



**Early Intervention Colorado**  
for Infants, Toddlers & Families

## An Academy for Developmental Intervention Assistants

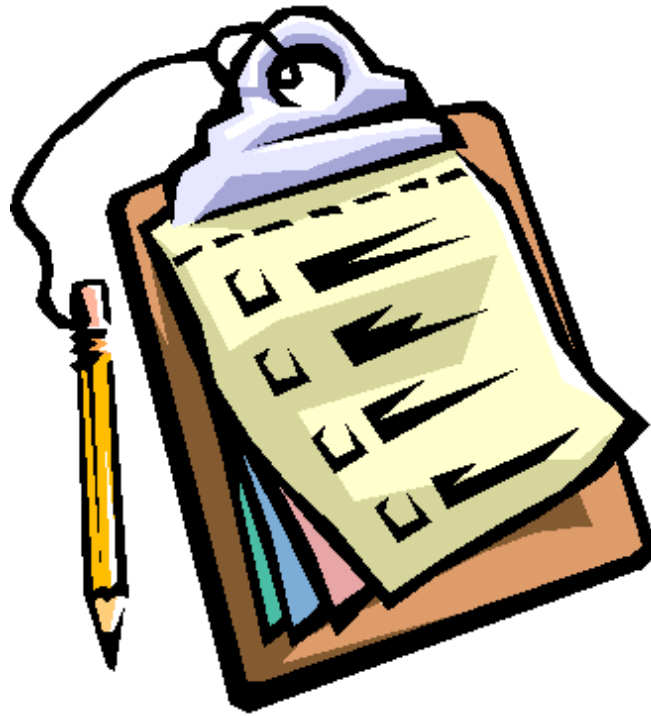
# Working With Families Slides

*This document contains slides/transparencies that are used with the Working With Families Instructor's Guide and Handout. The instructor may project the slides using a LCD projector or print slides and convert them into transparencies to project them using a traditional overhead projector*



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# LOGISTICS & NORMS



# Module A: Understanding the Evolving Concept of Family through a Cultural Lens

## Goals:

1. Describe what makes a family and the different family constellations.
2. Explore and strengthen the understanding of the concept of Family-Centered Practices.
3. Describe cultural differences, the danger of stereotypes as a barrier to individual consideration.
4. Identify challenges and barriers to building relationships given linguistic diversity among families.
5. Identify socioeconomic factors that frame a family picture.

# **Module B: Understanding the Impact of Illness and identified Disability on Family Life: Cultural Considerations**

## **Goals:**

1. Recognize the family as a system that changes over time.
2. Identify stages and characteristics of the grieving process and how it might apply to families with infants with developmental disabilities.
3. Identify factors of strength and resilience in families that DI Assistants can support.

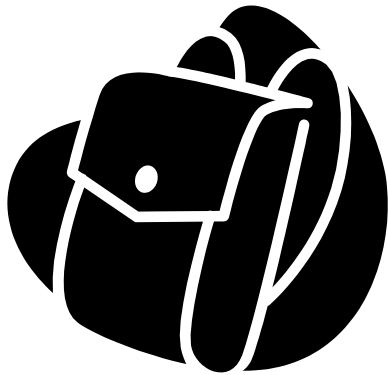
# **Module C: Cultural Responsiveness Supporting Each and Every Family**

## **Goals:**

1. Explore the vision of supporting infants and toddlers with identified challenges and their families in culturally responsive and inclusive settings.
2. Develop an understanding of the importance of listening to family perspectives and stories.
3. Examine the strengths and limitations of their own role in connecting families with team resources and community supports.
4. Develop an understanding of the concept of family leadership and its impact on the family.

# What is Meaningful to You?

- Select an item from your backpack or bag that is meaningful to you
- Share with a partner why this item is meaningful to you



# Module A: Understanding the Evolving Concept of Family through a Cultural Lens

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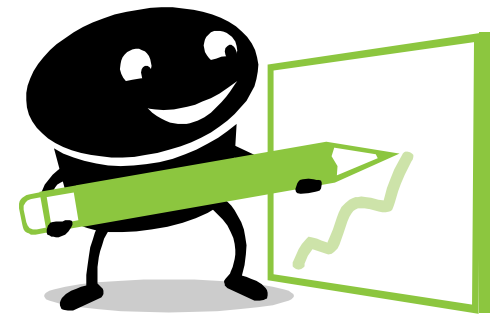
# Families





# Activity: Who is in your family?

Draw a picture representing  
who is in your family?



# Similarities & Differences

Share your family picture and identify similarities and differences....

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Family constellation (single parent, nuclear, extended, etc)
- Heritage
- Other considerations

## Take Away



All families are unique but many have similar or different family constellations that are impacted by various cultural, linguistic and other factors.

# Definitions of Family

“ big, extended, nuclear, multigenerational, with one parent, two parents, and grandparents. We live under one roof or many. A family can be temporary as a few weeks, or as permanent as forever, We become part of a family by birth, adoption, marriage, or from a desire for mutual support...”\*

*\*Report from the House Memorial 5 Task Force on Young Children and Families, New Mexico, 1990*

## Definition continued...

- ...A family is a creature unto itself, with different values and unique ways of realizing its dreams; together our families become the source of our rich cultural heritage and spiritual diversity...our families create neighborhoods, communities, states, and nations” \*

*\*Report from the House Memorial 5 Task Force on Young Children and Families, New Mexico, 1990*

# Parent Perspectives

- *“To make progress and have a family go in a positive direction, the family has to feel valued... that the information they are sharing is just as important as is the information the professionals are sharing...for the family to feel this is critical to success”  
Linda Roan Yager ~ Parent*
- *“What they need... they need to know about our culture... how we raise our kids... what we do when they are sick... when they are with adults... when they eat, and when they go to school. They need to learn how we think and feel as a family about our kids.” Maria Sandoval ~ Parent*



# Family Values: Vision for Future

What do all families have in common in terms of a vision for their future?

