



## In this issue:

- *What's the Big Deal about Routines?*
- *Family Service Coordination Training Highlight*
- *Just for Families*
- *Best Practice Award*
- *ECRC Spotlight*
- *Using Authentic Instruction for Informing and Differentiating Instruction*
- *KITS Collaborative Calendar*

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## What's the Big Deal About Routines?

When it comes to early intervention, the importance of "routine" has been around for years. Indeed, Part C services are designed to help families identify routines that occur on a regular basis, and from which important interventions can easily be embedded and carried out. By embedding interventions within a daily routine, it should be easier to implement and provide multiple practice opportunities for the child. While there is a desire to include routines that are unique to a family, too often they are listed in very general terms lending little information to make them unique.

Example "generic" routine listed in IFSP outcome...

- *During mealtimes, Billy will use 2-3 words to make his wants and needs known.*
- *Billy will sit unsupported on the floor during playtime.*

The routines listed in these examples are anything but unique to a family. Labels such as mealtime and playtime are a starting point, but that information alone does not provide the information needed to create an effective intervention for a specific family and child. Mealtime is very different from one household to another. Playtime also casts a wide net. A generic description, such as those listed in the above examples, do not provide the information needed to create effective interventions for a specific family and child.

## What Constitutes a Routine?

According to the Oxford Dictionary, a routine is a ***sequence of actions*** regularly followed. A routine is different than an "activity". Activities are things that may happen on and off, but in

general are not ongoing, nor are they conducted frequently enough to become habit.

With regard to family routines, actions are carried out in:

1. generally the same manner (by humans who happen to be in the routine at the time)
2. take place in a specific environment/location (e.g. room in the living room, backyard, school playground, vehicle, grocery store)
3. occur generally around the same time **most** days (first thing in the morning, mid-morning, after lunch, etc.).

A routine may occur at specific times during the day or happen as part of events that happen fairly often (e.g. going out to eat, visiting family/friends).

### **Why Intervening Within a Family Routine Is So Effective**

Take a minute to visualize a typical routine such as "driving to work". For me, the routine goes something like this. I grab my keys off of the hook I created (so I would stop losing them LOL) and head to the garage. I open the garage door, get in the car and put the key in the ignition. I check to see how much gas I have, and then pull out of the garage into the street, and turn on the radio. I take the same road each time, and on my way I stop at the Starbucks near my home to get a coffee. I finally get out of the traffic, sigh in relief and drive the rest of the way to my place of work. Somewhere along the drive I become lost in thought. I may think about my to-do-list, or what I need to do on the way home (items to pick up from the store, etc.) and at the last minute I realize I am right at my exit and quickly take it towards the office. I am shocked that the time went by so quickly and that I don't remember most of the drive at all. Why don't I remember the details of driving all that way?

Most adults report having a similar experience when driving at times. The reason we don't always remember specific details of a frequent drive is because our routine driving behaviors have become habitualized. Once this happens the

brain moves that type of driving out of the frontal cortex (where problem solving/decision making occurs) and into a spot where more "automatic" things happen. Habitualized behavior becomes a bit of "muscle memory", and as such do not require as much energy, thus conserving energy for situations that will require more attention to problem solve or make important decisions.

What does habitualized behavior have to do with improved interventions embedded within family routines? Like driving, actions carried out in various family routines are also habitualized. Humans engaged in a repetitive routine, end up carrying out actions in the same manner and sequence, and over time very little cognitive energy is required. Knowing what those repetitive behaviors are (in relation to what the child is doing), where those behaviors take place (e.g. in the living room on the floor, at grandma's house in the backyard), and the general focus and timing of the family identified routine (getting dressed at the start of the day, dinner preparation at the end of the work day) provides critical intervention information.

By tweeking one or more of the variables a little over time, parents can more easily and consistently implement the intervention(s). Yes, the initial tweek(s) will require additional thinking for a bit (until the new behavior becomes habitualized), however, that requires far less mental energy than a complete rehaul of the routine. In addition, because family routines happen often, there are more opportunities to practice new learning, parent and child alike. Finally, habitualized actions carried out in one routine, are often carried out in other family routines, thus making it easier for the intervention to be generalized elsewhere.

Example Tweeks to a Family Routine:

- Moving something in/out of the room (taking out something distracting/putting in something interesting)
- Changing the sequence of typical actions (serving the vegetables of a meal to a child, before the entire meal is served to

stave off hunger, but not hurt the overall meal)

- Moving the routine time up (starting bedtime a little earlier so things aren't so rushed)
- Changing what the people do within the routine (what is said, not said, tone of voice, cadence, eye contact, etc.)

