

Problem Solving and Planning



Problem Solving and Planning is integral to successful embedded intervention. Both *Problem Solving and Planning* involves a reciprocal exchange between the early interventionist (EI) and caregiver, and both offer opportunities for the EI to support the caregiver's decision-making and leadership.

Problem Solving and Planning involves a series of interactive exchanges between the EI and caregiver focusing on decision-making about a specific target, routine, or area of concern. The EI asks open-ended, reflective questions, or makes comments that guide the caregiver to brainstorm and then listens as they choose ideas for new routines, activities, or additional opportunities to embed learning in new settings, to modify intervention strategies, or identify potential solutions to a situation that is not working. The EI may ask parents to reflect on their impressions, compare expectations with performance, analyze or make inferences, or evaluate the current plan. When problem solving, EIs must remember that listening and encouraging the caregiver's ideas is important to building their confidence.

As partners, the caregiver and EI exchange information and experiences without judgment or prescribed solutions. Rather than provide answers, the EI makes comments or asks questions so that caregivers engage in the exchange, think about and share their perspectives and interpretations, and arrive at decisions and action steps they believe will work for their family.

Practices and Principles

How to...

Use a systematic process that engages the caregiver as a partner.	Listen to caregiver's descriptions of their priority or concern, gather objective information that clarifies when, where, how and why the priority or concern impacts the family.
Brainstorm ideas that are meaningful and relevant to the child and family's priorities.	Listen, ask open ended questions, make comments, clarify, and support caregiver's decision making on best options to try.
Support caregiver to develop a plan that is a good fit for the child and family.	Encourage caregiver to decide on action steps that match their everyday routines, activities, and family beliefs.



Problem Solving and Planning occur throughout the home visit and are central to Setting the Stage, Observation and Opportunities to Embed, as well as Reflection and Review. Discussions on which intervention strategies to use should occur both before and after practicing in a routine to ensure the best match for the caregiver and child. The EI and caregiver discuss options and agree on what to do when, how, and how often in the current or future routine or activity.

Problem solving is more than finding a solution. It is an opportunity to build a relationship that facilitates the caregiver's confidence and autonomy. Planning is more than a written document; it is the ideas identified by the caregiver that they believe will work

best for them to support their child's learning. When problem solving and planning follows a systematic process that encourages caregiver leadership, the caregiver gains skills that can be useful for many day-to-day events and situations.

Problem solving and planning are communication skills that are learned through experience and practices meaningfully in trusting relationships. Using the Family 5Qs as a starting and ending point for each session provides a consistent framework that emphasizes the caregiver's participation and scaffolds for their growing competence and independence embedding intervention in everyday activities that matter to the family. Some sessions may require more time spent problem solving than others to find the right fit of targets, strategies and routines for the child and family. This is time well spent as it increases the likelihood the intervention will occur between visits.

Remember

It is important to remember that throughout the home visit, the EI must balance support for learning with promoting the caregiver's confidence to make changes and decisions about next steps. It is a learning process that occurs over time and expands with the confidence of the caregiver.

While planning often occurs throughout the routine it is essential that it occurs before the end of the visit in the form of the action plan, the Family 5Q.