○Love?

○Health?

○Friends?

○Success as they would define success?

○Happiness?

# What does Family-Centered Practice mean?

## Activity:

- What does family-centered practice mean?
- Why is it important to use family-centered practices?

# Family-Centered Practices: Why?

“The family is the constant in the child’s life while the service systems and personnel within those systems may be involved only episodically” (Crais, 1990).

# **DEC Recommended Family-Based Practices Definition**

“a philosophy or way of thinking that leads to a set of practice in which families or parent are considered central and the most important decision maker in a child’s life and that service systems and personnel must support, respects, encourage and enhance the strengths and competence of the family.”

# Factors That Enhance Family-Centered Practice

- A genuine commitment to working with the whole family;
- A conceptual framework which allows us to understand the ecological or natural contexts of children, families and communities, in the wider society;
- A recognition of the skills in engaging families, nurturing their hopes and aspirations for their children, building on their strengths; and
- A focus on inter-agency, inter-professional cooperation

# Challenges for Early Intervention Providers

- Family constellations e.g. lone parent families, children living with grand parents etc.
- Marital status of parents (Divorce and separation)
- Family size
- Variety of cultures in the community
- Religious beliefs
- Poverty
- Drug and alcohol addiction in families



# Take Away



Working with families from cultures different from your own can sometimes be frustrating and require further study and information gathering....

**AND**

Can be an opportunity to be exposed to a richness of human experiences, to learn new information, and to grow as an individual

# What is Culture?

- Think of words or activities that describe or represent a culture.
- Share with the group

# Definitions of Culture

- *Cultures are systems of behaviors and customs passed from one generation to the next. The rules, language, religion, family systems, recreation, and education that a group of people share provide predictability and safety in their daily lives. When people are bound together by common beliefs and practices, they understand each other and the world around them has meaning.*

*Everyone has a culture, but often individuals are not aware of the behaviors, habits, and customs that are culturally based'*

(Hall, 1976)

# Definitions of Culture

*“The way of life of a group of people, including shared views of the world and social reality, values, beliefs roles and relationships and patterns or standards of behavior (such as communication style). Cultural features are linked to a sense of shared ancestry and continuity with the past and can be based upon race, ethnicity, nationality, geographic locations, as well as other dimensions of diversity.”*

(Chen et al, 1998)

# Definitions of Culture

- *A culture is a complex and evolving pattern of life, rooted in tradition as well as place. Culture is indelibly a part of each person's identity, but individuals also influence culture. It defines how we see ourselves and how we perceive others*

(Brown, Ina Corinne. *Understanding Other Cultures*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall/Simon & Schuster, 1963)

# The Nature of Culture

- *Culture is not static: it is dynamic and ever- changing*
- *Culture, language, ethnicity, and race are not the only determinants of one's values, beliefs, and behaviors*
- *In describing any culture or cultural practice, within group differences are as great as across group differences .....sometimes greater.*
- *Dimensions of culture and ethnicity are typically frames in terms of differences in relation to another group...the majority/ mainstream culture*
- *Everyone is the product of one or more cultures and everyone has a culture*

(Lynch & Hanson,2004)





# Danger of Assumptions

- “Cultural assumptions are beliefs which are so completely accepted within the group that they do not need to be stated, questioned, or defended  
(Chen, et al, 1998)
- **CAVEAT!** However, there is danger in assuming that because a family has certain cultural beliefs in common that they can be stereotyped in terms of adhering to all beliefs and patterns associated with their culture

# Additive Attitudes

- Each and every child and family comes with a rich cultural legacy that can be understood, respected, and celebrated.

Impact: The Perez-Mendez family from Mexico celebrates and lives “la familia” which translates into family traditions, speaking their native language in their home, while learning English as a second language, and maintaining connections with family that respect the “elders” and four generations of living relatives.

# Subtractive Attitudes

Preserving your home language and culture is not a choice given subtractive attitudes towards those who do not speak English fluently or adopt the life ways of the majority of English speaking families in the community.

Impact: The Sanchez family gives up its heritage language and traditions in order to avoid discrimination visited upon the parents while they were growing up. These parents were punished for speaking their language of heritage in public schools and do not want the same experience for their children..

# Family's Cultural Diversity

*“There exists no generic entity which may be dubbed the Southeast Asian family, the Native American family...each of these categories encompasses numerous cultures, their individual members may share tendencies in some areas and not in others. Individuals and families will be found to lie along different points of their cultural continuum (from traditional, for example to fully bicultural). These are valid cultural distinctions only in the very broadest sense of the term.”*



(Anderson & Fenichel, 1989, Zero to Three)

# Cultural Continuum

Where are you on a cultural continuum in respect to values of :

- ✓ Extended Family ..... Nuclear Family
- ✓ Inter-dependence .....Individuality
- ✓ Nurturance .....Independence
- ✓ Traditional ..... .. Technology
- ✓ Broad Ownership.....Individual & Specific
- ✓ Differentiated rights.....Equality
- ✓ Harmony.....Control

2.2

# Similarities and Differences

What do you know about cross cultural perspectives?

