of people who currently provide support or help to your child and you. This could include family members, friends, and members of your church or neighborhood as well as people from your community. Support comes in many forms. For example, friendship, child care, spiritual support, and a listening ear are all types of support. Let's start with your immediate family and more informal supports. First, I am going to put a circle in the middle of the page with your child's name in it. Now, I will draw a circle with your name in it. Then, I will draw a circle for each of the informal supports you identify.

Early intervention service providers also might be interested in the type of supports each person provides as well as the frequency of the support. Therefore, each of the circles may be labeled and additional information may be solicited about how each person relates to the child and family, the type of support each person provides, and how often the child and family receive the support. For example, below the circle, an *R* could indicate the relationship

Figure 1
First stage of an eco-map

of this person with the child and family (e.g., "R = neighbor"). An *S* might indicate the type of support provided (e.g., "S = babysitting"). Information about the frequency of the support provided by this person (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, as needed, once a year) also can be documented. An example script of this step follows:

> For each of the circles we have drawn, we need to add some information about how each person relates to your child, the type of support he or she provides, and how often your child and you receive the support. Let's start with grandparents. First, we will note their relationship as

maternal or paternal grandparents, then list the type of supports they provide to you and your child.

Figure 1 shows the first stage in the development of an eco-map of the Theriot family. Judi, the mom, is sharing information about her family, including her husband, Jodi; son, Paul; and daughter, Allie. Allie, in the center of the map, is an incredibly engaging, 35-month-old little girl, who was diagnosed with cerebral palsy at 7 months of age. Providing informal supports in her care and development are extended family members, friends, and neighbors. Each of these individuals or groups is represented by a circle on the map.

Figure 2
Relationship lines
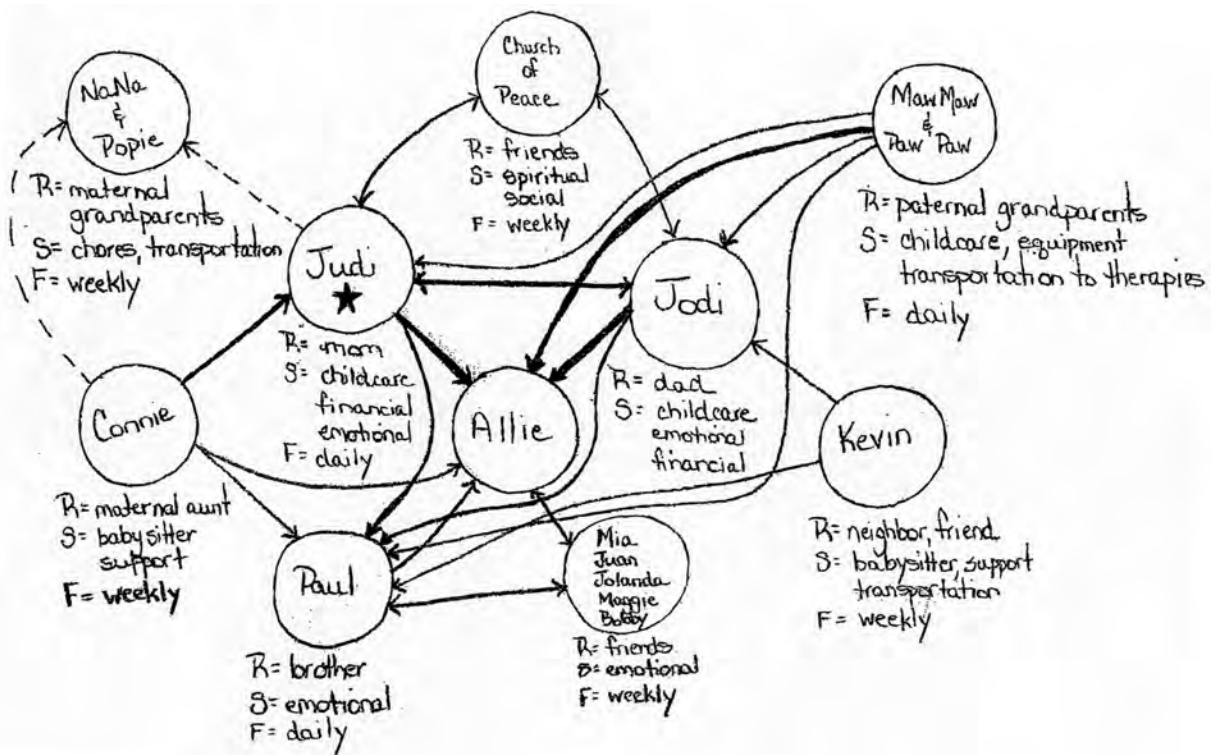
Identifying Strengths of Relationships

