

## EARLY INTERVENTION

### FOCUS TOPIC: PROGRAM PLANNING

#### SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Program Planning— Evaluation/ Assessment and IFSP Development
- Family Focus
- Conceptual Framework
- Family Networking
- Family Resources

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# Family Focus



## Early Intervention In Georgia

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

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## Family Focus by Jessica Carpenter, BCW Parent

As a young mom not knowing what to do with my son who did not seem to be talking like other children his same age and was starting to have fits and tantrums, I did not know where to go for help. I had filled out an application for Early Head Start. Then I found out about Babies Can't Wait.

I was not sure about what they might think of me as a mom or if they would judge me. But my first visit was like having a conversation with a friend with no judgment, with a lot of paperwork. Even though there was a lot of paperwork, Dianne made it comfortable. At my next visit two people came: a speech therapist and an evaluator.

They played with Ethan in the living room of my house. They

played with his toys, some toys they brought with them and they asked me questions about Ethan and our family and what our day looks like. I was surprised at how comfortable it was and how Ethan responded to these two new people. They made me feel very comfortable and we talked about what I wanted Ethan to do!

They shared ideas and gave me some suggestions until I heard from them again. Then I received a report that described what Ethan was doing. Our next visit was to write our plan (IFSP) for our participation with BCW.

I have now been in the program for a little over three months and have participated in this coaching model, which I understand is a new way. Not really knowing how the other way looks, I can-

not compare, but I can say that having one person who is meeting with me has been very helpful. My coach and I have worked together to talk about my concerns and what I want Ethan to do. They also have helped me with the Early Head start process, and Ethan has just started that program.

**"I was not sure about what they might think of me as a mom or if they would judge me. But my first visit was like having a conversation with a friend..." Jessica Carpenter, Parent**

## Program Planning: Evaluation, Assessment & Individualized Family Service Plan Development (IFSP)

By James Ernest, Ph.D., BCW Technical Assistance (TA) Unit

In Babies Can't Wait, there are four basic steps. The first is the intake process (see volume 1, Issue 1), the second is evaluation to determine program eligibility and assessment to develop the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), the third is providing services and supports necessary to meet the IFSP outcomes, and the fourth is transitioning from BCW. In this segment, we'll be

looking at the second of these: Evaluation, Assessment and IFSP Development.

#### **From the Start ...**

Whether we recognize it or not, and regardless of whether we are a parent or a professional, we spend our lives assessing and evaluating children. Whether it's a child's gesture indicating a wish for a sippy cup, a first step to-

ward Momma, a first word to Grandpa, or making a choice between two toys, each is a milestone in a child's development. This is the type of information that serves as the foundation for everything that happens in BCW.

Therefore, as a family moves through the intake process, BCW professionals will be busy

*(Continued on page 3)*



## BCW Families: GETTING CONNECTED

### Parent Resources for Early Intervention

- ☑ Parent Educators
- ☑ BCW Directory
- ☑ Parent Handbook for Success in Early Intervention
- ☑ Parent Conferences on Early Intervention

Parent to Parent  
of Georgia  
1-800-229-2038

[www.parenttoparent.org](http://www.parenttoparent.org)

Parent Educator Program  
Project SCEIs  
1-404-651-0162  
[http://education.gsu.edu/sceis/Parent\\_Education.htm](http://education.gsu.edu/sceis/Parent_Education.htm)

FAMILY FOCUS

# Getting Connected

## Babies Can't Wait Knows Parents Can't Wait! by Project SCEIs (Skilled Credentialed Early Interventionists)

Would you like to...

- ☑ Get more information about Babies Can't Wait?
- ☑ Become more involved with the program?
- ☑ Find out about workshops for Early Intervention?
- ☑ Talk with a parent who has been in the program?
- ☑ See how all the "pieces" fit together?
- ☑ Learn all this without leaving your home?

You can receive information on these and other topics by calling your Parent Educator. Contact information is available at the bottom of this page.

**Parent Educators...** are parents who work with the Babies Can't Wait program and have a child with disabilities who has received early intervention services. They have information and resources available for you about the program, parent involvement and multi-cultural issues.

**Babies Can't Wait Central Directory...** is the Babies Can't Wait information and referral service for both the parent and the professional, and provides information on

statewide services for children and their families. The Central Directory is administered by Parent to Parent of Georgia. Parent to Parent can also link you to a parent who has a child with disabilities similar to those of your child.