- African American
- Anglo European American
- Asian
- Hmong
- Indian
- Indigenous American Nations
- Korean
- Latino
- Somalia



# Life Ways: Dynamic Nature of Culture

What were the key messages you received growing up in your family of origin about...

- ✓ Babies crying?
- ✓ Toddlers playing with food?
- ✓ Discipline?
- ✓ People with disabilities?
- ✓ Have your key messages changed?
- ✓ What will you pass on to your children?

# Did Your Family Feel this Way?

Selected examples of key messages from families of origin...

- “Babies should cry... it is good for their lungs” Aunt Fanny
- “Pick up that baby ...comfort him and hold him tight”
- “Eat everything on your plate! What about the poor starving children in China or Africa?”
- “Just try a bite”
- “Just wait until your father gets home”
- “ You can make your own decisions but accept the consequences of your behavior”
- “Don’t stare at that child”
- “Those” poor children should be in special settings.

## Change over time...



- *“The context, [of a family story], is not a stagnant environment or a set of experiences frozen in time. Changes in environment and increased knowledge of how systems work are two Factors that cause sociohistorical context as well as the person living within that context to change”*

(Leistgna & Woodrum, 1996 quoted in Sanchez, 1999)

# Take Away



- a story from a parent at any given time:
  - consider that it is a story about a situation or
  - perspective at that point in time and
  - perspectives may change over time given
    - new information,
    - experiences, or
    - other influencing factors.

# Continuum of Cultural Identification

- Assimilation,
- Acculturation &
- Marginalization

# Assimilation

- Is when identified groups give up their culture and adopt the mainstream values and beliefs of the mainstream culture “mainstreamers”...
- Assimilation can be forced ( e.g. American government & American Indians) or a reaction to fear of discrimination and prejudice for many immigrant populations or a choice by those wanting to adopt the life ways of the majority culture

# Acculturation

- Described as a process from those who hold fast to their traditional life ways and beliefs to those who not only operate primarily with the dominant culture, but adopt the standard values of the mainstream culture...Families may move about on this continuum ....often associated with choice (bicultural) to maintain aspects of cultural identity while adopting aspects of the mainstream or dominant culture.

# Marginalization

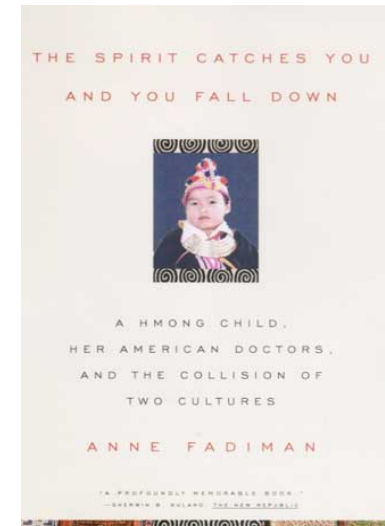
- When individuals essentially follow their own way and do not identify with any particular cultural group.
- In some instances they reject their own culture of heritage and also do not accept the values and life ways of the mainstream.



# Story of Lia

## Activity:

- Form groups of four.
- Select a recorder who will take notes during their discussion.
- Read Lia's Story
- Discuss why it is important to build relationships with Lia's family?
- Brainstorm a set of guidelines or principles that you would use with your team when working with families like Lia's that are from cultures different than yours.
- Recorders share the guidelines with the large group



# Guidelines for Building Relationships With Families

- ✓ Listen to the whole story before reacting.
- ✓ Don't operate on assumptions.
- ✓ Affirm or repeat to be sure you are hearing the story correctly.
- ✓ Ask permission before acting.
- ✓ Respect differences in spiritual beliefs and child rearing practices, even when different from your own.
- ✓ Be careful of stereotypes based on others opinions.
- ✓ Avoid judgments as they can cause harm.
- ✓ Immediately seek appropriate resources and supports when there are linguistic differences that are barriers to communication.

## Moving Beyond Stereotypes

*“All families, in fact, vary greatly in the degree in which their beliefs and practices are representative of a particular culture, language group, religious group, or country of origin.”*

(Eva Thorpe, 1997)

# Stages of Cultural Competence

- ✓ Cultural Awareness involves a providers sensitivity to his or her personal beliefs, values and biases and how they might influence perceptions of a family.
- ✓ Cultural knowledge involves providers seeking information and knowledge of a family's cultural world view and expectations.
- ✓ Cultural skills involve the provider's ability to intervene in a manner that is culturally sensitive and relevant (Sue, Ivey & Peterson, 1996)



## Your Cultural Lens

Each of us brings our own culture, values beliefs and experiences to each relationship we build with families...our background and experiences affect everything we do...they provide us a “cultural lens” through which we view how we ourselves raise our children, how we organize our household, how we talk and use language, how we view disability...we need to enlarge our cultural lens to “wide angle” to understand other’s experiences, values, and beliefs and how these influence each and every family. (Hall, 1976)

# Reflection: Worldview of Families From a Different Culture

## Activity:

- Think of a family from a different culture than yours that you work with or know in your community.
- Reflect on the following questions:
  - What is their worldview and adherence to traditional life ways?
  - How is their worldview different than yours?
  - What aspects of child rearing and beliefs about this family will impact your work as a DI Assistant?
- Share with the large group.