At the heart of the eco-map are the relationships between the family and other systems, which are represented by various types of sketched lines. Hodge (2005) suggests the following conventions:

Thicker lines represent stronger or more powerful relationships. A dashed line represents the most tenuous relationship, while a jagged line denotes a conflicted one. An arrow is drawn on the line to indicate the flow of supports, energy, resources, or interests. (p. 320)

Supports can go one way, such as babysitting services offered by a neighbor or assistance provided by a friend. Often, supports go both ways, such as between a parent and grandparent. Arrows are drawn between the circles to show whether the relationships benefit or help one or both people (e.g., one-way or two-way arrow). Hodge also suggests that short descriptions, important dates, or other symbols be written to clarify the relationships. In addition to seeing a quick, available-at-a-glance picture of a family and its interactions, families are able to use the eco-map to confirm their feelings of isolation or stress (e.g., "So this is why I'm so overwhelmed; I don't have many supports or people to help me.").

Figure 2 shows the Theriot family's eco-map with relationship

lines drawn. The map shows that Judi and Jodi provide primary care for Allie, but it also shows that Allie spends many of her days with her Maw Maw and Paw Paw Theriot. They are retired and have taken an active role with Allie, bringing her to most of her special activities. Paw Paw is good with his hands and has built or adapted trays, standing frames, wagons, and many other toys and furnishings. Allie's maternal grandparents are older. Judi worries about them and regularly helps them with household chores, doctor visits, and medical needs. Judi's sister, Connie, also helps her parents and, over the years, has been a huge support for Judi. Connie often babysits for Allie and Paul and always is available for Judi to "talk things over." These relationships are represented by the lines between Connie and Judi, Allie, and Paul.

Although Judi worries about Paul, the family has a good friend and neighbor, Kevin, who takes Paul to many of his baseball practices and games. Judi and Jodi still worry that they are not giving Paul enough time or attention. The family relies on their faith and church for guidance and support. They attend services and have other families from their church at their home for barbeques and picnics. Most of these families have young children close in age to Allie and Paul. There also are lots of young children in the Theriots' neighborhood.
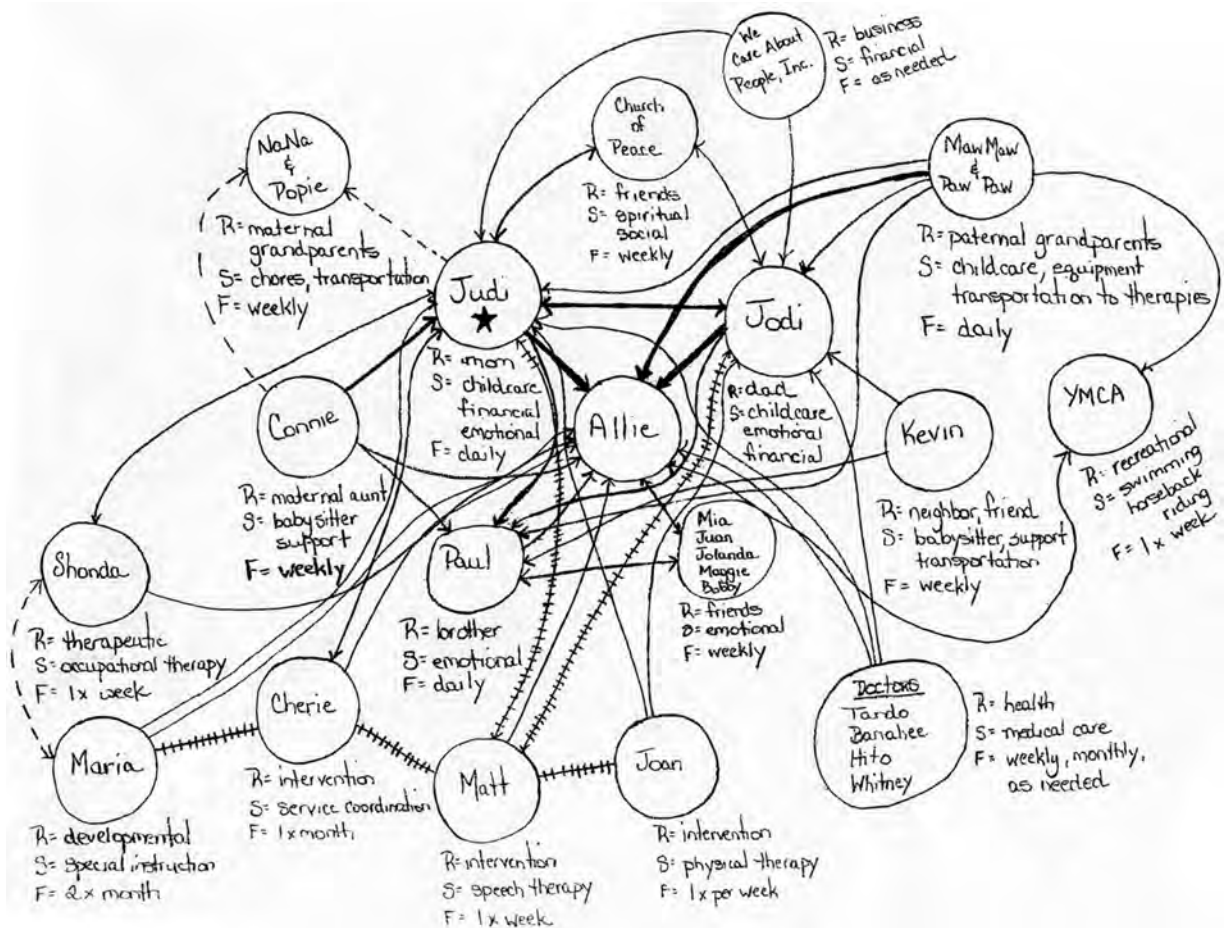
Identifying Formal Supports

