



Early Intervention Clearinghouse

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Plan Ahead to Prevent Tantrums and Meltdowns During the Holidays

The holidays can be an exciting time. Everyone may look forward to family gatherings, holiday trips, and breaks from school and child care. However, for young children, the holidays can be difficult. Parties, shopping, and other activities may take families out of their usual daily routine. These routines provide security and stability for young children. It can be difficult for children to follow directions, use gentle hands, and wait their turns when they are hungry, tired, or overstimulated. Regular meals, sleep times, and opportunities to play and relax help children regulate their behavior and emotions.

Planning for challenging moments can help make your holiday times more pleasant. Help your child prepare for the routine and schedule changes that accompany the holidays by using a variety of strategies to help your child understand what is going to happen. Here are a couple ideas that can help children who struggle with changes in daily routines:

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HOLIDAYS

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- **Picture schedule:** Begin by thinking through the changes that will happen. Help your child understand these changes by using a picture schedule (i.e., pictures of what may happen throughout the day). Pictures can help your child understand the order of events.
- **If/then chart or statement:** You may also try an “if/then” chart or statement to make behavior expectations clear. For example, you might say, “If you can sit in your chair for snack, then you can play with blocks.”

The holidays often include parties or events. Attending crowded events may be especially hard for young children. Large family gatherings may be loud or busy. These crowded, high-energy events may lead to sensory overload. Plan ahead to use strategies that will help your child be successful during these experiences. Here are a few strategies to get you started:

Allow for sensory breaks: After you are inside at a gathering, plan a walk or time on the playground for some fresh air and movement. If it is too cold outside, play a gross motor activity indoors (e.g., hide and seek, playing catch).

Consider sensory challenges: Holiday gatherings may be filled with sounds, sights, and smells. If you expect loud music or bright lights, bring headphones or sunglasses to lower the sound and light, respectively.

Write a story: Fold a piece of paper and make a book with each activity that will happen during the event. For example, the story may state: “First, we will go to Aunt Lucy’s house and take off our coats. Next, we will play. After, we will eat lunch. Then, we will get ready to go home.” Draw pictures to accom-



pany each step. You can also include photos of the individuals you will see so your child can look forward to seeing these special people.

Even with the best advance planning, challenging moments may occur that cause children to have tantrums or “meltdowns.” These challenging moments may cause parents to worry that they are not doing the right things to help their child or embarrassment about their child’s behavior. This can be especially stressful when family, friends, or even strangers are around to see these challenging moments. Remember, these behaviors are typical for all young children. Remind yourself and your child to take a deep breath, take a break, and then regroup.

Help Us Improve the Clearinghouse and EI Services

As a parent, have you ever had concerns or questions about the early intervention (EI) services your child receives? Have you ever had ideas on how EI services can be improved? Do you feel like you have access to the information and resources you need for your child and family?

The Early Intervention Clearinghouse, on behalf the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), is holding focus group sessions with parents and families that have received EI services on how to better inform and serve families in early intervention.

One of the key features of successful EI services and effective family engagement is the ability to listen to and understand parents’ concerns, ideas, and sug-

gestions. Focus groups can be an effective tool for gathering in-depth information, perceptions, opinions, and experiences about a specific topic. In a focus group, you are welcome to share your experiences and reflect on each other’s responses. We believe that the information we collect from these focus groups can help IDHS and the EI Clearinghouse better meet families’ needs and provide insight into how to provide superior EI services.

During these focus groups, we will be asking participants about the information they have received about early intervention and how we can better inform families in the future. We also will be asking families how they might feel about receiving some early intervention services through video chats.

The Early Intervention Clearinghouse is looking for parents or family members of young children (birth to age 8) who have received EI services to participate in these focus groups around the state. Parents and family members who participate will be asked to complete a questionnaire about their family and their experiences with early intervention services.

They will also take part in a focus group discussion with other parents or family members. These sessions will last about 60–90 minutes, and participants will receive a \$10 gift card and new children’s books.

For more information, please contact Meghan Burke at (217) 300-1226 or meghanbm@illinois.edu.

Everyday Early Intervention: Let's Get Dressed

Getting dressed is an everyday activity that is full of opportunities to work on EI outcomes. Getting undressed for the bath, putting on warm clothes for outside play, and changing from pajamas to daytime clothes are opportunities to practice skills. During these moments, your child is observing, trying new physical skills, and talking with caregivers. Here are some ways you can help your child learn and develop new skills during this everyday routine.



Fine and Gross Motor Skills

Encourage your child to try snaps, buttons, and zippers. Children also move their large muscles and develop motor planning skills while dressing. Help your child practice pushing her arms into the sleeves of her coat and balancing as she puts on pants. Sometimes, the skills for undressing are easier to learn. Encourage your child by saying, "Can you unsnap your pants or pull open the tabs on your shoes?"



Cognitive Skills

Practice cognitive skills such as sequencing, visual spatial skills, and matching. Help your child find matching socks, match items by color, and find clothes to put on. Practice first, second, and third. Say, "First put on your coat, then your hat, then your mittens." Be silly and see if your child notices things that do not belong.