# Marta's Story (video clip)



# Marta's Story: Considerations

- What worked for Marta?
- What was troubling or concerning?
- How does this impact your practice?



# The Power of Language

- Did you know that linguists have suggested that more than 14,000 meanings can be gleaned from the 500 most commonly used English words...

(Samerov & Porter, 1991)

- BECAUSE LANGUAGE AND CULTURE ARE SO INTERDEPENDENT, COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES FROM DIFFERENT CULTURAL AND LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS CAN BE VERY COMPLEX.

# Communication



- When the language of the family and the provider are different it is clear that communication may be severely compromised
- However, Speaking the same language does not guarantee communication
- “Communication, both verbal and non-verbal is critical to cross cultural competence”

(LYNCH, E.W. & HANSON, M.J. (1999) *Developing Cross-cultural Competence. a guide for working with children and their families, 2nd ed.* Baltimore, MD/London: Paul H. Brookes.)

# Valuing Linguistic Differences

- At last count, there are over 114 different languages represented in the homes of children in Colorado.
- Providers cannot learn 114 different languages but they can value the diversity and power of languages and seek ways to communicate with families as they build relationships

## **Socio-Economic Factors**

Nearly 13 million American children live in families with incomes below the federal poverty level, which is 20,650 a year for a family of four. The number of children living in poverty increased by 11% between 2000-2006. There are 1.2 million children living in poverty today more than in 2000. NCCP, 2007

# Scenario One

In the suburbs

- **“Laughing and yelling, a white toddler named GT splashes around in the swimming pool with his nanny in the backyard of his 4 bedroom house in the suburbs, As on most evenings, after a quick dinner his father drives him to Gymboree at the local rec center. His brother has a baseball game at a different location...as they rush out of their work clothes and get the children ready for activities, the boys parents are harried... (Adapted from Lareau, 2003)**

## Scenario Two

Only 10 minutes away, a Black 2 year old AW, is riding home from child care with his mother in their beige, leather upholstered Lexus. A's mother is tired but talks with her son about school...She has a long Thursday ahead of her. She will get up at 4:45 to go out of town on business and arrive home at 9:00 that evening. The next day she will chauffeur A to a private Suzuki violin lesson, followed by a visit to his Nanna and then a soccer game for her older child...Discussions between parents and children are a hallmark of middle-class child rearing...

(Adapted from Lareau, 2003)

## Scenario Three

Farther away a Black two and a half year old boy, HM, plays outdoors in the housing project in which he lives, with his two male cousins. After giving up searching for a basketball, they come in to watch sports on TV and then go back outside for a water balloon fight. People sit in white plastic chairs outside the apartments and music and TV can be heard.

(Adapted Lareau, 2003)

## Scenario Four

Only 20 minutes away in a “blue-colored neighborhood and slightly farther away in a public housing project, childhood looks different. Mt Y, a white working class father picks up his son, Billy, from his Head Start child care program. He has a beer while his son watches some TV, then rides his “trike’ and plays on the sidewalk outside of their apartment. Other nights he and his Dad might sit on the sidewalk and watch cars and trucks. At 5:30, B’s mother arrives home after work as a house cleaner and makes dinner. They all sit down together as a family and await the visit from an uncle who typically stops by to talk.

(Adapted from Lareau, 2003)



# Similarities and Differences

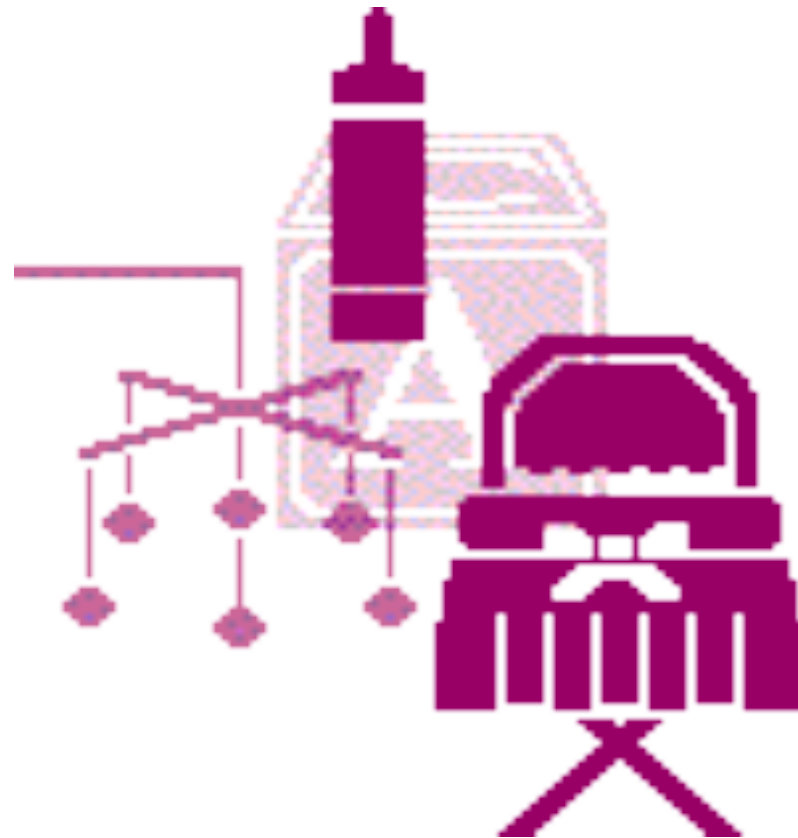
- Both sets of families want the best for their children
- major life task :
  - to put food on the table,
  - arrange for housing,
  - negotiate unsafe neighborhoods,
  - take children to the doctors,
  - provide clean clothes and
  - get children to bed and ready for school the next morning...
- Unlike middle class parents, concerted development of children through organized activities is not an essential priority or aspect of good parenting.

