



kits

kansas ⁱⁿservice training system

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N E W S L E T T E R

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The 5 R's of Healthy Brain Development

One of the most important things we can do as early interventionists is to strengthen the relationship between the children we work with and their family members. Early Interventionists are in a unique position to understand the science of the developing child, the lasting effects children who live in chronically stressed families may face and the critical importance for us to support the child's relationships with their caregivers. The Zero to Three's *The Growing Brain* curriculum talks about the 5 R's, which are the five key ingredients for building a healthy brain. They are: 1) Relationships, 2) Responsive interactions, 3) Respect, 4) Routines, and 5) Repetition. The focus is on these five, as they have the most power in our everyday interactions with young children and families.

Relationships: When children feel safe and secure, and their physical and social/emotional needs are met, they are able to explore their environments trusting that caring adults will be there to offer comfort if they experience distress or need some support. They can focus on learning through play and developing positive relationships with other children and adults. One of the most important findings from attachment research is that a strong, positive relationship with at least one adult is essential for healthy brain development. Children who do not have attachment bonds with at least one primary adult can experience poor brain development and may exhibit behavioral issues.

In early intervention, we begin each visit by asking how things have been going since our last visit, whether the plan we put in place at the end of the last visit was helpful or not effective. During this conversation it is easy to focus on just the child and his or her progress. We may need to broaden our conversation to talk about the other people involved in the routine with the child. Remembering to ask "how did that plan work for you, mom or dad, and having an extended conversation about the parent's reactions can be an effective way to show support for

the parent as well as the child. Another way to support the child-parent relationship is to simply invite the parent “wonder” about their child during any interaction they are having. Saying “I wonder what he is thinking when he looks at you that way” is an invitation for the parent to reflect and see their child as a separate little human being with his own thoughts and ideas. Many newer parenting programs include noticing at least one good thing a parent did in their interactions with the child and saying something about it. “I noticed how you ___” messages frame something the parent has done, while “I noticed how she ___ when you _____. For example, “I noticed how she looks for you the moment you enter a room” focuses attention on the relationship of the child and parent.

Responsive interactions: Responsive interactions are the “how” of interacting with very young children. In a responsive interaction with a very young child, the adult is reading the child’s verbal and nonverbal cues to understand the child’s experience and intent and then responding on the basis of that information. A responsive interaction means that the adult is following the child’s lead rather than being driven by his or her own agenda. Research shows that following a child’s lead in a nonintrusive way supports a strong relationship between the provider and child and also supports the child’s thinking skills and ability to focus and attend. As the adult, the parent is making an educated guess about what the child needs or is trying to communicate. It is the willingness to stay tuned in to the child and to keep on trying to understand his needs that characterizes responsive interactions.

As home visitors, we have probably all experienced parents who are challenged in reading their baby’s cues. It can feel a little painful or even awkward. We need to be ready to step in and help the parent through the tough interactions by speaking up about what the child might be learning and what the parent intends for the child to learn. Using a coaching conversation to talk about behavior, social/emotional development and even brain development just as we do for developmental skills can help the family identify what’s working, what’s not working and how they’d like it to work, as long as we are willing to have the conversations with the parent.

Respect: Treating even the youngest infants as valuable individuals whose efforts to communicate preferences and needs is important. When a child feels ashamed or bad about who they are, or something they’ve done, it can get in the way of

learning. They are not able to access the thinking and problem solving “top functions” of their brain because the strong negative emotions may be overwhelming them. We want children to feel safe and secure in their environments so they can have strong self-esteem, self-regulate, and feel confident in exploring their environment.

We can help families set limits and address challenging behaviors in ways that teach and guide, not that punish or shame. We can help parents understand that children are not being bad on purpose and that when their strong emotions are in charge, they really can’t follow the rules, stop crying, or control themselves. We can re-frame the behavior as an expression of the child’s frustration and inability to cope with the demands of a situation.

Routines Early interventionists know the importance of routines but sometimes families might need help understanding why we work through routines. From a brain growth and development perspective, routines help build brain connections that support memory and organizational skills. Routines create a sense of safety for a child, calming the bottom functions of the brain, emotions and feelings, and thus allowing children greater access to more top functions including working memory and focused attention. Routines also create a sense of security by helping children know what, how, and when things will happen.

Because our work is focused on routines, this is an easy concept for us to think about. However, we often focus on the developmental skills needed within the routine and we may need to strengthen our ability to help parents see and understand the importance of the social interactions that are happening during the routine. It’s the social interactions that are building and strengthening that core relationship between the child and parent and keeping those as positive and growth-affirming as possible should be an equal goal to developing the child’s specific skill. The parent’s role in routines is to provide that just-right amount of stress (scaffolding) that helps a child develop internal motivation and persistence. It’s within the safe and stable relationship with the parent allows the child to explore.

