

8 Tips for Early Intervention Service Providers Transcript

Hello and welcome to the Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs website. We're delighted that you have joined us. My name is Robin. Today's training video is directed to Early Intervention Service Providers and will give guidelines for setting up boundaries and ground rules for home visits. If you need a printed copy of the eight tips we will be discussing today you can download them from this website. So let's get started.

Tip #1: It's really important for you to define your role as an Early Intervention Service Provider within the first three home visits.

At that visit you would want to make sure that you set up what developmental therapy is and how it differs from other therapies. For example, developmental therapy is family focused, so the caregivers are going to be an integral part of the home visit. Our role is to give the families tools and strategies to use for addressing their child's needs so their participation is very important.

At that same visit you're also going to show your commitment to this family on a weekly basis. It's real important that you let them know that the information about their child and their family will be kept confidential. You're also telling them that you're committing your time for a weekly visit, and you're committing to being on time, to being very punctual...that's very important. If you think you're going to be late or you're going to need to cancel, contact the family as soon as possible and try to reschedule. Let the family know that this is a mutual commitment, so you want them to also try to schedule their other appointments around your home visit and to call as soon as possible if they need to cancel or reschedule. Let them know that you're going to be presenting a lot of information, so encourage them to feel free to ask questions or to raise concerns and that you will try to address these topics to the best of your ability.

Tip #2: We call this the "Five Minute" Rule

I myself like to talk a lot and it's really important to share some personal information with your family, so that you can establish that rapport with them. But the "five minute" rule says don't talk about yourself or your personal life for more than five minutes at a time. You're over stepping your boundary if you do so.

Tip #3: Ask yourself the question: Am I empowering this family?

Have I given this family the tools and the strategies that they need to address an IFSP goal for this week? Am I encouraging the family to make their own phone calls, to make appointments without relying on me to do that for them? Remember that this child will be turning three at some point in time and we need to give the tools to this family that they can advocate for the child themselves.

Tip #4: Ask yourself the question: Would I do this particular thing for or with all of my TEIS families?

It's real important that you treat all of your families equally. So if you can't do for all of your families, don't do for any of your families. It would be a really big challenge to try to purchase gifts for all of your children that you see with the caseloads that we have. So, spending money on your families is not what is important or necessary, but establishing relationships with them is very important. For example, if a child is sick and has to be put in the hospital, it would be a great idea for you to go to visit that child. Or if a family member has been sick this past week, make a phone call and check on them. One of the things that I like to do is, I have a Halloween party every year for all of my families and for all of my former families. I provide the meat and I have all of my families bring a covered dish. This is a great way for the families to network and it's also a good opportunity for the children to have interaction with their peers.

Tip #5: Listen to your inner voice.

If the family asks you to do something that you don't feel comfortable with...don't do it. If you don't feel safe...excuse yourself from that visit and talk with your supervisor.

Tip #6: Is this family meeting an emotional need of mine.

If you take on this family as your "project" to make yourself look good or to feel better, you're probably over stepping your bounds. If you say to yourself, "This family can't do this without me." You're probably over stepping your bounds. So a good rule of thumb to follow is...if what I am doing is outside the parameters of my job, then I am probably crossing the boundary.

Tip #7: Is this family relying on me too much?

If the family can do the things for themselves, like contact people and make the appointments, encourage them to do so. They need to learn how to advocate for their child.

Tip #8: What are the legal ramifications regarding my interaction with this family?

It's a good rule of thumb to follow the policies that are set by your program, they will give you guidelines. It's not our role to do physical therapy with the child, but it is our role to help the family implement the strategies that have been demonstrated and given to them by the physical therapist. It's not our role to do feeding therapy with the child, but it is our role to help the family implement the strategies that have been demonstrated by the feeding therapist. It's not our role to give medical advice or medical recommendations. Don't go there! Also, avoid being left alone with the child. I've been put in situations before where the families have asked me, "Since you're here. Is it okay if I go down the road for a few minutes to get some diapers?" No. Rely back on the policies of your program.

Those are our eight tips for today. I hope that you find that these tips are helpful in setting boundaries for your home visits. Thank you for joining us and for being such an important part of early intervention. Thank you for playing such an important role in the lives of our babies. Because remember...babies can't wait! See you next time.