Finally, family members are asked to identify all of the formal supports they currently receive, and separate circles for these supports are drawn. Examples of these supports might include physicians, therapists, and other professionals from community agencies. Formal support comes in many forms. For example, information, child care, housing, financial assistance, early intervention services, medical care, and counseling are all types of support. The steps needed to label and denote family relationships with these formal supports are then repeated. That is, the interventionist asks, "What is the relationship or association of this person with your child? With you? What type of support does this person provide? And what is the frequency of this support?"

Figure 3 illustrates a completed eco-map for the Theriot family. This map shows Allie's favorite activities, horseback riding and swimming. It also shows her numerous doctors and therapies, including clinic-based speech and physical therapy, home-based special instruction, and occupational therapy. A family service coordinator also meets with the family monthly and has helped them access early intervention services and supported them in obtaining a wheelchair for Allie.

Currently, Allie's providers are discussing her need for an augmentative communication device. Judi and Jodi are confused about these devices, and they are having a difficult time trying to discuss this with the speech-language pathologist because of her busy schedule. They are frustrated that Allie's therapists do not have time to communicate with each other. Jodi also is frustrated with

Figure 3
Completed eco-map

their health insurance agency's slow determination and payment process.

Summary of the Eco-Map Process

During the process, family members are encouraged to take the lead in the identification of informal and formal supports and strengths of relationships. When a stopping point nears, the service provider, if needed, might ask about specific supports not addressed by the family (e.g.,

community, intervention services, medical or health), requesting that the family identify and describe these supports. These additional supports may then be added to the eco-map. Some families might need additional structure as they complete this activity. For example, a parent might have difficulty thinking independently of the various types of supports the child and family receives and would benefit from a listing of sources and examples of support. If this is the case, Table 1 lists categories and

Table 1
Categories and Examples of Potential Family Supports

Category	Example of Person(s)	Example of Type(s) of Support
Family	Grandparent	Financial assistance, emotional support
Friends	Friend of yours	Friendship
Neighborhood	Next door neighbor	Child care
Church	Church member	Transportation
Community	Case worker	Housing, financial assistance
Child care	Teacher	Child care, parent education
Intervention services	Physical therapist	Early intervention services
Mental health	Counselor	Emotional support, parent education
Medical/health	Physician	Medical care

examples of supports to share with the family.

Once all informal and formal supports and their relationships are documented, the family and provider jointly review the eco-map and reflect on the usefulness of these supports in meeting the child's and family's identified concerns and priorities. The early interventionist then closes with, "Thank you for working with me to identify your family's supports. Let's review your map regularly as we consider the effectiveness of these supports in meeting your family's needs. Here is a copy for you to keep."

Implications of the Eco-Map Process for Early Intervention Practice

Some advantages of using an eco-map in early intervention service planning and provision include (a) establishing rapport with families to build a foundation for the provision of family-centered services, (b) appropriateness for families of culturally diverse backgrounds and families with limited literacy, (c) organizing information and facts and linking to the IFSP, (d) facilitating services in natural environments, and (e) maximizing utilization of informal resources.

