



First Steps

#2

Natural Environments and Daily Routines

Our children do not come with instructions. Parents Reaching Out provides resources that help families make informed decisions about the care and education of their children. We thank the families who have asked questions and found successful ways to advocate for their child for providing the inspiration for these fact sheets.

Each family will define what “Natural Environments” looks like for their family. Young children learn from interacting and playing with you, the parent, other family members and others such as a babysitter or childcare workers. They also learn through play with other children.



The definition of natural environments is everyday routines, activities and places of the family. . Effective early intervention services are provided in places where your family typically lives, learns and plays, or the family’s daily routine/natural environment. The goal is to help families identify natural learning opportunities throughout the child’s day.

Natural Environments are the ‘natural’ or everyday ‘activity settings’ for your child. They are places where they would be if they didn’t have a special developmental concern. They are the places where all children live, learn and play.

Daily Routines: What does your family participate in on a daily basis? Examples may include:

- At home: bathing, eating, dressing, playing, etc.
- Outside the home: grocery shopping, attending childcare, visiting friends or relatives, parent–toddler groups, etc.
- Events: birthday parties, holiday gatherings, family get-togethers and celebrations, etc.
- Other Activities: Recreational center, playgroups, playgrounds, libraries, any place parents and children go for fun and support.

Research shows that when children are at risk for a developmental delay, the earlier we provide services, the better the outcome is for the child. Early Intervention is designed to help children and families get off to a good start. Research has also shown that when children’s needs are met in the Natural Environment, outcomes are even better. A child receiving services in the family’s daily routines and activities, in essence, receive early intervention 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

High Expectations

As families, we need to develop a vision of high expectations for our children. Though it is sometimes difficult to do, looking down the road a few years, we can envision our children will be fully included in all activities. Having our children included in our daily routines is the first step towards including our children when they are older. Planting seeds of high expectations now, will develop roots that will last a life time

Parents can help decide where early intervention services will take place...

- *What does a typical day look like for our family?*
- *Where do we go? What do we do?*
- *Are there activities that we don't do now, that we would need help with in order to participate?*
- *How can services be provided that make the most sense for our family?*
- *What places or activities does my child enjoy? What places or activities upset him?*
- *Are there other people (Grandma, baby sitter, child care worker etc.) that need to know about how to promote our daughter's development.*

We want families to know that Early Intervention can assist all eligible families and their children.

The first years of life are the most important - developmentally! Take advantage of all supports and services that will help improve your child's future.

As a parent, you decide and share with the IFSP team:

- Your family's needs and priorities
- The outcomes of early intervention that are important for your child and your family

As a parent, you and the IFSP team decide together:

- The strategies to meet the outcomes decided upon
- What early intervention services your child and family will receive
- When and where your child and family will get early intervention services
- Who will provide the services to your child and family

Connecting with Other Families

At Parents Reaching Out, family liaisons in **Project DreamCatchers** work with families of infants and toddlers, who are at risk for or have developmental delays, disabilities or medical conditions. They connect families in similar situations who can share experiences, offer practical information and build networks of support.

A new way of thinking... You have started a journey that will take your child and family to new dreams! This journey is where supports and services come together to meet the needs of children and their families in places that are natural to them and a part of "their Daily Routine".



For more information call Parents Reaching Out. We offer phone consultations and provide workshops in English or Spanish to communities throughout New Mexico. This publication was developed under a grant from the New Mexico Department of Health Family Infant Toddler program. However, the views here expressed do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Health and should not be assumed to be an endorsement by the New Mexico Department of Health.