Repetition. The brain establishes connections in response to experiences. If the experiences are positive, the child’s brain connections are also positive, strengthening learning and developmental growth. If the experiences are negative, then the response that is strengthened is the activation of the

stress response system, which when hyper-aroused can cause difficulties for the child's learning and developmental growth. Reading the same stories, hearing the same songs, or going on the same walks stimulates the senses, muscles, and skills involved in these activities. Cognition, language, physical skills, and social-emotional abilities can be supported through repetition. The brain needs many opportunities to try something over and over again to cement neurological connections; we repeat to remember.

In many of the routines we work on with families, there is the repetition of a specific activity with the routine that the child simply loves to do over and over again. For example, during bedtime routines, children tend to have favorite books and want them to be read over and over again. Helping families understand what is happening in the child's brain, how they are strengthening language and cognitive pathways, might help them better tolerate the hundredth reading of the child's favorite story.

Sometimes parents might need help in understanding that this doesn't mean that we can help children learn things beyond their cognitive abilities through repetition. We would not give addition flash cards to a 2-year-old, because they would not be able to build positive pathways in their brain beyond their developmental level to do so. In fact, we could cause the child's stress response system to activate and strengthen brain connections associated with negative emotions and feeling. If done often, pushing a child beyond their developmental abilities could actually hinder a child's love of learning.

Resources:

Bohlander, A., Lerner, C. and Thompson, R. (2017) *The Growing Brain From Birth to 5 Years Old, a Curriculum for Early Childhood Providers, Zero to Three*

Submitted by Barbara Kramer, M.S., A Growing Brain Certified Trainer (785-764-4183) or email kramerb@ku.edu for more information.



Family Service Coordinator Training Highlight

The Kansas Special Health Care Needs (SHCN) Program promotes the functional skills of persons, who have or are at risk for a disability or chronic disease. The program is responsible for the planning, development, and promotion of the parameters and quality of specialty health care in Kansas in accordance with state and federal funding and direction.

SHCN provides specialized medical services to infants, children and youth up to age 21 who have eligible medical conditions. Additionally, the program provides services to persons of all ages with metabolic or genetic conditions screened through the Newborn Screening.

Services may include diagnostic evaluations, treatment services or care coordination and must be prior authorized.

Diagnostic Services are limited to a one-time evaluation without regard to family income, for Kansas youth under the age of 21 years. Prior authorization is required and may be obtained by phone or letter from program staff. Consultations must be scheduled with SHCN contracted specialty providers. Second opinions are not covered. The application process must be completed if medically eligible before additional services will be authorized.

Holistic Care Coordination Service is a partnership with clients and their families in the effort to assist them in navigating the systems of care to achieve their optimal health. Care Coordinators partner with clients and families in finding, understanding and accessing the services and resources on a medical, educational, community and personal level to make sure they are receiving the services needed. Everyone has individual needs and requires services and supports tailored to meet those needs, so in partnership with clients, we work to identify their individual needs and wants. An Action Plan to help achieve their goals, while providing the level of support they would like. Our goal at the KS-SHCN program is to empower clients to feel confident in navigating services and supports, while having a consistent person available for assistance, support, and understanding. This program is offered FREE to any individual and their family who have a special health care need or disability who qualify for the KS-

SHCN program. This is a voluntary program and all individuals have the option of opting in or out at any time.

Direct Assistance Programs (DAPs) are available for eligible clients to choose from to meet their individual needs. Clients can choose up to two DAP's per qualifying year. Care Coordinators explain the different DAPs to families and will assist them with their selections, if needed. There are currently nine DAP options to choose from: [click here](#) for more information. DAP overview chart in (English) & (Spanish)

What part of the cost does SHCN pay?

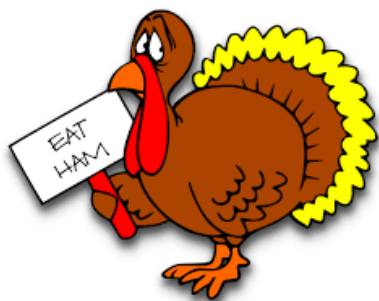
Services must be prior approved before any cost-sharing can be determined. SHCN is the payer after insurance and Medicaid.

Special Bequest

The Special Bequest Fund allows for specific request for financial support of medical equipment, specialized care, education or other needed items that can improve health status, function, or quality of life for those with special health care needs who meet SHCN eligibility requirements. All requests are subject to Special Bequest Commissioner approval. The Special Bequest request form can be submitted online.