Family-Centered Early Intervention Services

When used in initial meetings and information gathering with families, the eco-map facilitates a family-centered approach to assist families in identifying resources currently available to meet their needs. It is a tool to elicit from family members their own perceptions of their family's functioning and organization around their children and their concerns, priorities, and resources. A well-constructed and in-depth eco-map can provide the family and early intervention provider valuable information that formal family assessment instruments might miss. For example, as noted in Figure 2, the Theriot family's eco-map not only shows a large informal support system but points out those supports (i.e., maternal grandparents) that also are stressors for the family. Hartman and Laird (1983) suggest that the joint completion by provider and family in a side-by-side process is an important feature of the eco-map. This shared activity and perspective is congruent with other recommendations for family–professional partnerships (Woods & McCormick, 2002).

> **"** The family's cultural heritage and values become more transparent as the family and professional work together. **"**

Use With Families of Diverse Backgrounds

Because the eco-map process asks the family to identify family members and community resources, it is useful across families of culturally diverse backgrounds. The eco-map has been used widely with families of diverse backgrounds and to map diverse components of family systems (Hodge & Williams, 2002). The family's cultural heritage and values become more transparent as the family and professional work together to identify the family's various linkages, which are unique to its culture and how the family interacts with the world. For example, Chatters and Taylor (1994) report that approximately 70% of African Americans attend church or a place of worship. It would not, therefore, be surprising to see church and church-related supports included in an eco-map for an African American family.

In addition, the eco-map provides a way to reconceptualize the complex needs of families of children with significant disabilities (Imber-Black, 1988; Imber-Coppersmith, 1983, 1985). Morawetz and Walker (1984) suggest that this also is true for high-poverty, high-risk families: "Frequently a family will be involved with many helping systems and the relationships of these systems with each other in respect to the family will resemble the relationships of a group of angry and rivalrous relatives" (p. 333). These interactions and relationships can be seen readily in an eco-map.

Working together, families and interventionists will not overlook powerful significant-other relationships that uniquely can assist and support the family (Cox, Keltner, & Hogan, 2003). The completion of the eco-map can confirm or challenge the perception about a family and its interactions in the multiple communities in which the family lives (e.g., school, work, neighborhood, family). Another form of diversity that is sometimes overlooked is the educational level of families. Eco-map construction is conducted through verbal interaction between the family and interventionist. This interaction eliminates the necessity for advanced reading levels, and thus is useful for families with low literacy levels or those for whom English is not their first language.

Linkage to the IFSP

Family information gathering is essential to the development of individualized early intervention services for children and families. The specific resources and needs of each family must be considered in the development and implementation of the IFSP. The eco-map facilitates (a) identification of sources of family support that can be utilized during service provision, (b) identification of information that will empower families and assist them in obtaining needed services for their child and family, and (c) decision making regarding currently used and needed resources—time and resources required of the family for services and supports (e.g., the Theriot family has to take off work early to pick up Allie and drive her to therapy). It provides a simple visual that depicts gaps in resources or

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relationships as well as identifies conflicting or stressful relationships. In short, the eco-map provides a comprehensive picture and summary of information that easily fits and supports the IFSP process.

Support Services in Natural Environments

The activities and routines in which young children participate are influenced by the resources, time, interests, and settings of the family (Dunst, Hamby, Trivette, Raab, & Bruder, 2000). The eco-map is designed to facilitate the identification of these prominent family resources and interactions first, setting the stage for the provision of supports and services within environments in which the child is already participating. For example, Allie Theriot (Figure 2) spends much of her time at Maw Maw and Paw Paw's house. Mapping of this important resource for the Theriot family sets the stage for interventions incorporating Allie's typical activities at Maw Maw and Paw Paw's house. The eco-map then moves to other, more formal resources and visually diagrams the connections, or lack of connections, across these agencies or organizations. The sketched lines and arrows, as shown in the Theriots' eco-map, depict how different individuals, interventionists, and agencies interact with one another. This helps to highlight the type of communication across family members, interventionists, and providers—a critical component of the provision of services in natural environments.

Review of Informal and Formal Resources

When the eco-map is used with families already receiving early intervention services, it can serve as a mechanism to facilitate a review of the family's use of informal and formal resources. The eco-map can be a concrete tool for assessing, developing, and coordinating natural or informal resources and more formal networks (Flashman, 1991). Often professionals overlook informal resources, immediately arranging for formal programs or organizations to assist in meeting families' needs. The visual display provided by the eco-map allows professionals and families to quickly identify the "got a need—get a service" phenomenon, which can drain family time, energy, and resources.

