Coaching Strategies

Early interventionists use a variety of general and specific coaching strategies to support caregiver-implemented intervention in families’ everyday routines and activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Coaching Strategies</th>
<th>Specific Coaching Strategies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Information Sharing</td>
<td>• Direct Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Observation</td>
<td>• Demonstration with Narration*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Joint Interaction</td>
<td>• Guided Practice*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Caregiver Practice*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Problem Solving</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Review and Plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - Must occur within routines

**General Coaching Strategies**

**Information Sharing**
Caregiver and early interventionist (EI) exchange information related to the child’s and family’s outcomes and the early intervention program. Both participate in the exchange by asking and answering questions, sharing comments and support to enhance the relationship. Info sharing is used to gather updates about the family status, child and family outcomes, and intervention progress and to review the previous action plan.

- E.g., *Mom shares that she was successful and the eye doctor’s appointment is scheduled for next week.*

**Observation**
Primary role of the caregiver is to interact with the child; the role of the interventionist is to observe or gather data. Interventionist does not give specific feedback or suggestions. Interventionist is not a part of the activity though s/he may be in close proximity; s/he does not offer comments. Observations must last at least 20 seconds.

- E.g., *Interventionist observes mom and Sarah’s hand washing routine and collects data on Sarah’s behaviors and responses to mom’s prompts.*

**Joint Interaction**
The EI and caregiver work as partners with the child, but the EI does not offer any guidance or feedback to the caregiver. The EI models the appropriate use of intervention strategies, offers reinforcement to the child and caregiver, and keeps the interaction going but is not actively coaching on any specific strategy, routine or target.

- E.g., *Interventionist joins dad in taking turns pushing the child on a swing at the park. Feedback isn’t provided because it isn’t necessary or because it simply isn’t offered.*
## Specific Coaching Strategies

### Direct Teaching
The EI shares information about a specific strategy, routine, or child development with the intent for the caregivers to learn how to support their child in new ways. The child may or may not be included in the interaction until you have explained how to use the strategy and how it helps support development. A handout or video clip may be used for illustration.

- E.g., *EI: “If you help him keep his trunk stable, he is better able to reach for toys. If he isn’t steady, he can’t reach as easily. So, helping him be more stable will enable him to use his arms to reach.”*

### Demonstration with Narration
The EI takes the lead in demonstrating a strategy with the child while the caregiver observes. He or she sets up the demonstration by telling the caregiver what she is going to do, and why. The EI narrates during and after the demonstration with the purpose of showing the caregiver how to use the strategy. If the EI does not narrate the strategy, the caregiver does not benefit from seeing it directly and may not realize what the EI did to support the child. Demonstration may be repeated and should evolve into guided or caregiver practice with feedback.

- E.g., *The EI shows baby the bottle, sets it on the table, and then points while saying to mom “I’m going to point to the bottle and then wait 3 seconds to see if he requests it with a gesture or a vocalization.”*

### Guided Practice
The EI and caregiver work as partners with the child and exchange roles in practicing intervention strategies in the context of a routine. The EI guides the interaction with specific suggestions about how to use a strategy. The caregiver has a turn (or multiple turns) to practice using the strategy with the child as the EI makes suggestions during the interaction or following the routine.

- E.g., *During snack the EI says, “Here are two goldfish for her to eat. Let’s see what happens if you wait a little longer before offering her more.” Child eats and looks at mom and mom reaches out with another goldfish. The EI models the word more and coaches mom to say more before giving goldfish. Mom asks how long to wait and how many times to repeat the label and the EI and mom begin to problem solve.*

### Caregiver Practice
The caregiver takes the lead in interaction with the child as the EI observes and supports the interaction as needed. Support is offered by providing feedback specific to the caregiver or child’s behavior, offering encouragement, or asking a reflective question without interrupting the routine. The EI is less actively involved or ‘hands-on’ than in either guided practice or joint interaction.

- E.g., *Mom is working on pausing to give Amy time to take a turn rather than asking “What’s that?” As mom and Amy look at a book together, mom waits after reading the title. Amy vocalizes and mom turns the page. Amy points, vocalizes, and looks up at mom to “tell” her about the picture.*
Specific Coaching Strategies

**Feedback**
The EI offers performance-based comments about the caregiver’s use of strategies with the child or about the child’s behavior/ responses. Feedback may be specific (citing something the EI observed) or general in nature. Feedback may be provided during or after the routine, and may be directed to the child or to the caregiver.

- E.g., “Your grandma does such a good job of making sure you have lots of opportunities to make choices as you get ready for daycare in the morning.” (Specific)
  “Sounds like you do a great job working with him during bath time.” (General)

**Problem Solving**
The caregiver and EI consider and discuss strategies to improve routines/outcomes. Both parties contribute, define, or clarify solutions to a problem, situation or concern and develop an action plan for when or how the strategy will be used in the routine.

- E.g., EI: “He seems to throw the ball away from you- how do you think we could help him roll the ball toward you?”
  Mom: “Maybe if I hold the laundry basket he can throw the ball into the basket.”
  EI: “Let’s try it. You could even say ‘ready, set, go’ to get his attention”

**Reflection**
The EI supports the caregiver to reflect on a routine, home visit, strategy, or child progress. The EI may ask questions or make comments to encourage the caregiver to reflect. The EI may model his/her own reflections and impressions. The EI may also build or expand upon the caregiver’s comments to encourage continued reflection. Videos or other tools may be used to create opportunities for reflection.

- E.g., EI: “Let’s watch the video together to see how he responded when you used environmental arrangement during breakfast. Tell me what you think made this work so well.”
- E.g., EI: “How did you think she did using the spoon today? What helped her?”

**Review and Plan**
The EI and caregiver summarize the events, steps or high points, strategies, things to remember, and data observed during the visit as the first step in the planning process for the next visit. An action plan designed to meet the caregiver’s preferences (not just EI documentation) is developed with attention to data to collect on specific outcomes in routines and activities. The plan can be for either child or family outcomes or both.

**References**