

Talking With Your Family About Your Child's Disability



Within your immediate family, siblings play an important role in their brother's or sister's development. Extended family members may not understand your child's delay/disabilities or your day-to-day lives and responsibilities. It is up to you to decide whether to share information about your child's needs with family members.

If you want to share information with family members, here are ways you can interact with extended family members and siblings to help them better understand your child's delays/disabilities and your everyday life as their parent.

Simple and effective ways to talk with your extended family

- **Teach family members:** You can talk with extended family members about your child's strengths, personality, therapies, appointments, and the activities they enjoy. You also can answer questions family members may have about your child's delays/disabilities.

Example: If your child spends the day with an aunt and she is uncomfortable using the child's orthotics, make a short video on your phone to show how to put the orthotics on.

- **Explore and use family resources:** Each family has its unique informal resources. These are people who provide parents with information and emotional support. Informal resources can be extended family, friends, coworkers, or community members. They may have helpful information and experiences.

Example: You may have a friend who works in childcare or a brother who is a nurse. You can use these personal connections to find more information about available supports in the community.

- **Invite individuals to appointments:** Invite extended family members or friends to participate in medical and/or EI appointments and visits. This may help them understand your experiences, your child's development, and how they can support you and your child in everyday life.

Simple and effective ways to talk with your child's siblings

- **Talk with sibling(s) in their language:** Talk with them using words and phrases they will understand. When talking about your child with a disability, emphasize their strengths and what they like to do and enjoy. Also talk about simple ways to include their brother or sister in everyday life, routines, and activities.
- **Read books:** Share books with the sibling(s) about their brother or sister's disability. Check out your local library or the Early Intervention Clearinghouse for books.
- **Meet other siblings:** Consider attending Sibshops, which are events for siblings of individuals with disabilities. Sibshops provide opportunities for siblings to meet other siblings who may have shared experiences. To find a Sibshop event near you, visit www.siblingsupport.org/about-sibshops/find-a-sibshop-near-you

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

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