(Unequal childhoods, Lareau, 2003)

## How does the 'culture of poverty' apply?

- Is there a difference in the concerns, priorities and resources of these parents and families?
- Is there a difference in daily routines, activities, places, and relationships between middle class families and those in working class or in impoverished situations? How will this impact your building relationships with families?

# Module B: The Impact of Illness and Identified Disability on Family Life: Cross Cultural Considerations



# **Module B: The Impact of Illness and Identified Disability on Family Life: Cross Cultural Considerations**

## **Goals:**

1. Recognize the family as a system that changes over time
2. Identify stages and characteristics of the grieving process and how it might apply to families with infants with developmental disabilities.
3. Identify factors of strength and resilience in families that DI Assistants can support.

## *Family as Systems: The Balancing Act*

Family is viewed as a system developing and changing consisting of interrelated members...

Implications:

- cannot understand one member apart from the others...cannot separate the child from the family
- a change in one part affects the lives of others

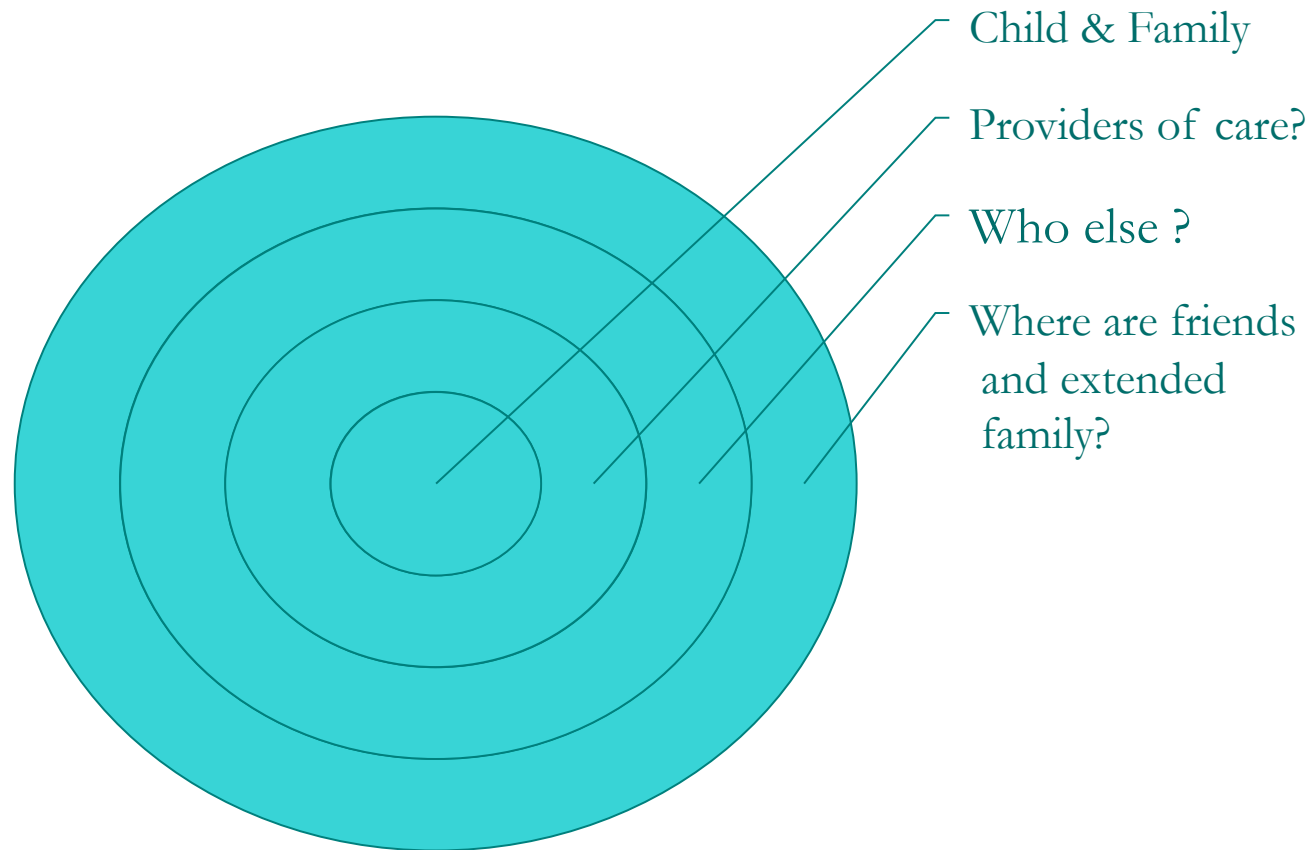
(Andrews & Andrews, 2000)

# Circles of Support in Human Development

## Who is in Your Circle?



# What about the child identified with a disability? Does it look different?



## *You are Not Alone*

- Read *You are Not Alone* by Patricia Gill Smith
- Identify common reactions of family members faced with their child being identified with medical challenge or a developmental disability.