### **Routines Based Interview: Use What Was Collected**

Although IFSP outcomes often reflect broad routine labels and fail to include important details as described above, in most cases those details have been collected and included as part of the initial evaluation and assessment. When conducting the RBI most professionals ask for details pertaining to each routine discussed with the family (Where is this routine happening, where is the child/what are they doing, what are you doing, what is everyone else doing, how well is that working for you), however those details may not end up being included in the My Child's Story and consequently IFSP outcomes. This is not to suggest that every detail should show up when describing the routine, just the most important pieces

Here are a couple IFSP outcomes that illustrate the type of information that helps make it unique for a family/child. Information such as "who else is there" and "where/when it occurs". The wording in red indicates the family routine, and green indicates desired skill/behavior/competency to work on, and other information pertinent to the routine and/or outcome is in black.

- Chelsea will play near Mary (\*her mom) in the kitchen with minimal assistance, while Mary is preparing dinner. We will know this was accomplished when Mary reports that she no longer needs to hold Chelsea while she is preparing dinner, the majority of the time, for at least a week.
- After lunch, Eddy will play in the backyard or playroom with his 4 year old cousin using two-word phrases to request/label what he wants to do (e.g.

down slide, throw ball, play blocks), so that he can expand his vocabulary and help his cousin understand what he wants to play. We will know this has been accomplished when grandma reports that Eddy has used two word phrases during play for at least three afternoons in a week over a two week period.

Potential intervention tweaks for Chelsea may be to include favorite play equipment in the kitchen area that isn't normally there, such as pretend kitchen toys, or give her actual pots/pans and utensils that would be safe for her to play with. Other ideas might be to add a task for her to complete such as wiping down the chairs or cabinets with a damp cloth while Mary is cooking. For Eddy, a tweak might be to enlist his 4-year old cousin to help by modeling "saying specific phrases" that Eddy may learn to imitate. Grandma could potentially change the environment a bit by limiting the amount of toys/games that the boys have access to, thus promoting certain words/phrases more often. By adding a bit more information it is easier for the team and family to identify possible tweaks that should be easy to carry out over time.

Submitted by Misty Goosen (913-593-3695) or email [mistyg@ku.edu](mailto:mistyg@ku.edu) for more information.



## **Family Service Coordinator Training Highlight**

**Assistive Technology for Kansans ATK** is the statewide assistive technology program funded by the Administration for Community Living (ACL) in the Department of Health and Human Services. ATK serves people with disabilities and health conditions of all ages across the state.

Learn about our services on the ATK website at [www.atk.ku.edu](http://www.atk.ku.edu). For more information, contact Sheila Simmons at [ssimmons@ku.edu](mailto:ssimmons@ku.edu).

The purpose of **Assistive Technology for Kansans**: Increase statewide access of assistive technology devices and services to people of all ages and

abilities. Kansans of all ages with any type of disability or health condition can request information/referral, evaluation, and demonstration of equipment, technical assistance or training supports by calling 1-800-KAN-DO-IT. Assistive Technology for Kansans has five regional Assistive Technology Access sites that have assistive technology specialists, funding specialists, access to technology devices, and contacts with experts in all areas of technology. Areas of assistive technology covered: computer access devices and software, activities of daily living, assisted listening, communication, education/learning, environmental control, leisure/play, and mobility.

For more information, contact Sheila Simmons at 620-421-8367 or email [ssimmons@ku.edu](mailto:ssimmons@ku.edu).



## Just for Families

There's a lot happening during playtime. Little ones are lifting, dropping, looking, pouring, bouncing, hiding, building, knocking down, and more.

Children are more than busy when they're playing. When your children play with you, they are also learning that they are loved and important and that they are fun to be around. Learn more about how these social-emotional skills give babies the self-esteem and self-confidence they need to continue building loving and supportive relationships all their lives.

Zero to Three has numerous articles and resources for families about the importance of play and how to incorporate play into your child's day. Find out more at <https://www.zerotothree.org/early-learning/play>.

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



## Best Practice Award

**Russell Child Development Center – tiny-k Program** is recognized for the utilization of

distance technology to ensure delivery of early intervention services while meeting needs of children/families in their program during the COVID-19 pandemic. RCDC instituted a planned and focused shift in services to tele-intervention services in collaboration with families. The program focused this transition on maintaining the identified outcomes for children and families and providing services with fidelity. Program administration and staff worked with families to ensure services were provided in the daily routines of the family. The program also utilized video provided by the family for assessment of progress. Families noted that joint planning of intervention was key to maintaining a positive relationship with staff and effective services for their child.