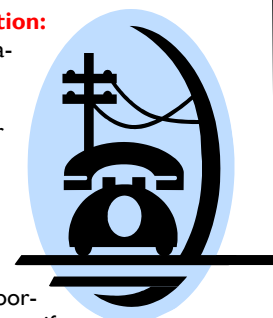
To reach the Directory: Toll free 1 (800) 229-2038 or visit their website at [www.parenttoparent.org](http://www.parenttoparent.org).

**Parent Handbook for Success in Early Intervention** (Available in English and Spanish) This 135 page handbook, developed by parents and specialists in early intervention, is designed to help families understand all as-

pects of Georgia's Babies Can't Wait program and to explain your rights and responsibilities under federal and state law. Ask your service coordinator for a copy or visit the Project SCEIs website to download a copy (see below).

### Parent Conferences on Early Intervention:

Various Babies Can't Wait districts offer parent conferences. Check with your Service Coordinator to see if your district sponsors a parent conference.



## Sometimes Talking to Another Parent Helps by Project SCEIs

### Babies Can't Wait Parent Educator Program

The Babies Can't Wait Program (BCW) introduces families to a variety of early intervention professionals trained to work with children with special needs. The Parent Educator Program has been developed to provide a parent resource to Babies Can't Wait families. BCW recognizes that sometimes it's just easier to talk to another parent who is well-

trained and knowledgeable about the BCW system. If you would like to talk to a Parent Educator, ask your service coordinator to give your name



and telephone number to the parent educator for your district or contact the BCW Central Directory (which is managed by Parent-to-Parent of Georgia) at 1(800)229-2038 or in Atlanta at (770)451-5484.

For more information on the Parent Educator Program, visit the Project SCEIs website at [http://education.gsu.edu/sceis/Parent\\_Education.htm](http://education.gsu.edu/sceis/Parent_Education.htm) or contact the SCEIs office at 404-651-0162.

## Provider's View by Beth Page M.Ed. EI Specialist

### EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

Evaluation and assessment is the next step in the process following intake. My experience with evaluation and assessment and Babies Can't Wait covers ten years. Evaluation and assessment are two different but equally important steps. Evaluation assists in providing information used in determining eligibility for supports, particularly if a child does not have a Category I (automatic eligibility) diagnosis. Assessment is ongoing, starting with intake and continuing throughout a child and family's participation in BCW.

Evaluation and assessment procedures look different in each district, but the focus is on gathering information about the child's abilities and skills in all five developmental domains: personal – social, adaptive, fine and gross motor, receptive and expressive communication, and cognitive. Information is also gathered

about routines and favorite activities, and child participation and involvement in these routines and activities including any adaptive or assistive technology needs/supports.

Best practice is to complete these evaluation and assessment procedures in the child's natural environ-



ment using toys/objects familiar to the child. I have been fortunate in my BCW work to be able to provide evaluation and assessment in the natural environment at a child's

home and/or child care placement or other important environments. I feel that I am able to obtain a more realistic picture of how a child is interacting with his/her environment and with the important people in his/her life.

I have also had the opportunity to participate for nine plus months with the coaching approach. Working closely with the team has enhanced my skills in observing and gathering information from the child, environment, and family. The discussion starts at intake and the information gathered as well as the discussions at team meetings improves pre-assessment planning allowing for the team to gather/paint a picture of a child. It leads naturally to development of an Individualized Family Service Plan with outcomes that are important and meaningful to families in their real life. It also fosters ongoing relationship-building with the members of the team that will be supporting the child and family.

*"It leads naturally to development of an IFSP with outcomes that are important and meaningful to families in their real life. It also fosters the continuation of building the relationship with the members of the team that will be supporting the child and family"*

*Beth Page, M.Ed.,  
EI Specialist*

## Program Planning cont.

*(Continued from page 1)*

asking lots of questions so that they gather useful information about the child, their family, their resources, their hopes and dreams for their child, etc. This information is collected so that two things may happen. First, BCW is required by federal law to determine whether children are eligible for the BCW program. This is the process of **evaluation**. Second, **assessment** is something that happens throughout the child's time with BCW and helps with developing the most appropriate plan for the child, family, and BCW (the IFSP). Assessment is the on-going process that provides information necessary to help determine typical family activi-

ties and routines, as well as family priorities, desired outcomes, and necessary supports that are most likely to lead to a child's development. Evaluation and assessment are important parts of the BCW process so let's look at them in a bit more depth.