Sequential Eco-Maps

Additionally, eco-maps can be used at the onset of intervention, at transition, or at other points in time. Hartman (1978) recommended that eco-maps be used to monitor the progress of intervention by completing eco-maps at multiple points in time. A comparison of these eco-maps might help families and interventionists measure the changes that have occurred over time. Mattaini (1995) suggested that sequential eco-maps can be useful particularly in family situations where the interconnected networks of stressors, supports, resources, and issues are complicated and a single measure simply cannot capture all of the data of importance.

Summary and Conclusions

As illustrated by the vignette and the accompanying figures, eco-maps offer a feasible method for gathering extensive information about families and their resources and supports. It is a fun, easy-to-use paper-and-pencil simulation that organizes and objectifies a tremendous amount of data about the family system in space and through time. The family plays a vital role in bringing pertinent information to the table and laying the foundation for a meaningful IFSP. Van Treuren (1986) suggests that the eco-map has four advantages. It (a) is simple to use and understand, (b) is adaptable to any size family and can be used with children as well as adults, (c) is functional and useful, and (d) allows for the creativity of the family and practitioner. The eco-map represents the family within the context of

significant relationships with other individuals and institutions (Horton & Bucy, 2000). It represents the connections between family and others—basically, family life. The authors of the eco-map consider the tool to be "practical and parsimonious . . . the usefulness of this simple diagram becomes dramatically clear if one considers the volume of words it would take to describe the family with words alone" (Hartman & Laird, 1985, p. 161). In summary, the use of the term *ecology* is purposeful. It describes the balance that exists between living things and the environment in which they function, the mutuality of these interactions, the flow of resources, the nature of interactions, and the points of conflict. It demonstrates both lack and abundance (Hartman, 1978).

Note

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Supporting Family Member Informed Decision Making

Involving family members in informed decision-making increases the likelihood that child and parent intervention practices are responsive to family concerns and priorities. This can best be accomplished by working with parents and other family members in ways that are sensitive and responsive to each family's unique circumstances in order to develop and implement interventions to achieve desired outcomes and goals.

Watch a video of this Learning Guide

Learning Guide: Identifying Family Concerns and Priorities

- Informed decision-making includes three inter-related activities. These are identifying: (1) parent concerns and priorities, (2) the support and resources for addressing concerns and priorities, and (3) the sources of those supports and resources.

- Parents can only make informed decisions if they are provided complete and unbiased information. Early childhood practitioners are important sources of that information. Provide information specifically in response to parents' concerns and priorities.

- Work with parents to identify what they want to accomplish for their child and family. Engage the parents in prioritizing their concerns and goals, placing them in order from those that can be met immediately to those that will take some time and effort to achieve.

- Work with the parents to identify the types of supports and resources that are needed to address their concerns and priorities. This can include such things as child-rearing advice, childcare information, emotional support, parenting information, child-level interventions, and any other types of supports and resources to achieve desired outcomes and goals.

- Engage the parents in discussing who is/are the sources of needed supports and resources. It is helpful to introduce the idea that help and assistance can come from informal sources of support such as family members and friends as well as from formal sources of support such as early childhood teachers and therapists.

- Parents are more likely to seek supports and resources from persons and organizations with whom they have had positive experiences. After identifying those sources of support and resources, engage parents in deciding who they feel most comfortable using to address family concerns and priorities.

- In those instances where supports and resources are not available from known persons or organizations, work together with the parents to seek out and obtain family-identified supports and resources.

- Parents look toward and expect practitioners to make suggestions and provide advice and guidance. That is one of the most important reasons they become involved with early childhood practitioners.

A Quick Peek   Susan and Bill Adams are the parents of a 1-year-old daughter, Zoe, who has a disability and medical condition that requires specialized health care. The parents decided that as a result of their child's health care costs, Susan needs to return to work. She brings this up during the next home visit by the family's early childhood provider. The mother and home visitor discuss the kinds of childcare the child will need and which backgrounds and skills childcare staff will need to take care of her daughter's health care needs. The home visitor and mother together identify about half a dozen childcare centers that meet all of the mother's requirements. The two go through each one and identify both strengths and weaknesses. After narrowing the list down to the two best picks, the home visitor shares the fact that one of the two centers is operated by a nurse who has considerable experience with children with Zoe's medical condition. The mother decides to visit that center first and eventually enrolls her daughter in that program after the director's explanation of the care Zoe would be provided.

You'll know the practice is working if ...

- A parent was actively involved in specifying his or her concerns and priorities

- The parent is confident with the persons or organizations who provided needed support and resources

- The parent judges the outcome of the supports and resources as addressing concerns and priorities

Learn more about helping families make informed decisions:

Making Decisions Together: How to Decide What's Best from CanChild, the Centre for Childhood Disability Research at McMaster University in Canada.