System Navigation Training for Families are provided at locations across the state to help individuals and families learn how to navigate the systems of care. This is a FREE one-day training offered to all families who have a loved one with a special health care need. Trainings are limited to a maximum of 25 participants and conducted by individuals who also have children with special needs. Topics covered during these trainings include: Insurance, medical services, self-care, communicating with providers, Shared Plans of Care, transition, education, waivers, resources, etc. If you would like to participate in a training or request one be conducted in your area, please call 785-296-1312.

Information retrieved from <https://www.kdheks.gov/shcn/>.



Just for Families

Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) can affect young children, birth to 5 years, directly and indirectly. Beyond getting sick, many young children's social, emotional, or mental well-being has been impacted by the pandemic. Trauma faced at this developmental stage may have long-term consequences across their lifespan. CDC's [COVID-19 Parental Resource Kit: Ensuring Children and Young People's Social, Emotional, and Mental Well-being](#) can help support parents, caregivers, and other adults serving children and young people in recognizing children and young people's social, emotional, and mental challenges and helping to ensure their well-being.

The challenges of being a child with special needs during a pandemic need to be recognized and addressed. For more information on how to accomplish this, go to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/daily-life-coping/parental-resource-kit/index.html>.

Information retrieved from www.cdc.gov.

Submitted by Kim Page (620-421-6550) or email kpage@ku.edu for more information.



Knowledge and Skills for Service Coordinators

In April 2020, the National Service Coordinator Leadership Institute Group, in partnership with Division for Early Childhood (DEC) and the Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association (ITCA), with support from the Early Childhood Personnel Center, disseminated a nationwide survey identify knowledge and critical skills early intervention service coordinators should possess. In November a statement of what a service coordinator should know and be able to do was released.

The Knowledge and Skills for Service Coordinators (KSSC) document is not meant to take the place of identified skills in any program or state, but to compliment those identified competencies.

To see the document:

The recommended [Knowledge and Skills for Service Coordinators \(KSSC\)](#) can be found using this link. Additional information about the nationwide survey findings and how the information was used to finalize the KSSC please see the [RKSSC Nationwide Survey Highlights & Response to Suggestions](#). To learn more about the [KSSC](#) and stay informed on the soon to be released DEC/ITCA Joint SC Position Statement get connected with the [DEC SC CoP!](#)



ECRC Spotlight on: Create a positive and inclusive environment for children of all cultures

Create a positive and inclusive environment for all children of all cultures was written by Angèle Sancho Passe to help early childhood educators have the power to help children learn to respect themselves and others. It is an easy-to-use guide that shows how early childhood professionals can create a positive and inclusive environment for children of all cultures.

The newest addition in the Redleaf Press Quick Guide series includes elements of the National Association for the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) developmentally appropriate practice and ethical

standards; and correlations to the recommendations from the 2019 NAEYC position statement on "Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education". As well as early childhood progress indicators and best practices in adult learning.

Guides for reflection and planning for educators, cross-cultural competence and self-assessment checklists, and recommended resources are included to further assist educators.

All information retrieved from

<https://www.redleafpress.org/Creating-Diversity-Rich-Environments-for-Young-Children-P2301.aspx>

Resources like this and others are available and may be borrowed from the KITS Early Childhood Resource Center. Contact Kim Page at resourcecenter@ku.edu or (620 421-6550).

Contact the KITS

Early Childhood Resource Center

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Our entire catalog is searchable online at

[KITS ECRC](http://kskits.org/ecrc/) or <http://kskits.org/ecrc/>

Collaborative Calendar of Events

Check the KITS Collaborative Training Calendar for information on a variety of training event for Kansas early childhood professionals!

DATE	EVENT / LOCATION	SPONSOR / CONTACT / REGISTRATION
11-16-2020	Coaching Facilitator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
11-18-2020	New Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
12-01-2020	Make New Friends: Promoting Friendship and Belonging	Military Families Learning Network - https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/61152/
12-09-2020	New Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
12-17-2020	Coordinator Meeting	KITS - https://kskits.org

01-13-2020	New Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
01-18-2020	Coaching Facilitator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
01-22-2020	Coordinator Connections	KITS - https://kskits.org
02-04-2020	Coordinator Meeting	KITS - https://kskits.org
02-10-2020	New Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
02-15-2020	Coaching Facilitator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
02-18-2020	Family Service Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
03-04-2020	Coordinator Meeting	KITS - https://kskits.org
03-15-2020	Coaching Facilitator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
03-18-2020	Family Service Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
04-09-2020	Coordinator Connections	KITS - https://kskits.org
04-14-2020	New Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
04-19-2020	Coaching Facilitator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
04-22-2020	Family Service Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
05-12-2020	New Coordinator Training (Weather Date)	KITS - https://kskits.org
05-13-2020	Family Service Coordinator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
05-17-2020	Coaching Facilitator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org
05-20-2020	Coordinator Meeting	KITS - https://kskits.org
06-11-2020	Coaching Facilitator Training	KITS - https://kskits.org