# Child's Medical or Disability Diagnosis: Parents' Typical Emotions

- Parents' typical emotions/reaction on their child's first diagnosis of a medical condition or developmental disability include:
  - Initial feelings of shock and numbness,
  - Feelings of grief, an “inexplicable loss”, disappointment, isolation
  - Denial “ this is not happening to me”,
  - Potential anger at those that are trying to help.
  - Anxiety about and Fear of the unknown or anticipated change
  - Feelings of guilt and self-blame, “What did I do wrong?”
  - Overwhelming confusion and feelings of powerlessness
  - Rejection

# Examples of Influence from Belief Systems

- Cultural: “If only I had worn the keys during the full moon as my mother told me, my baby would not have been born with a cleft palate”
- Cultural: “This child is sacred and must be sheltered and protected as a child with special powers”
- Cultural: “If Lia’s sister had not slammed the door, her soul would not have left her body”
- Religious: “It is God’s will”
- Religious: “It is punishment from God”
- Religious: “ It is a blessing from above”

# Take Away



- Not all parents experience all of these feeling states although many parents and family members have
- Feelings experienced can be highly influenced by personal cultural, religious, and spiritual values and beliefs
- Feeling states may re-emerge or re-cycle as parents face new experiences and transitions during different points in their child's life.
- Parents are to be respected and supported as they travel this journey

## *An Unexpected Journey*

**Watch this video or website on NICU families experiences [NICU youtube](#)**

- Reflect upon:
  - Key reactions of the families to their child’s situation...emotions and feelings of guilt, pride, fear, frustration, sadness, etc
  - The impact on the lives of all family members
  - Specific strategies used by the hospital “team of providers” supported families given different situations and concerns as they traveled this journey.

# Welcome to Holland

- Read the poem.
- Reflect:



What did you learn from this poem?

# What You Should Know About My Child

Read the poem

- Reflect:

- What key messages did you learn that will help your work with families of children with disabilities?

# Supporting Transitions to Home

How can we support families transitioning to home?

- Recognize that some families need to have time to absorb what has happened and adjust to it.
- Some families may want to deal with the feelings of fear, confusion, helplessness, anger, guilt, and need more time to deal with these issues. Affirm that feelings are real, and respond with empathy.
- Other families may need a “sounding board” or someone to just listen to their fears and other feelings associated with their circumstances.
- Listen without judgment
- Refer to service coordinator and other team members as appropriate
- Provide information when asked.

# Aracelly & Elizabeth

- Listen to this mother's story and discuss the following questions:
- How do differing beliefs about disability impact the differing reactions by this family and address the following questions:
  - What culturally based factors apply to various responses to the news of Down Syndrome?
  - What was concerning about how the diagnosis was initially provided?
  - What supports did Aracelly appreciate and benefit from as she traveled her path with Elizabeth?
  - How did this family adapt in terms of their cultural life ways?



# Aracelly & Elizabeth



# Tapping into the Family's Internal Resources

- **Unconditional positive regard** by Carl Rogers
  - Is blanket acceptance and support of a person regardless of what the person says.
  - Is essential to healthy development.
  - If not experienced by people (i.e. lack of unconditional positive regard), may result in seeing themselves in the negative ways that others have made them feel.
  - Can be facilitated by keeping in mind the belief that all people have the internal resources required for personal growth.

# Resilience

- Resilience as a response to adversity is considered an innate capacity bolstered by environmental protective factors such as family cohesiveness and external supports... the same supports that nurture us all.

# Protective Factors include...

- Supports and opportunities that buffer the effect of adversity, crisis, or challenges and enable development to proceed ...
- Family strengths, assets, outside influences, e.g. productive alliances with other families and positive family professional partnerships.
- Parents' inner strengths or resources they can utilize to build their resilience:
  - ✓ faith, flexibility, humor, communication skills, problem-solving skills, mutually supportive caring relationships, the ability to identify and access outside resources and services when needed.
- These strengths can be nurtured and developed through concrete skill-building activities and supportive interactions with others.
- Community services including early intervention programs that focus on culturally competent, family-centered care

## Take Away



Resilience is based upon “protective factors” such as individual family strengths, family supports, and supports provided by early intervention and other services that can serve to “buffer” the adverse impacts of having a child identified with a disability.

# Resilience Factors of Families

- Choose one of the Beach Center Family stories
- Read out loud in your group
- Use **H23** and discuss what strengths in family members, sources of information supports and other factors led to family's resilience in the challenging situations
- Discuss implications for practice as a DI Assistant

# Factors that Support Family Resilience

- Close –knit extended family
- Role of “affirming” provider who supports family choices
- Positive parental attitudes
- Positive attitudes of providers
- Service providers in EI that garner needed resources during times of crisis
- Team –based services
- Welcoming child care resources
- Ongoing frequent communication and collaboration
- Spousal understanding and support
- Maintaining high expectations
- Parent’s that feel safe to ask questions
- Family to family support Refocusing on strengths versus deficits ...
- Networking
- Focus on advocacy and supporting parents as they grow in confidence, comfort level and capabilities to be the “voice for their child”.