### The Evaluation Process

After a child has been referred to BCW, BCW has up to 45 days to determine eligibility for BCW services and develop the initial IFSP. The service coordinator helps with this by coordinating the process. A team of people is created and called the *Multidisciplinary Team (MTD)*. At a minimum the team includes the family, the intake service coordinator, and two professionals from

two different disciplines (e.g. an educator and a speech language pathologist). The team is responsible for collecting information using a variety of tools/procedures and will come to consensus about eligibility. A good rule of thumb is that the evaluation process is for determining eligibility and the assessment process helps determine the appropriate supports and services necessary to meet the needs of the family.

### The Assessment Process

During a meeting, the MDT determines if a child is eligible for services or not. When the family is eligible for BCW services, figuring out "What to do next?" comes from

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# Program Planning cont.

(Continued from page 3)

important information from assessments. Assessment is defined as collecting and bringing together information about a child and family's strengths and learning needs to plan for ongoing early intervention. More specifically, "assessment" means the "ongoing tools/procedures used by appropriately qualified personnel throughout the period of a child's eligibility in BCW to identify: a) child's unique strengths, needs, and services appropriate to meet those needs in each of the following domains: cognitive, communication, adaptive, physical, and social-emotional development; and b) resources, priorities, and concerns of the family and the supports and services necessary to enhance the family's capacity to meet the developmental needs of their infant or toddler with a disability" (from the BCW Standards and Implementation Manual). As you might have noticed, many of the questions asked during intake revolve around activity settings, child and family interests and assets,

and interactions and participation, in a variety of family and community settings. After the evaluation, these questions are usually followed-up with assessment activities that involve observation of the child participating in a variety of family/community/child care activities and routines. This information leads to a better understanding of the day-to-day workings of the family and helps with the development of the IFSP - the plan that determines how BCW can provide supports and services.

## The IFSP

The intent of this "information gathering" is to paint a picture of the family and their daily/weekly life. It is important to remember that all of this is done to "enhance the family's capacity" to meet the needs of their child. Research shows that families benefit most when their capacity and competence are increased so that they engage their children/family in meaningful activities and routines that enhance the

development of the child. After all, BCW will come and go, but family is forever. The IFSP is a written document that puts all of the assessment and evaluation information together and explicitly states some of the outcomes that the BCW team, including the family, will work toward.

Once the IFSP is in place, it would make sense that this is when services begin. Not at all! From the first intake meeting with the intake service coordinator, a family is receiving services. The service coordinator is one more part of the team and remains as the contact as the family receives additional supports and services through BCW. This will be the focus of the next issue of *Family Focus*. Remember, in all of this, the family should be an equal partner in BCW - the more a family knows, the better prepared they will be to affect the child's development. The BCW personnel are great sources of knowledge and will help in any way they can.

**"The intent of this 'information gathering' is to paint a picture of the family and their daily/weekly life. It is important to remember that all of this is done to 'enhance the family's capacity' to meet the needs of their child."**  
James Ernest, Ph.D.

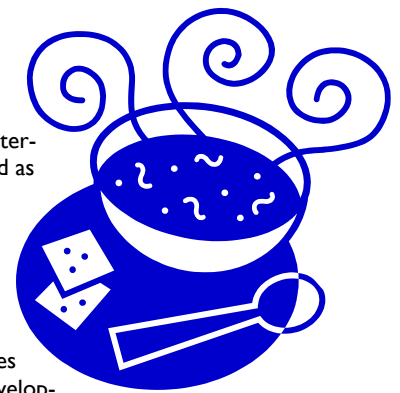
# Alphabet Soup

- ☑ **Assessment:** Collecting and bringing together information about a child and family's strengths and learning needs to plan for ongoing early intervention. It looks at activities and routines between family, friends, neighbors, and the child. It is used to determine the outcomes and supports that are most likely to enhance a child's development.
- ☑ **Evaluation:** The process by which the team (which includes the family and qualified early interventional professionals) collects information using a

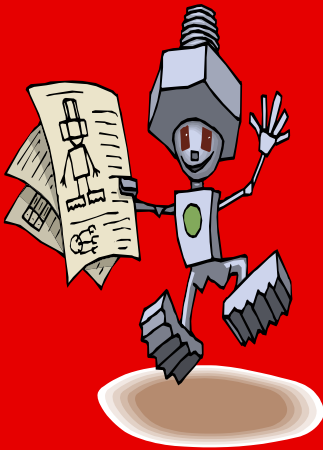
variety of tools/procedures (at least two different ones) that will be used to determine the child's initial and ongoing eligibility for *Babies Can't Wait*.

