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## First Contacts in Early Intervention

We all know the importance of first impressions. It's why we dress up and prepare for job interviews. But how much thought are we giving to the first impressions we make with families? Is it possible that families "disappear" after the evaluation or after the initial IFSP meeting because they really didn't understand what they were getting into as we quickly introduced ourselves and began the mountain of paperwork needed to complete an IFSP process? If this is happening too often in your program, it may be time to reflect on those first impressions.

According to Lynda Pletcher and Naomi Younggren in their book *The Early Intervention Workbook, Essential Practices for Quality Services*, the overall purpose of first contacts is for the family to learn what early intervention is all about, including what it can do for their child and family, and to understand their critical role in the early intervention process. Equally important is establishing the partnership relationship that will continue to grow over time.

### The referral phone call

The initial phone call with a family sets the stage for how the family will view the early intervention program and what their relationship with providers might look like. In fact, if the call doesn't go well, you may not even get a first visit! In some programs, the first phone call may be with a service coordinator who will be prepared to explain the program and answer any questions the family may ask. In other programs, an administrative assistant may answer the phone and the family waits for a phone call back from a service coordinator. In all cases, it may be wise to review the messages given to families in the initial phone conversations.

- Who is answering the phone at your program?
- What are they saying to families who call in to explore your services?

- Are messages friendly, open and inviting?
- Do the messages set the stage for how early intervention works and what the family's role will be?
- Are families getting a clear understanding of the next steps in the process and their decision-making role as you proceed?
- If families are waiting for a call back, how long are they waiting?

### The initial face to face visit

The first visit with a family is critical to ensuring their continued interest in early intervention services. You may have had a hundred first visits, but for this family, it is their very first one. What impression are we leaving them with? This is not a time to focus on the paperwork or process you need to get done. It is a time to listen, share and begin your relationship with the family. Pletcher and Younggren suggest that the initial visit include the following activities:

- Discovering the family's concerns
- Describing early intervention as a system of supports and services to assist families to help their children develop and learn
- Sharing information about family's rights
- Determining the need for a developmental screening
- Deciding if an evaluation for determining eligibility is necessary
- Planning for the evaluation if needed

How you ask a question can impact what you learn about a family's concerns. Consider the difference between these two approaches: "What questions or concerns do you have about Kate's development?" versus "The doctor referred Kate due to possible speech and language delays, what are your concerns about her communication? The key to exploring the family's concerns is to listen more than you talk, which means crafting questions in a way that the family leads the conversation.

Describing early intervention services and how they work in Kansas is the critical information you need to share with the family at the initial visit. It is a time to share brochures or even watch a short video together that fully illustrates what the

family can expect for our team-based, primary provider model. Paging through the family rights booklet with the family during this conversation is an excellent way to explain the process and the family's rights at each point in the process. It also sends a message that family rights are taken seriously and that family's decision-making abilities are respected.

Making plans for next steps is the final component of the initial visit. It's possible that there will be time for a developmental screening, if needed, during the initial face to face visit but Pletcher and Younggren don't encourage initiating a child's evaluation or assessment at this time. However, planning the evaluation visit to determine eligibility, or planning an assessment if the child is auto-eligible is critical. We must not forget how scary it may be to a family to consider that their baby or toddler needs an evaluation or assessment. Taking the time to share what this process looks like, how they may wish to be involved, and what you will do with the information will reinforce the collaborative relationship you are building with the family.

Although we have timelines to adhere to, initial contacts with the family must be thoughtfully planned. Some programs have developed scripts to use to ensure that families receive a good explanation of early intervention and team-based, primary service provider model implemented in Kansas. It is equally important to explore family's questions about services and concerns about their child fully to make these initial contacts as meaningful as possible.

Submitted by Barbara Kramer (785) 765-4183 or email [bkramer@ku.edu](mailto:bkramer@ku.edu) for more information.