ECTA *Center*

Social-emotional development in young children

Why it's so important and how you can promote it in your program and in the home

Social-emotional development. As early childhood professionals, we hear the term often. We know it's important. But our resources and efforts often skew toward identifying delays and tracking milestones in traditional developmental areas, such as communication, gross and fine motor skills, and problem solving.

While standard developmental screening is essential to ensuring every child has the opportunity for the best possible start, it's clear that early identification of social-emotional concerns is just as critical.

Social-emotional development is critical to a child's future success

What is social-emotional development?

Social-emotional development is a child's ability to experience, express, and manage emotions, develop positive relationships with caregivers and others, and explore their environment with curiosity and confidence.

Why is social-emotional development important?

Children's ability to regulate their emotions and skillfully manage social interactions is critical to their healthy development and future success. Beginning at birth, babies use vocalizations and body movements to begin building relationships. These relationships help young children feel a sense of comfort, safety and confidence—all necessary for forming friendships, communicating emotions and dealing with challenges.

Ensuring that every child has strong social-emotional skills through screening, early identification, and competence-building exercises helps prepare them for school, stop the bullying epidemic, and improve their well-being. And all of this helps set children up for future success! A recent study (http://bit.ly/AJPHpub), also found significant associations between stronger social-emotional skills in kindergarten and better life outcomes in the areas of education, employment, criminal activity, substance use, and mental health.

How can you promote social-emotional development?

Conduct social-emotional screening on every child.
There's plenty you can do to support healthy social and emotional development in children (more on that below), but your efforts will have the greatest impact if you first identify which children may be at risk so follow-up steps can be planned—including further assessment, monitoring, or mental health services.

If possible, screen all children with Ages & Stages Questionnaires®: Social-Emotional, Second Edition (ASQ:SE-2) (http://bit.ly/ProdASQSE-2). If a child's score is in the monitoring zone or above the cutoff, take the recommended next steps. This article about what to do when an ASQ:SE-2 score raises concern (http://bit.ly/ASQSE2Concern) outlines possible follow-up actions.

**Use resources to educate staff and families.**
Be sure your program staff and the families you work with also understand what social-emotional development is, why it's important, and where they can find resources to support their needs.

Not sure where to start? National organizations like ZERO TO THREE (http://bit.ly/ZTTweb) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (http://bit.ly/AAPHealthyChildren) offer lots of free resources, and ASQ has developed many of our own.

Here are some excellent ones:

- **Social-Emotional Development Guides** – Share these download-able handouts (http://bit.ly/SEDevGuide) with parents, caregivers and providers so they know what behaviors to expect at each age interval, from 2 to 60 months. You can also find this information in Spanish in the ASQ:SE-2 User's Guide (http://bit.ly/ASQSE2UG) on pages 241–258.
- **Activity Ideas by Age** – Give parents ideas on what they can do at home to support their child's social-emotional development. Colorful one-page handouts are available for each age interval, in both English (http://bit.ly/EngASQSE2Activities) and Spanish (http://bit.ly/SpanASQSE2Activities).
- **ASQ®:SE-2 Learning Activities & More** – This book and CD-ROM set features, among other resources, a set of nine parent news-letters that correspond to each age interval. Each one explains important social-emotional milestones and shares tips on strengthening this area of development while offering parents warm and encouraging words of wisdom.
- **10 Free Social-Emotional Resources** – Brookes Publishing's *The Inclusion Lab* blog links to a list of early childhood organizations (http://bit.ly/FreeSEResources) that offer social-emotional tips and tools online.

Available now!

Learn more and order
(http://bit.ly/ASQSE2LearningAct)
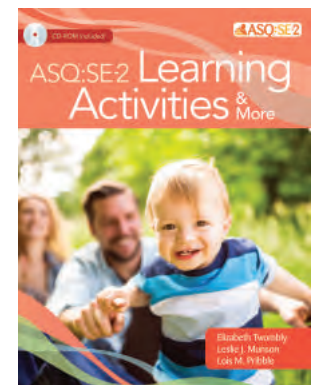
Find opportunities to share and incorporate resources with parents.
Involving parents in their child's social-emotional development is one of the biggest ways to positively influence behaviors. Think of some different ways you can connect parents with these wonderful resources, including:

- **In-person encounters** – Share guides, activities, and newsletters with parents at back-to-school nights or during parent conferences. Another good time to offer activity ideas is when you meet to discuss screening results.
- **Send regular email updates** – Try emailing parents once a month with age-appropriate activities they can do at home with their child. Suggest a few specific ones in your email, or send the PDF that corresponds with the child's age.
- **Post on your program's bulletin board** – You could include a list of resources or even offer printouts of the guides or activities for parents to take with them. October is Emotional Intelligence Awareness Month, a perfect reason to create a board that focuses on social-emotional development!