Contact: David DeLoach, Russell Child Development Center, 2735 N Jennie Barker Rd, Garden City, KS 67846, Phone: 620.275.0291, email: [ddeloach@rcdc4kids.org](mailto:ddeloach@rcdc4kids.org)

**Infant-Toddler Services of Johnson County** is recognized for development of a shared leadership approach to the delivery of early intervention services. ITSJC identified a need for their program to redesign their services and service delivery model to more effectively meet the outcomes of children and families they serve. Initial steps taken to achieve this consisted of development of a functioning and active leadership team of administration and staff with input from their Board of Directors. This team effort was developed to guide their work, articulate the leadership activities needed to transform services, tie their work to the DEC Recommended Practices, and define work performance on work events and not just on the number of families served. Service coaching logs are utilized as a central measure for assessment of relationships development and fidelity of practice. Partnerships with community and state partners are a component of their plan. The program also has developed a formalized written plan and written document that confirms their leadership plan and insures sustainability of practices over time.

Contact: Monica Ross, Infant-Toddler Services of Johnson County, 6405 Metcalf Suite120 Overland Park, KS 66202, Phone: 913.432.2900, email: [monica.ross@itsjc.org](mailto:monica.ross@itsjc.org)



## ECRC Spotlight on: This is Play: environments and interactions that engage infants and toddlers

### ASQ-3 Learning Activities

ASQ-3 Learning Activities enhances the growth and development of infants and young children with more than 400 fun, fast, and easy-to-use learning activities.

Children are more than busy when they're playing. When your children play with you, they are also learning that they are loved and important and that they are fun to be around. Learn more about how these social-emotional skills give babies the self-esteem and self-confidence they need to continue building loving and supportive relationships all their lives.

Perfect for sharing with parents of children who are developing typically or need nonintensive support in one or more developmental areas, these playful, developmentally appropriate activities encourage progress using safe, age-appropriate materials that most families have in their home.

All information retrieved from [Brookes Publishing](https://brookespublishing.com): <https://brookespublishing.com>

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](mailto:resourcecenter@ku.edu) or (620 421-6550).

### 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/>



## Using Authentic Assessment for Informing and Differentiating Instruction

The [Preschool During the Pandemic](#) series illustrates how the fields of early education and early childhood special education have been successfully supporting preschoolers and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. Episode 13, a new two-part video was just added to the series.

### EPISODE 13 - AUTHENTIC LEARNING IN REMOTE PRESCHOOL

#### Part 1-Home Learning Materials and Authentic

**Assessment:** In this first of a two-part series, New Mexico early childhood special educators Brittany Behenna Griffith and Tara Hughes illustrate how they provide families with engaging asynchronous learning activities and materials and how the families share rich documentation of their children participating in the activities on Seesaw (their classroom platform) to enable authentic assessment.

#### Part 2-Informing and Differentiating

**Instruction:** In the second of the two-part series, Tara and Brittany illustrate how they use authentic assessment documentation that families share on Seesaw to help inform and differentiate instruction.

These videos plus many more can be found on the [KITS webpage](#) or at [kskits.org](http://kskits.org). They can also be found at the [Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center \(ECTA\) web site](#).



### Fun Facts about March:

- Women's History Month
- National Nutrition Month
- American Red Cross Month
- Fire Prevention Month
- The first month of Spring
- In the southern Hemisphere, March is the same as September in the Northern Hemisphere
- Each year March and June end on the same day of the week

## Collaborative Calendar of Events

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

DATE	EVENT / LOCATION	SPONSOR / CONTACT / REGISTRATION
03-15-2021	<a href="#">Coaching Facilitator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
03-18-2021	<a href="#">Family Service Coordinator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
04-09-2021	<a href="#">Coordinator Connections</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
04-14-2021	<a href="#">New Coordinator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
04-14-2021	<a href="#">Strategies for Supporting Caregiver-Child Interactions That Enhance Development</a>	University of Illinois - <a href="https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/95065/">https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/95065/</a>
04-19-2021	<a href="#">Coaching Facilitator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
04-22-2021	<a href="#">Family Service Coordinator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
05-12-2021	<a href="#">New Coordinator Training (Weather Date)</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
05-13-2021	<a href="#">Family Service Coordinator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
05-17-2021	<a href="#">Coaching Facilitator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
05-20-2021	<a href="#">Coordinator Meeting</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>
06-10-2021	<a href="#">Ideas for Implementing Triadic Strategies: Putting it Into Action!</a>	University of Illinois - <a href="https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/95065/">https://militaryfamilieslearningnetwork.org/event/95065/</a>
06-11-2021	<a href="#">Coaching Facilitator Training</a>	KITS – <a href="https://kskits.org">https://kskits.org</a>