## Just For Families

The Imagination Library is a unique early years book gifting program that mails a brand new, age-appropriate book to enrolled children every month from birth until five years of age, creating a home library of up to 60 books and instilling a love of books and reading from an early age. All it takes is an online registration and the child will receive a book in the mail every month. The online registration is necessary to insure proper delivery. Some titles may be available in audio and braille. At present, over 1300 communities sponsor Dolly's Imagination Library for over 650,000 children. To learn more, go to: <https://usa.imaginationlibrary.com/>

Retrieved from: <https://imaginationlibrary.com/>



### Coordinator's Corner



My name is Belinda Sanders and I am the new Fiscal Analyst for KDHE. I just want to introduce myself and give you my contact information so you can reach me with any questions/concerns you may have with your program's fiscal/budget needs.

The tiny-k programs throughout the state of Kansas hold a special place in my family's heart. I was a foster parent at first and then adopted my two boys while they were infants/toddlers. One of them had an urgent need for the tiny-k services and I am so thankful that I learned about this program. Having had the opportunity, as a parent, to see firsthand all the benefits of these programs was so inspiring and that is what led me to this position! My son is now 13, and the things he is able to do now, I never ever thought he would be able to do! I know it's because of the tiny-k's early intervention and outstanding services he received during those crucial early years.

Along with the personal experience, I have a degree in Business Management as well as Legal

Assistant. I have had vast experience working with both internal and external employees as well as many years of experience working with business's budgets and fiscal responsibilities. I am a dedicated professional who is also very resourceful. I am so very excited to work with all of you!

I have been gathering information and learning about each program this last month. I have created some financial charts already to show how programs are progressing and to identify any issues that I may be able to help with. I am a great tool for you and will be working diligently to help in the utilization of resources as well as funding aid.

I hope to have an onsite visit soon where I can have the opportunity to hear concerns in the fiscal area and any issues you may have that KDHE can help you with. Please feel free to contact me until then at (785)296-1329 or [Belinda.Sanders@ks.gov](mailto:Belinda.Sanders@ks.gov).



I wanted to introduce myself, I'm Darci Rickson the new Data Analyst for KDHE Part C.

I personally understand the important work that tiny-k does. My youngest son was diagnosed as being on the Autism

Spectrum at the age of two and half. He was flagged for concerns due to his lack of communication skills by his doctor. We were quickly referred to our local tiny-k program and started receiving services. I feel the early services we received at the time is the reason he is so high functioning today. I immersed myself in learning what I could do to best support him and his development.

This is when my career path in early childhood education took hold. I was a Parent Educator for 5 years doing home visits and developmental screenings. Later I went to work as an Infant Toddler Specialist for Child Care Aware. I moved to the data manager/accounting assistant position and discovered I loved tracking the information and working with data and databases. In my last position, with the Kansas National Guard, I was working with their data and accounting which I very much enjoyed. However, when the opportunity to return to early childhood

presented itself, I jumped at the chance to come back! I am so excited to be working on a great team.

I have a BA of Psychology with emphasis in Education and Accounting. I have worked in many different areas of both. I have provided technical support on different databases and audited contracts for compliance. Creating databases and understanding how they work is very exciting to me.

Please contact me if you have any questions or concerns about the data part of your important work. I am here for you. Please feel free to contact me at (785)296-1294 or

[Darci.Rickson@ks.gov](mailto:Darci.Rickson@ks.gov).



### New to the ECRC

- Barbre, J. (2013). *Activities for responsive caregiving: infants, toddlers, and twos*. St. Paul, MN. Redleaf Press.
- Hewitt, D. (2012). *So this is normal too?* St. Paul, MN. Redleaf Press.
- Kinnell, G. (2008). *No biting: policy and practice for toddler programs*. St. Paul, MN. Redleaf Press.
- Lansbury, J. (2014). *No bad kids: Toddler discipline without shame*. JLML Press.
- Schiller, P. (2003). *The complete resource book for toddlers and twos: over 2000 experiences and ideas*. Beltsville, Md. Gryphon House.
- Schiller, P. (2005). *The complete resource book for infants: over 700 experiences for children from birth to 18 months*. Beltsville, Md. Gryphon House.
- Mackrain, M.; LeBuffe, P.; & Powell, G. (2009). *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Infants and Toddlers (DECA-I/T)*. Lewisville, NC. Kaplan Early Learning.
- Knight, J. (2016). *Better Conversations*. Corwin Press. Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Schiller, P. (1998). *The complete resource book for preschoolers*. Beltsville, Md. Gryphon House.