# Implications for Early Intervention Services

- √ Early Intervention Services are respectful of and compatible with a family's cultural strengths and needs.
- √ Culturally competent agencies and practitioners are able to view a family's strengths and needs within a cultural context and integrate culturally relevant information in helping the family develop a meaningful plan of action.
- √ Cultural competence is a skill learned by the individual, team and the EI program, fostered by a commitment to provide services that are culturally appropriate and that make a positive difference for children and families



**Module C:**  
**Cultural Responsiveness ~**  
**Supporting Each and**  
**Every Family**

# **Module C: Cultural Responsiveness ~ Supporting Each and Every Family**

## **Goals:**

1. Explore the vision of supporting infants and toddlers with identified challenges and their families in culturally responsive and inclusive settings.
2. Develop an understanding of the importance of listening to family perspectives and stories.
3. Examine the strengths and limitations of their own role in connecting families with team resources and community supports.
4. Develop an understanding of the concept of family leadership and its impact on the family.

# Family's Vision of Inclusion

## Activity

- Work in pairs
- Listen to video clip
- Discuss the following questions on the handout
  - What vision of inclusion is illustrated in the Creating Bright Futures
  - What did you hear families and service providers say about their experiences?

# Family's Vision of Inclusion



# Take Away



## Vision of Inclusion

- Childhood belongs to all children.
- Children with disabilities can do things that no one thought they could do others get to see that.
- Seeing kids as kids first
- Parent was unsure if she was giving her children what they needed. It helped to have someone to talk to - someone to say she was doing a good job.

## Value Statements: Pass the Envelope Please ...

- “Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them” Lady Bird Johnson
- “ When I approach a child, he inspires in me two sentiments: tenderness for what he is and respect for what he will become” L Pasteur
- “ Life affords no greater responsibility, no greater privilege, than the raising of the next generation” E. Koop

# Discussion

- What do these quotations say to you about your work with young children and families?
- What do they say about including infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in community?

# Examples of Value Statements

- ✓ We need to maintain positive expectations for each child.
- ✓ We must recognize the uniqueness of each child and family.
- ✓ It is important to honor cultural differences.
- ✓ Cultural stereotypes that might be harmful to children and families must be avoided.
- ✓ Children and families are more alike than different, yet differences need to be acknowledged and valued.



# Communication Skills with Families

- Listening is key!
- When the language of the family and the provider are different it is clear that communication may be severely compromised
- However, speaking the same language does not guarantee communication
- “Communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is critical to cross cultural competence”

(Lynch & Hanson, 2004)

# Having a Conversation

- ✓ Create an atmosphere of exchange
- ✓ Focus on parent engagement and participation
- ✓ Recognize the specific needs of a particular parent
- ✓ Refrain from using professional jargon
- ✓ Provide information
- ✓ Be sensitive to challenges
- ✓ Recognize strengths and resilience of families

# Verbal & Non-Verbal Communication

- ✓ Be present
- ✓ Use silence as a tool
- ✓ Follow the lead of your partner
- ✓ Let them know you are listening by nodding, leaning forward, eye contact ( if appropriate)
- ✓ Ask open ended questions
- ✓ Restate or paraphrase what you heard to affirm you are listening or to clarify intent of speaker

# Listening Without Judgment

- ✓ Just listen and do not react negatively when a parent shares their feelings that might seem unacceptable to you
- ✓ Listen and respond with affirmations like “I can see why you might feel that way”, even when you disagree.
- ✓ Offer suggestions only when asked;
- ✓ Communicate with your team members and supervisor, especially if you are concerned about the feeling state, responses or reactions of parents you are working with.”
- ✓ “Be there” for families in terms of attending to their messages both verbally and non-verbally
- ✓ Follow their lead if there is a pressing need to digress from your own agenda;

# The Power of Listening: Self Assessment with Feedback

- How do I listen and respond to my partner ?
- Did I “hear” the information?
- Did I ask open ended questions and allow my partner to ask me questions?
- Do I think I listened well? ( Use of non-verbal as well as verbal) Examples
- Did I share relevant information?
- Was a mutual trust established?

# Family Voices from Special Quest

Play **Family Voices** video clip

•Discuss the following questions:

- ✓What did you hear as families' priorities for their children?
- ✓What are these families telling us is important as we listen to their stories?
- ✓How does this help us build relationships with families?

# Family Voices from Special Quest



# Take Away



Listening to families enables service providers to provide services that are designed with individual families and that meet the families priorities and needs.



# Reflection

- List the strategies in their journal that they feel are important to remember as you build relationships with families.

AND

- Reflect upon how or if your strategies might change depending upon the culture and life ways of the family.

# What Is Wrong With This Picture?

- Read the scenario as well as review the D I Assistant roles and responsibilities.
- Answer the following
  - Did the DI Assistant act appropriately within the boundaries of the role?
  - What would have been the appropriate way of handling this situation?

# Creating Connections to Community:

## What is the DI Assistant role?

- What community resources families might want to build connections with (Possible examples that the group might come up with are - church, library, parent groups, parent to parent connections, clinics, community colleges etc) based upon their cultural life ways, interests, or other factors?
- How you can facilitate the process of building these connections keeping in mind the boundaries of your role?
- How might you contribute to the team knowledge of community resources and supports for each and every family?

# Limitations of the DI Assistant Role

- ANY questions/situation that you encounter in your work with families is best addressed through consultations and discussion with your supervisor and team members, especially the service coordinator. While you might have more knowledge about the community resources, you are actually limited by the scope of your role to establish connections without the direction and approval of your supervisor and other team members, especially the service coordinator.

