



Evidence-Based Practice Tip Sheet Series

NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES

Watch Now!



WHAT ARE NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES?

Natural learning environment practices support parents' and other caregivers' recognition and use of child interests as a way of capitalizing on the many learning opportunities within a child and family's everyday lives (Shelden & Rush, 2007).



WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES IN PART C EARLY INTERVENTION?

Natural learning environments extend beyond settings and locations and include everyday routines, experiences, and activities occurring in different contexts as a part of family and community life (Raab & Dunst, 2004).

Natural learning environment practices align with key early intervention principles including: "Infants and toddlers learn best through everyday experiences and interactions with familiar people in familiar contexts" (ECTA, 2008).

Research indicates that early childhood intervention programs must use natural learning environment practices that are promotional, strengths-based, resource-based, family-centered, and build the capacity of caregivers to be confident and competent in promoting the development of the children in their care (Shelden & Rush, 2007).



WHAT DOES THE LAW SAY ABOUT NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES?

Although the the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does not address specific natural learning environment *practices*, it does promote use of **evidence based practices**. IDEA 34 CFR 303.1 states that: "A statewide system described in section 1433 of this title shall include, at a minimum, the following components: . . . (a) (2) A State policy that is in effect and that ensures that appropriate early intervention services based on **scientifically based** research, to the extent practicable, are available to all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families . . ." Additionally, Wisconsin Administrative Code - Dept. of Health Services, Chapter 90.11.(2)(a)(1) outlines the general conditions and general role of providers of early intervention services.

Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program Operations Guide
see Chapter 10: Early Intervention Services



WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES IN PART C EARLY INTERVENTION?

- ✓ When a child is involved with something or someone that they find interesting, research shows that the child will engage for longer periods of time, thus yielding especially positive benefits related to child learning (Shelden & Rush, 2007).
- ✓ Natural learning environment practices support parents and other primary caregivers in understanding the importance of everyday activities as the sources of interest-based children's learning opportunities (Shelden & Rush, 2022).

WHAT ARE CONSIDERATIONS FOR USING NATURAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT PRACTICES IN PART C EARLY INTERVENTION?



Contextualized IFSP Outcomes: How does your team ensure that IFSP outcomes reflect real-life contextualized settings and situations?

Parent Responsiveness: What strategies does your team use to intentionally and consistently support the parent/caregiver in being highly responsive to the child?

Child Interests: How does your team use the child's interests as a basis for promoting child participation and learning?

Everyday Opportunities and Activities: How does your team use, adapt and enhance family and child everyday opportunities and activities to support child learning? How might you help to increase the variety and frequency of everyday learning opportunities?

Child and Family Community Life: How does your team engage the parent/caregiver in using community activities as the context for child learning?

Scheduling: How does your team schedule visits to ensure that services are provided in a timely, flexible and activity-focused manner according to the needs and priorities of the child and family?

Please see reference page for sources utilized within the evidence-based practice tip sheet series.