- ☑ **IFSP, Individualized Family Service Plan:** A written plan for providing early intervention supports and services to eligible children/families that is developed jointly by the family, service coordinator, and other appropriate, qualified personnel providing early intervention services. It is based on the multi-disciplinary evaluation and assessment of the child and the

assessment of the strengths and needs of the child's family, as determined by the family and as required in 34 CFR 303.322. It includes developmental outcomes, strategies, and activities, as well as services necessary to meet the IFSP outcomes and to enhance the development of the child and the capacity of the family to meet the special needs of the child.



## Words To Know



## NUTS 'N BOLTS

### ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS IN EARLY INTERVENTION AT INTAKE

#### FOR FAMILIES:

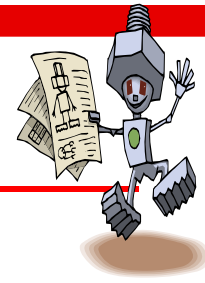
- ☑ PARTICIPATE
- ☑ SELECT THE DAILY ACTIVITIES AND ROUTINES
- ☑ HELP IDENTIFY CAREGIVERS

#### FOR PROVIDERS:

- ☑ KNOW AND PRACTICE BABIES CAN'T WAIT STANDARDS AND PHILOSOPHY
- ☑ FIND OUT ABOUT FAMILY'S ROUTINES
- ☑ SUPPORT FAMILIES TO MAKE INFORMED DECISIONS

Adapted from Infant and Toddler Connection of Virginia: Philosophy and Considerations for Individualizing Early Intervention Services 2003

## What's a Person to Do?



### Roles and Expectations In Early Intervention

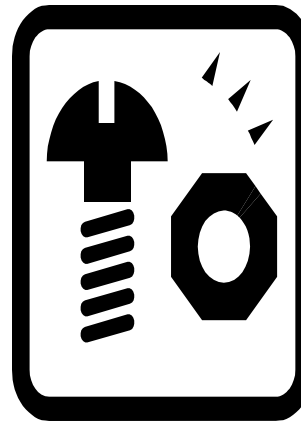
#### Part 2: Program Planning

Knowing what to expect may help your family feel more comfortable as you continue your journey through the Babies Can't Wait program and allow you to take a more active role in the early intervention process. The initial step you took in your Babies Can't Wait (BCW) journey was called intake. It was your first contact with BCW staff and consisted primarily of information sharing. This information sharing will continue throughout your BCW experience. It will provide the "real-life" information that will help determine initially if your child is eligible for BCW and then help determine the child's and family's unique strengths and needs, which will guide the program planning (IFSP development).

Evaluation (used to determine eligibility) and assessment (used for program planning) both offer families important opportunities to share information about your child and family with the team. It's very important that you participate in the process. You know more about your child and family than anyone else. Remember: YOU are the expert on your child. Without your involvement, the team will not have the knowledge they need to make informed decisions regarding how best to help support you as you learn how best to support your child.

The assessment process means

that you and the professionals work together to learn about your child. You will identify and select the daily activities and routines that would be best, not only for evaluation and assessment, but also for ongoing intervention as you develop the IFSP together. You will also help identify the important people in your child's life such as grandparents, brothers and sisters, and child-care providers. They also play an important part in your child's life.



The assessment should provide a snapshot of your child doing activities he would normally do, where he would normally do them and with the people with whom he would normally be doing them. You will decide how you would like to participate in the evaluation and assessment process. You may choose to describe how your child participates in everyday routines such as play, bathing, and eating, or you may prefer

to show the evaluation team some of your normal routines. You might help by completing parent surveys. Rest assured that whatever means of participation you choose the information you share is invaluable. You are an important part of the evaluation team.

So what should you expect from the BCW evaluation team? That they will be familiar with the BCW standards and philosophy and they will share this information with you as you go through the process. They will work with you in your home and/or community. They will want to know about family and friends and how you and your child interact with them. They will ask you about your routines. Not because they want to be nosy, but because the information will help them better support you as you support your child.

Again, you are in control of how much information you are comfortable sharing at this time. Most families become more comfortable sharing information as they develop relationships with their BCW providers. The ultimate goal of assessment is to provide information to you and the professionals, who will help support you as you make your decisions about what outcomes you would like on the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), and then identify what supports and resources are needed to meet those outcomes.

# Conceptual Framework

Research indicates that some ways of providing supports and resources to children and families are more effective than others. In order to consistently provide Babies Can't Wait families the supports and resources in the best possible manner, Georgia has adopted five ideas or concepts. These concepts are supported by the research on effective early intervention. They also represent the intent of the federal law known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

These evidence-based ideas form the backbone or **conceptual framework** that guides early intervention in Georgia.