For more information on social-emotional development and screening, refer to your ASQ:SE-2 User's Guide (http://bit.ly/ASQSE2UG) or read about why social-emotional screening matters (http://bit.ly/WhySEScreen).

This article is reprinted from our FREE ASQ e-newsletter.
Sign up at http://bit.ly/ASQNews

ASQ Activities

AGE 1

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 1-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Let your baby "help" during daily routines. Encourage your baby to "get" the cup and spoon for mealtime, to "find" shoes and coat for dressing, and to "bring" the pants or diaper for changing. **Following directions** is an important skill for your baby to learn.

Babies love games at this age **(Pat-a-Cake, This Little Piggy)**. Try different ways of playing the games and see if your baby will try it with you. Hide behind furniture or doors for Peekaboo; clap blocks or pan lids for Pat-a-cake.

Tape a large piece of drawing paper to a table. Show your baby how to **scribble** with large nontoxic crayons. Take turns making marks on the paper. It's also fun to paint with water.

Make puppets out of a sock or paper bag—one for you and one for your baby. Have your puppet talk to your baby or your baby's puppet. Encourage your baby to "talk" back.

Babies enjoy **push and pull toys**. Make your own pull toy by threading yogurt cartons, spools, or small boxes on a piece of yarn or soft string (about 2 feet long). Tie a bead or plastic stacking ring on one end for a handle.

Cut up safe **finger foods** (do not use foods that pose a danger of your baby's choking) in small pieces and allow your baby to feed himself. It is good practice to pick up small things and feel different textures (bananas, soft crackers, berries).

This is the time your baby learns that adults can be useful! When your baby "asks" for something by vocalizing or pointing, respond to his signal. **Name the object** your baby wants and encourage him to communicate again—taking turns with each other in a **"conversation."**

Excerpted from *ASQ-3™ User's Guide* by Jane Squires, Ph.D., Elizabeth Twombly, M.S., Diane Bricker, Ph.D., & LaWanda Potter, M.S. ©2009 Brookes Publishing. All rights reserved.

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ASQ Activities

AGE 2

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 2-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Action is an important part of a child's life. Play a game with a ball where you **give directions** and your child does the actions, such as "Roll the ball." Kick, throw, push, bounce, and catch are other good actions. Take turns giving the directions.

Children can find endless uses for **boxes**. A box big enough for your child to fit in can become a car. An appliance box with holes cut for windows and a door can become your child's playhouse. Decorating the boxes with crayons, markers, or paints can be a fun activity to do together.

Take time to **draw** with your child when she wants to get out paper and crayons. Draw large shapes and let your child color them in. Take turns.

Play **"Follow the Leader."** Walk on tiptoes, walk backward, and walk slow or fast with big steps and little steps.

Enhance listening skills by playing both slow and fast music. Songs with speed changes are great. Show your child how to move fast or slow with the **music**.

Children at this age love to **pretend** and really enjoy it when you can pretend with them. Pretend you are different animals, like a dog or cat. Make animal sounds and actions. Let your child be the pet owner who pets and feeds you.

Add actions to your child's favorite **nursery rhymes**. Easy action rhymes include "Here We Go 'Round the Mulberry Bush," "Jack Be Nimble," "This Is the Way We Wash Our Clothes," "Ring Around the Rosy," and "London Bridge."

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ASQ Activities

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 3-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Make an **adventure path** outside. Use a garden hose, rope, or piece of chalk and make a "path" that goes under the bench, around the tree, and along the wall. Walk your child through the path first, using these words. After she can do it, make a new path or have your child make a path.

Before bedtime, look at a magazine or children's book together. Ask your child to **point to pictures** as you name them, such as "Where is the truck?" Be silly and ask him to point with an elbow or foot. Ask him to show you something that is round or something that goes fast.

While cooking or eating dinner, play the **"more or less"** game with your child. Ask who has more potatoes and who has less. Try this using same-size glasses or cups, filled with juice or milk.

Make a **necklace** you can eat by stringing Cheerios or Froot Loops on a piece of yarn or string. Wrap a short piece of tape around the end of the string to make a firm tip for stringing.

