

***Guidance for Conducting Brainstorming**

The purpose of coaching is to build the individual's capacity to solve problems (identify, evaluate, and implement effective solutions). Brainstorming should be implemented in a manner that prompts the individual being coached to take the lead role in identifying potential solutions/ideas. The potential solutions should include a mix of informal and formal resources and supports. Informal supports include family, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, etc. with whom families often "trade favors." Informal supports are often flexible and renewable, meaning the family can continue to access it and the family contributes in some valuable way the relationship. Formal supports include organizations, agencies, and businesses whose resources are reliable, but sometimes costly or nonrenewable. The following prompts can be used to ensure the practitioner provides ample opportunities for the active participation of the individual being coached.

- What else have you done/thought about?
- What other options can you think of? What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?
- Would it be helpful if I offer what I know?

After these (or similar) prompts it is appropriate for the coach to offer up some additional ideas. After the ideas are on the table, the coach reinforces the leadership role of the individual by asking him/her what he/she thinks about the ideas.

The focus should be to help the family build and maintain a network of resources.

Tips for Effectively Coaching Early Childhood and Family Support Practitioners

Although we have provided a framework and a process for supervisors coaching direct service practitioners, conversations can sometimes be unpredictable. Below are some helpful pointers to keeping your coaching conversations productive:

- Schedule coaching meetings with individual practitioners regularly (weekly) to build a routine for reflecting on one's practice and to keep the practitioner's continuous improvement plan moving forward.
- You may need to reframe some of the questions several times to prompt the practitioners to think more deeply, analyze the situation, or to fully answer. For example, you may need to ask "what are your options?" more than one time to prompt the practitioner to identify a broad range of options to analyze.
- Avoid jumping in and providing answers or options before the practitioner has had an opportunity to reflect. The power and benefits of using a coaching approach during supervision come from the practitioner's active participation in the reflective process. His/her abilities to reflect over time will improve with experience.
- Practitioners who are reflective may provide information beyond the question you asked. Be mindful of the information the practitioner is providing by keeping organized notes. Your notes can keep the conversation from becoming redundant. Space is provided on this **Roadmap** for noting points, options, or decisions made by the learner
- Practice being a reflective supervisor/manager. After each conversation, reflect on the long-term impact of the conversation on the practitioner you coached and the families with whom he/she works. Think about what you could have done and what you can do next time to build his/her capacity to better support the families enrolled in your program.

Adapted from: Rush, D. D. & Shelden, M. L. (2008). Tips and techniques for effective coaching interactions. *CASEinPoint*, 1(2).

Your Role in Providing Comprehensive and Integrated Professional Development Experiences

As a supervisor or manager, you are the lynchpin that connects external trainings, in-service opportunities, and the experiences direct service staff have with the children and families they support. The process of making meaning from those diverging experiences is essential to the growth and development of the practitioner and establishes and maintains an appropriate relationship-based environment. Regular (ideally weekly) reflective supervision or coaching provides necessary opportunities for direct service provider to think deeply about the impact of their work in light of their expanding knowledge and provides a process for the continuous improvement of your program's supports to families. Remember, the most effective types of professional development ensure that learners receive guidance, feedback, and the types of support that ensure deeper understanding and mastery of the training content (Trivette, Dunst, Hamby, & O'Herin, 2009). The time you spend reflecting with staff is an investment in the families and children served by your program.

Trivette, C. M., Dunst, C. J., Hamby, D. W., & O'Herin, C. E. (2009). Characteristics and consequences of adult learning methods and strategies. *Practical Evaluation Reports*, 2(1), 1-32.

Start Here

Last time, we met
we talked about...
How has that
been going?

How has
that been
going? Tell
me more
about that...

Why do you
think this is
happening?

Well

Not well

What
matched or
worked
well?

What did
you do to
cause that?

How did you
follow up on
the joint
plan?

How did you
help the
family identify
formal and
informal
resources?

How did you
help the
family
brainstorm?

How did you
help the family
evaluate the
advantages
and
disadvantages
of their
options?

How did you
decide when
and how to
share
information?

How did you
help the
family select
and access
needed
resources?

How did
you arrive
at a joint
plan?

How does that match
research/our policies
and procedures?

Share information
about coaching,
resource-based
practices, research,
and/or policies &
procedures. Then
brainstorm how to use
them.

What are the
advantages/
disadvantages?

What else would you
need to do or consider or
is required (e.g., licensing,
policies, procedures,
laws, Performance
Standards, rules)?

Provide
informative
feedback if needed
(e.g., policies,
procedures,
standards.) What
are your thoughts
about those ideas?

What are your
next steps?

What supports
do you need/
want?

When
should we
revisit this
plan?

Did not revisit the joint plan

Did not discuss resources or only discussed formal resources

Did not brainstorm or shared ideas before the family did

Did not discuss advantages and disadvantages

Did not share information or says, "I don't know"

Did not help the family select/access resources or accessed the resource for the family

Did not get to a plan or told parent what the plan should be



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Strengthening families. Advancing excellence.