



DEC Recommended Practices

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The DEC Recommended Practices provide guidance to practitioners and families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes and promote the development of young children, birth through age 5, who have or are at-risk for developmental delays or disabilities.
Developed by the DEC Recommended Practices Commission.

Family

Family practices refer to ongoing activities that (1) promote the active participation of families in decision-making related to their child (e.g., assessment, planning, intervention); (2) lead to the development of a service plan (e.g., a set of goals for the family and child and the services and supports to achieve those goals); or (3) support families in achieving the goals they hold for their child and the other family members.

Family practices encompass three themes:

1. ***Family-centered practices:*** Practices that treat families with dignity and respect; are individualized, flexible, and responsive to each family's unique circumstances;; provide family members complete and unbiased information to make informed decisions; and involve family members in acting on choices to strengthen child, parent, and family functioning.
2. ***Family capacity-building practices:*** Practices that include the participatory opportunities and experiences afforded to families to strengthen existing parenting knowledge and skills and promote the development of new parenting abilities that enhance parenting self-efficacy beliefs and practices.
3. ***Family and professional collaboration:*** Practices that build relationships between families and professionals who work together to achieve mutually agreed upon outcomes and goals that promote family competencies and support the development of the child.

We recommend the following family practices for practitioners:

- F1.** Practitioners build trusting and respectful partnerships with the family through interactions that are sensitive and responsive to cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic diversity.
- F2.** Practitioners provide the family with up-to-date, comprehensive and unbiased information in a way that the family can understand and use to make informed choices and decisions.
- F3.** Practitioners are responsive to the family's concerns, priorities, and changing life circumstances.
- F4.** Practitioners and the family work together to create outcomes or goals, develop individualized plans, and implement practices that address the family's priorities and concerns and the child's strengths and needs.
- F5.** Practitioners support family functioning, promote family confidence and competence, and strengthen family-child relationships by acting in ways that recognize and build on family strengths and capacities.
- F6.** Practitioners engage the family in opportunities that support and strengthen parenting knowledge and skills and parenting competence and confidence in ways that are flexible, individualized, and tailored to the family's preferences.

- F7.** Practitioners work with the family to identify, access, and use formal and informal resources and supports to achieve family-identified outcomes or goals.
- F8.** Practitioners provide the family of a young child who has or is at risk for developmental delay/disability, and who is a dual language learner, with information about the benefits of learning in multiple languages for the child's growth and development.
- F9.** Practitioners help families know and understand their rights.
- F10.** Practitioners inform families about leadership and advocacy skill-building opportunities and encourage those who are interested to participate.