## Who is a Cultural Mediator?

When an interpreter/translator goes beyond translation of language and helps “translate” between the culture of the school environment and the child’s family in order to enhance understanding, share information, and create a relationship that supports families as full participants in the process, this individual becomes a **cultural mediator**.

# What Does The Cultural Mediator Do?

The cultural mediator is always trained and works under the direction of the supervisor  
and may become:

- a referral source for community
- a liaison with parent
- a communication link to ensure parents are part of the team
- a “cultural gauge” for knowing what is/is not relevant to a family’s cultural context

# Values Essential to the Use of Cultural Mediators/Interpreters/Translators

- **If:** The diversity of families is acknowledged and honored
  - **Then:** Their knowledge of and dreams for their children are believed and valued and they are recognized as the key decision-makers for their children
- **If:** The child must be viewed in the context of their family, culture and community
  - **Then:** Supports and services will be culturally resonant with the child and family's culture
- **If:** Interactions with the child and family occur in their primary/preferred language
  - **Then:** Cultural mediators, interpreters, and translators need to be effectively utilized as key team members, integral to the process of working with families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds

# Who Is an Effective Cultural Mediator?

- proficient in English and the family’s language
- trained for their role
- aware of the boundaries of his or her role
- willing to take directions from the supervisor
- able to maintain confidentiality
- well-versed in use of appropriate terminology
- skilled in interpersonal relations yet is able to remain neutral and objective
- an individual who has knowledge of the early intervention service system and community resources.
- not a member of the child’s family



# Activity: Pathways for Support for Each and Every Child Family

- Form groups of four.
- Generate situations in which despite good intentions, the basic ethical responsibilities with regards to working with families could be breached by a DI Assistant.
- Reflect on the previous knowledge gained with regards to limitations of roles, responsibilities of the DI Assistant, DI Assistants' funds of knowledge with regards to community's language, culture and resources
- Share with the large group.

# Key Messages for DI Assistants in Facilitating Pathways of Support for Families

- As DI Assistants, you:
  - Maintain confidentiality of all information regarding infant/toddler's and their families
  - Respect the dignity of every child and their families at all times
  - Communicate with families only as directed by the supervisor
  - May assist the service coordinator/team with family access to culturally resonant services under the direction and with the approval of the supervisor
  - Act as cultural mediator/ translator/interpreter when directed by the supervisor. You will need appropriate training for this role.
- Communicate with team regarding family challenges or concerns that you become aware of. Any questions/situation that you encounter in your work with families is best addressed through consultations and discussion your supervisor and team members .
- DO NOT ACT ON YOUR OWN.

# Parent Leadership & Advocacy

*Promoting Family Leadership*

Leadership

Comfort

Capable

Confidence

Empowerment

Advocacy

# Meaning of “Parent Leadership” and “Parent Advocacy”

## Activity:

- In small groups, discuss the meaning of words like “Parent leadership” and “Parent advocacy” in the context of early intervention services .
- Share their insights with the large group



# Road to Parent Advocacy & Leadership

- Parents who have a recently identified child with a special need are often consumed with how they will handle all the new information and access supports.
- As families understand their situation over time , they grow in their desire and ability to become a strong advocate for their child and eventually reach out to other parents or families in similar situations.
- An outcome of Part C EI services is to support families in their quest for confidence, comfort, and capability as a “voice” and advocate for their child.<sup>109</sup>

# Importance of Family Advocacy and Leadership

- In your group now, discuss:
  - Why is family leadership important?
- Share with the large group

## Take Away



- Families are their children's best resources.
- Families provide support to other families.
- Families provide input on program and community services.
- Families directly experience how systems work and can provide valuable insights.
- Families work in systems to advocate on behalf of all children and families.

# Open The Door





## Activity: Open The Door

- **Open the Door** video clip (Special Quest).
- In groups of four, generate a list of strategies and supports for parental advocacy and leadership seen on the part of families in the video.
- Discuss the lists generated by small groups in the large group.

# Strategies for Parent Advocacy & Leadership

*Strategies that open doors for families to advocate for their own child and family*

- √ Relationships are the foundation for beginning the family-service provider that nurture family leadership opportunities.
- √ Encourage families to share their perspectives, ideas and suggestions.
- √ Listen and respond positively to family priorities.
- √ Provide families with information, resources, and support so they can make decisions for their child and family.
- √ Use of well trained cultural mediators, interpreters, and translators.

# Strategies for Parent Advocacy & Leadership

- *Strategies that open doors for families to support other families*
  - √ Facilitate a variety of opportunities for families to come together e.g. parent groups.
  - √ Offer training for families who want to assume more formal roles of support.

# Strategies for Parent Advocacy & Leadership

## *Strategies that open doors for families to work at systems level*

- √ Create opportunities for families to participate in committees, policy council, etc.
- √ Provide mentorship, training, and orientation by other families or service providers.
- √ Provide information about leadership opportunities to all families.

# Important



Important for DI Assistants to be aware of all  
the strategies discussed above but  
implementation of any strategy or idea by  
them should happen under the direction  
and with the approval  
of their supervisor.

## Wrap-up

- What personal reflections about the information shared in this Academy do you want to remember?
- What did you learn that will stay with you while working with families as a DI Assistant.