

What you will learn in this module

How to give parents of children with disabilities the support they need

Parents may feel isolated and rejected when their child is born with a disability. They often need more support than families of typical children.

How to partner with parents

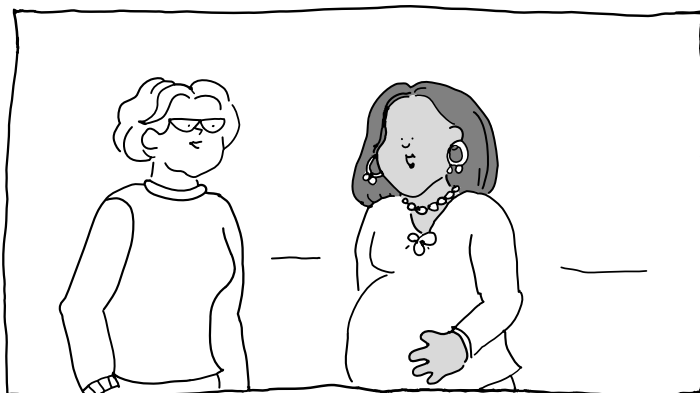
Teachers can take some of the pressure off parents. They can help them understand their child's development and particular needs.

How to be part of an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) team

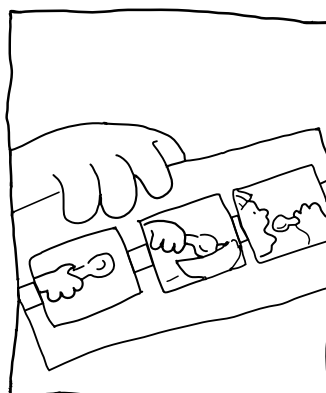
Teachers can collaborate with Early Intervention professionals to support families.

Using Pictures to Learn

As you read this story notice how Ms. Lazard acts as a role model for Isabel, by showing her a new way to help Alexandro learn.



Isabel: "I've just about given up on teaching anything to Alexandro. He doesn't respond to anything I try."



Ms. Lazard: "Well, here's what we're trying. Come see how he does."



Ms. Lazard: "Alexandro, it's time for snack. Pick up the spoon."



Ms. Lazard: "Scoop it up."



Ms. Lazard: "That's it. Now eat your applesauce."



Isabel: "It looks like pictures are the way to go. I'm going to try them at home. Thanks!"

Flexibility

All families have their own concerns. But families from cultures different from yours may have problems you wouldn't guess. "Savuth's family is a good example of that," said Ms. Rodriguez. "When his mother enrolled him, I didn't know how we were going to communicate. She's a Cambodian refugee and her English is difficult for me to understand, but the real problem was that it seemed like she didn't want to make decisions."

"I talked to the social worker — she has some Cambodian clients. And the first thing she said was, 'Where's the grandmother?' I told her I never saw a grandmother. She said that Cambodians let the oldest in the family make decisions, and they're used to working things out as a group. Since the rest of the family had moved, I figured I could take the grandmother role for Savuth's mother, but first I asked her if she knew an older person who could advise us. She was so pleased! She came in with a nice grandmother substitute, and we got along fine. If you want to work with a family, you have to find out how that family works."



🗨️ What do you think?

A refugee family from Afghanistan brought their 28-month-old son, Essan, to Ms. Chen's center. Essan had lost his foot in the war. *To support this family, Ms. Chen needs to learn:*

- (a) how to say hello in their language, so they feel welcome
- (b) how war affects children
- (c) how their family decision system works, as well as what they need

The correct answer is (c). Working with families from different cultures means respecting their right to do things differently. In traditional societies, people have set roles. The father does this, the mother's role is that. And the older family members may play a different role than they do in this culture. Teachers need to understand what role each family member plays. That's what keeps the interaction running smoothly.