Language Skills

Name the articles of clothing, use descriptive words for colors and textures of items, and describe the patterns and pictures on clothing. Introduce words such as *over*, *under*, and *through* as you put on pieces of clothing. Help your child practice following instructions: "Find mommy's boots by the door and bring them over."



Social Emotional Skills

Being able to dress oneself provides a sense of accomplishment and pride. Praise your child when he tries to dress himself. Say, "Good job getting your shoes on your feet!" Let your child decide what to wear. Say, "Would you like the shirt with dots or stripes?"



 For more information, visit the Illinois Early Intervention Clearinghouse at <https://eicclearinghouse.org>

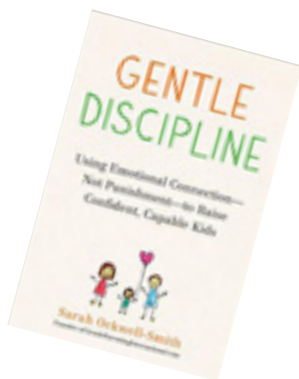
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Challenging Behavior/Social-Emotional Resource Guide

Gentle Discipline: Using Emotional Connection – Not Punishment – to Raise Confident, Capable Kids

Sarah Ockwell-Smith
TarcherPerigee, 2017
HQ 770.4 .O25 2017
Also available as an **audiobook**



The Emotional Life of the Toddler

Alicia F. Lieberman
Simon & Schuster, 2018
HQ 774.5 .L54 2018
Also available as an **audiobook** and **eBook**

Ignore It! How Selectively Looking the Other Way Can Decrease Behavioral Problems and Increase Parenting Satisfaction

Catherine Pearlman
Blackstone Audio, 2017
HQ 755.8 .lg5 2017
Also available as an **audiobook** and **eBook**



1-2-3 Magic for Kids: Helping Your Kids Understand the New Rules

Tom W. Phelan and Tracy M. Lee
Sourcebooks, 2017
HQ 770.4 .P486 2017

Love

Matt de la Peña
G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2018
PZ 7 .P3725 2018



ASQ:SE-2 Learning Activities & More

Elizabeth Twombly, Leslie J. Munson, and Lois M. Pribble
Paul H. Brookes, 2018
WS 105.5 .E8 T9749 2018

How to Raise Emotionally Healthy Children. Vol. 1: Babies

Vicki Murray-Kurzban
23-minute DVD
InJoy, 2013
LB 1139.23 .H69 2013 Vol. 1
Also available in **Spanish**

From Biting to Hugging: Understanding Social Development in Infants and Toddlers

Donna S. Wittmer and Deanna W. Clauson
Gryphon House, 2018
LB 1139.23 .W58 2018
Also available as an **eBook**



Social and Emotional Development in Early Intervention: A Skills Guide for Working With Children

Mona Delahooke
PESI, 2017
BF 721 .D372 2017

Mindful Discipline: A Loving Approach to Setting Limits and Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Child

Sauna L. Shapiro and Chris White
New Harbinger, 2014
BF 723 .E6 S537 2014
Also available as an **audiobook**

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Social Workers' Roles in Early Intervention

As part of our series of stories on different members of early intervention teams, we asked a number of licensed clinical social workers (LCSW) about their work with families in early intervention (EI). Below are some of their responses.

"Social workers are members of the EI team who can support and assist in so many different ways with our EI families and can also provide therapeutic support within the home setting. Social workers address the emotional and behavioral challenges that often coexist with other developmental challenges a child and family might be experiencing. Social workers also provide clinical therapy and support for children and families who have been impacted by any kind of trauma or mental illness, and we also provide advocacy and support in connecting children and families to resources that might provide further support in their community." — Angie Pitsenberger

"A social worker generally comes from a systems approach, which takes into account many areas of the child.

When I do an assessment I look at the family's resources (emotional, financial, spiritual, supportive), education, health, mental health, housing, lifestyle, etc., to determine what help they might need." — Peggy Vorona

A social worker "is a vital member of the early intervention team who participates in the development of the individualized family service plan (IFSP) and collaborates with other EI disciplines and the family in the implementation of identified strategies. As a specialist in the social and emotional domains, an LCSW provides family training, education and support to help families and team members understand and respond to the special needs of the child and family and support the development of family relationships and routines." — Rekha Murthy

"Social workers have expertise to address the risk factors that, separately from developmental delays, make children eligible for early intervention services, including parental mental illness or substance abuse or parents who are very

young. Also, families who receive early intervention services may also be impacted by trauma such as domestic violence or violence in the community, and social workers can help support and strengthen child-parent relationships that can be challenged by trauma." — Kate Goetz

"Social workers join families on their journey and help families manage the stress in their lives. We establish a trusting relationship with families and meet them where they are in their journey. We use a strengths-based approach to build the family's coping skills and view of their child and his/her development. We assess the need for outside services and resources and provide the follow through to ensure that these connections are made.

"We assist parents in working on specific behaviors that are a concern and within daily routines that are currently stressful for families. These could include sleep difficulties, mealtime difficulties, aggressive behavior, and difficulty behaving outside of the home in their local community (park, stores, restaurants)." — Lynn Sloyan

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