Families have long been recognized as a very important part of the early intervention process. You are the EXPERT on your child, and Babies Can't Wait provides staff with expertise in child development and

family supports. The conceptual framework provides the foundational structure needed to support the teaming between parents and providers (coaches) that is needed to help children succeed.



New	Traditional
<p><b>Promotion Models</b> Focus on promoting competence and positive functioning</p> <p><b>Capacity-Building Models</b> Provide opportunities for people to use existing abilities and develop new skills</p> <p><b>Strength-Based Models</b> Acknowledge the assets of people and help them use these assets to improve functioning</p> <p><b>Resource-Based Models</b> Describe practices in terms of a wide variety of formal and informal supports within a community</p> <p><b>Family-Centered Models</b> View professionals as agents of families and responsive to family desires and priorities</p>	<p><b>Treatment Models</b> Focus on remediation of a disorder, problem, or disease, or its consequence</p> <p><b>Expertise Models</b> Depend on professional expertise to solve problems for people</p> <p><b>Deficit-Based Models</b> Focus on correcting a person's weaknesses or problems</p> <p><b>Service-Based Models</b> Describe practices primarily in terms of professional services</p> <p><b>Professionally-Centered Models</b> View professionals as experts who determine the needs of a person from their own as opposed to the other person's perspectives</p>

Adapted from Conceptual Framework for Evidence-Based Practices in Early Intervention Dunst (2000)

## Development of the IFSP by Project SCEIs

### IFSP stands for:

- Individualized** The plan is designed for your child and your family.
- Family** Family focused on your family's plan of action.
- Service** Based on the strengths and needs of your child and family; these are identified by you and your team and support the outcomes that are developed.
- Plan** The written document that guides outcomes, strategies, and services/supports.

### Your IFSP will tell you...

- What you and your team have identified as outcomes or changes;
- Specific activities that will be focused on and how you will know if you're making progress;
- Who will help you and your family with these activities;
- What services/supports will be provided;
- When services/supports will begin;
- How long services/supports will be provided;
- How often services/supports will be provided;
- How the services/supports will be paid for; and
- Who your service coordinator and other team members will be.

### IFSP Development

A meeting must be held and an initial IFSP developed within 45 days of the referral for children who meet eligibility criteria.

### IFSP Review

The initial IFSP outcomes are reviewed at least every six months to determine if changes are needed. The IFSP is reviewed formally at one year. You must provide written consent before services/supports begin. The IFSP can be changed whenever the family or the team feels it is necessary.

For more information on this topic, see the Handbook for Success in Babies Can't Wait (<http://education.gsu.edu/sceis/>) or call your Service Coordinator or Parent Educator.



Local Program Contact Info

Address:

Phone:

Fax:

E-mail:

Mailing Address Line 1  
Mailing Address Line 2  
Mailing Address Line 3  
Mailing Address Line 4  
Mailing Address Line 5



## Featured Family Resources

Families enrolled in Georgia's Babies Can't Wait program frequently indicate a need to locate additional resources for their children and family members. Each issue of the Family Focus will feature a few of the numerous resources currently available to support families on their early intervention journey. If you would like to share additional resources, please forward your recommendations to [listen@valdosta.edu](mailto:listen@valdosta.edu).

**Babies Can't Wait (BCW):** BCW is part of the Department of Human Resources (DHR), Division of Public Health's Children with Special Needs system. It is Georgia's statewide interagency service delivery system for infants and toddlers with developmental delays or disabilities and their families. Phone 1-888-651-8224 or visit

their website. <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/bcw>

**Babies Can't Wait Parent Educators:** Parent Educators are all parents of children with disabilities who have received early intervention and who are familiar with the Babies Can't Wait program and policies. As a component of Project SCEIs (Skilled Credentialed Early Interventionists), Parent Educators provide significant support to families at the local district level as well as providing an important family voice at the state level. This site includes downloadable copies of the Handbook for Success in Babies Can't Wait (English and Spanish Version) as well as an extensive web Directory of Internet Resources Concerning

Disabilities. <http://education.gsu.edu/sceis>

**IFSP web:** An online self paced tutorial created for Nebraska families and professionals. It is designed to assist in the development of Individual Family Service Plans (IFSPs). It includes detailed information describing the history and content of an IFSP, the cornerstones of a good IFSP, and how to incorporate family concerns, child and family outcomes, resources, and even transition planning into the plan. Even though this site was developed for families in Nebraska, it contains a great deal of core information that would be beneficial to families across the United States. <http://www.answers4families.org/ifspweb>