### ECRC Spotlight on No biting: Policy and practice for toddler programs

No biting by Gretchen Kinnell, is in the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition to address biting incidents from developmental, emotional, and practical perspectives. Developed and tested by classroom teachers and administrators, the wealth of ideas in No Biting will help develop appropriate policies regarding biting in the toddler classroom. Information on why toddlers bite, how to respond when it happens, and how to handle ongoing incidents. How to develop biting policies, recommended articles to learn more about biting and sample letters to parents, policy statements, and incident reports. New material on how language development and spatial awareness issues can lead to biting.

Additional guidance for working with parents Perhaps no other concern in toddler programs challenges teachers and parents as much as biting does.

Information retrieved from:

<http://www.redleafpress.org/No-Biting-2nd-Edition-Policy-and-Practice-for-Toddler-Programs-P215.aspx>

No biting is available and may be borrowed from the KITS Early Childhood Resource Center. Contact Kim Page at [resourcecenter@ku.edu](mailto:resourcecenter@ku.edu) or (620) 421-6550, ext. 1638.

### Contact the KITS

#### Early Childhood Resource Center

(620) 421-6550 ext. 1651

Toll free in Kansas: (800) 362-0390 ext. 1651

Email: [resourcecenter@ku.edu](mailto:resourcecenter@ku.edu).

Our entire catalog is searchable online at

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



## Not Just “Soft Skills”: How Young Children’s Learning & Health Benefit from Strong Social-Emotional Development

Very young children rely on parents and caregivers to help them understand our world, and to provide them with the experiences and information that help their brains grow. This is true whether a child is learning how to read and write, or how to get along with others and manage their feelings. When parents and caregivers respond to their children’s needs from birth with sensitivity and nurturing, they strengthen children’s early learning and provide a strong foundation for better health and well-being throughout life.

One aspect of early learning that is less understood than other types of learning—but equally important—is social-emotional development. Children with strong social-emotional skills are more interested in all types of learning, form healthier relationships with others, persist longer at difficult tasks, and can better control their emotions. Social-emotional development is an aspect of typical brain development that depends both on genetics and children’s early experiences, including support from parents and caregivers. The more nurturing

and loving support a child receives from a parent or caregiver during activities like talking, reading, and singing, the better developed that child’s social-emotional skills.

Stable and nurturing relationships with parents and caregivers can also help protect children during stressful experiences, too. It’s typical for children to experience some stress growing up. But when young children experience severe, repeated adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), their bodies and brains go on permanent high alert, releasing stress hormones that affect their learning and development. This “toxic stress” can negatively impact not only how a child learns, but also how she builds relationships, manages emotions, fights off infections, and develops physically. Caring interventions from a parent or caregiver can prevent these experiences from becoming toxic stress, and even reverse the effects of stress after it has occurred. Learn more about ACEs, toxic stress and the importance of relationships in supporting children’s development in this two-page companion piece.

Learn more about the strong evidence base on social-emotional development and why it’s critical to young children’s learning and lifelong success in [Too Small to Fail’s](#) new report.

Retrieved from ecta-enotes on June 2, 2017.

### Collaborative Calendar of Events

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

	EVENT / LOCATION	SPONSOR / CONTACT / REGISTRATION
09-08-2017	<a href="#">Master Coach Training Better Conversations</a>	Michele Utt/michutt@ku.edu
09-29-2017	<a href="#">SSIP Phase 3 Cohorts</a>	Misty Goose/mistyg@ku.edu
10-04-2017	<a href="#">Division for Early Childhood Conference 2017</a>	<a href="http://www.dec-sped.org/conferences-institutes">http://www.dec-sped.org/conferences-institutes</a>
11-014/17	<a href="#">2017 Governor’s Conference</a>	<a href="https://www.kcsl.org/training_conference.aspx">https://www.kcsl.org/training_conference.aspx</a>