Practice **following directions.** Play a silly game where you ask your child to do two or three fun or unusual things in a row. For example, ask him to "Touch your elbow and then run in a circle" or "Find a book and put it on your head."

Find large pieces of paper or cardboard for your child to **draw** on. Using crayons, pencils, or markers, play a drawing game where you follow his lead by copying exactly what he draws. Next, encourage your child to copy your drawings, such as circles or straight lines.

Listen and dance to **music** with your child. You can stop the music for a moment and play the "freeze" game, where everyone "freezes," or stands perfectly still, until you start the music again. Try to "freeze" in unusual positions for fun.

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ASQ Activities

AGE 4

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 4-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Invite your child to play a **counting game**. Using a large piece of paper, make a simple game board with a straight path. Use dice to determine the count. Count with your child, and encourage her to hop the game piece to each square, counting each time the piece touches down.

Play the **"guess what will happen"** game to encourage your child's problem-solving and thinking skills. For example, during bath time, ask your child, "What do you think will happen if I turn on the hot and cold water at the same time?" or "What would happen if I stacked the blocks to the top of the ceiling?"

Play "bucket hoops." Have your child stand about 6 feet away and throw a medium-size ball at a large bucket or trash can. For fun outdoors on a summer day, fill the bucket with water.

Make a **bean bag** to catch and throw. Fill the toe of an old sock or pantyhose with 3/4 cup dry beans. Sew the remaining side or tie off with a rubber band. Play "hot potato" or simply play catch. Encourage your child to throw the ball overhand and underhand.

Go on a **walk** and pick up things you find. Bring the items home and help your child **sort them into groups**. For example, groups can include rocks, paper or leaves. Encourage your child to start a collection of special things. Find a box or special place where he can display the collection.

"Write" and mail a letter to a friend or relative. Provide your child with paper, crayons or pencil, and an envelope. Let your child draw, scribble, or write; or he can tell you what to write down. When your child is finished, let him fold the letter to fit in the envelope, lick, and seal. You can write the address on the front. Be sure to let him decorate the envelope as well. After he has put the stamp on, help mail the letter.

Play "circus." Find old, colorful clothes and help your child put on a circus show. Provide a rope on the ground for the high wire act, a sturdy box to stand on to announce the acts, fun objects for a magic act, and stuffed animals for the show. Encourage your child's imagination and creativity in planning the show. Don't forget to clap.

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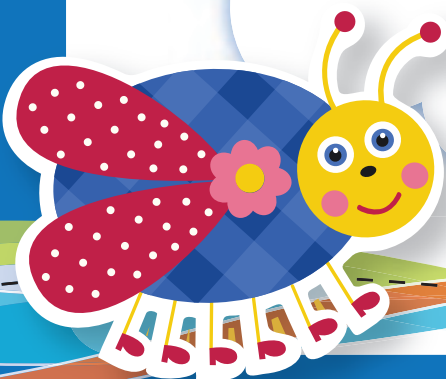
ASQ Activities

HELP YOUR CHILD LEARN AND GROW!

Try these fun and easy activities with your 5-year-old—a great way to have fun together and encourage your child's healthy development.

Encourage **dramatic play**. Help your child act out his favorite nursery rhyme, cartoon, or story. Use large, old clothes for costumes.

Make an **obstacle course** either inside or outside your home. You can use cardboard boxes for jumping over or climbing through, broomsticks for laying between chairs for "limbo" (going under), and pillows for walking around. Let your child help lay out the course. After a couple of practice tries, have him complete the obstacle course. Then try hopping or jumping through the course.

Play **"mystery sound."** Select household items that make distinct sounds such as a clock, cereal box, metal lid (placed on a pan), and potato chip bag. Put a blindfold on your child and have him try to guess which object made the sound. Take turns with your child.

Play the **"memory"** game. Put five or six familiar objects on a table. Have your child close her eyes. Remove one object, and rearrange the rest. Ask your child which object is missing. Take turns finding the missing object.

Practice **writing** first names of friends, toys, and relatives. Your child may need to trace the letters of these names at first. Be sure to write in large print letters.

Let your child help you with simple **cooking tasks** such as mashing potatoes, making cheese sandwiches, and fixing a bowl of cereal. Afterward, see if he can tell you the order that you followed to cook and mash the potatoes or to get the bread out of the cupboard and put the cheese on it. Supervise carefully when your child is near a hot stove.

You can play **"license plate count up"** in the car or on the bus. Look for a license plate that contains the number 1. Then try to find other plates with 2, 3, 4, and so forth, up to 10. When your child can play "count-up," play "count-down," starting with the number 9, then 8, 7, 6, and so forth, down to 1.

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