

# Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

## Slide 1

**Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Service Providers**

**1. Diversity and communication**

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## Slide 2

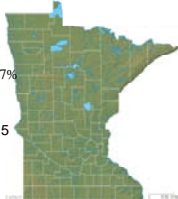
**Why do we need to pay attention?**

Between 2005-2015 in Minnesota:

1. Nonwhites will grow 35%
2. Whites will grow 7%
3. "Hispanic Origin" will grow 47%

In 2015:

- 19% of children under age 15 will be nonwhite
- 5% of people over age 65 will be nonwhite



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## Slide 3

**Culture: More than meets the eye**



**Visible Culture:**  
Foods, language, music, celebrations, dress, etc.

**Understood rules:**  
Courtesy, time, conduct across situations

**Unconscious rules:**  
Communication (human interaction). Includes voice tone, verbal/non-verbal, touch, eye contact, etc.

Mistakes are overlooked

Risk of offending

Strong negative response

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 4

**Communication:**  
A continuum of preferences

Direct Indirect

- Direct or indirect communication preferences  
**Tip: Listen and adapt your inquiries to fit their preferences**
- Formal or informal communication preferences  
**Tip: ask how you should address the family**
- Decisionmaking preferences  
**Tip: ask who makes educational decisions**

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Slide 5

**Communication:**  
A continuum of preferences

**Physical proximity:**

- Everyone has a concept of their own personal space and is uncomfortable when it has been violated. Look for cues to help you to understand if you are standing or sitting too close
- Some parents do not like others to touch their child without reason
- Touch is necessary to perform exercises or assessments. Explain what you want to do and ask parents' permission

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Slide 6

**Communication:**  
A continuum of preferences

**Eye contact**

- You may note that some parents do not make eye contact in a way that is familiar to you
  - It's important not to interpret a lack of eye contact as disinterest or disrespect
- In some cultures, it is considered disrespectful to make sustained eye contact

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# Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 7

**Communication:**  
A continuum of preferences

**Deference (getting along):**

- “Sitting quietly” may mean that a parent is being polite, but it does not necessarily mean that he or she agrees
- Some parents will nod as you speak to let you know that they are listening. It does not mean that they understand what you are saying



How will you know if parents understand what is being communicated?

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Slide 8

**Perception** – the meaning we place on what we observe—such as the behaviors of others. What we see is not simply what we look at but how we interpret what we see



Others may not place the same meaning on what they see  
Checking perceptions often with others builds partnerships

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Slide 9

**Serving Diverse Families:** Strategies for Early Childhood Service Providers

**2. Focus on the family**

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

### Slide 10

The IFSP's focus on family

IFSP statements that focus on the family



- ✓Family's resources, priorities, and concerns related to enhancing their child's development
- ✓Measurable results (outcomes) expected for the **child and family**
- ✓Specific services to be provided to meet **child and family needs**

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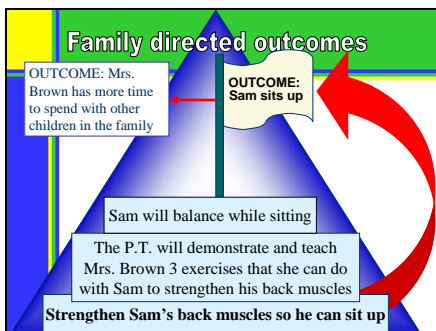
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### Slide 11



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### Slide 12

Focus on the family

➤What if you went to dinner in a stranger's home – someone you had never met? Would you:

- Know if they like wine with dinner?
- Know if they dress informally or formally for meals?

➤How would knowing these things help you?



The more we know about all families, the more likely we will be able to avoid breaching important boundaries

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 13

Build on family strengths



Building on strengths:

- Recognizes the skills that all families have
- Affirms the legitimacy of personal experience
- Supports families to make their own decisions based on their family's needs

What kinds of questions help to uncover family strengths?

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Slide 14

Build on family strengths

What do parents think about:

- ✓ their child's disability/ delay?
- ✓ their role in helping their child?
- ✓ their role in services?

What do parents:

- ✓ Want their child to learn?
- ✓ Do that makes the child happy?
- ✓ See as the biggest challenges?
- ✓ Want from early intervention?

What do parents admire most about their child?



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Slide 15

Build on family strengths

What do parents:

- ✓ Celebrate as cultural events in their community?



- ✓ See as their individual and family strengths?
- ✓ Do for fun as a family
- ✓ Do to relax (hobbies, sports)?

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 16

Build on family strengths

What do parents:

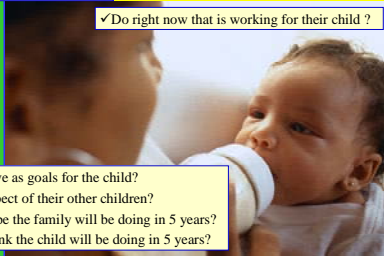
✓ Do right now that is working for their child ?

✓ Have as goals for the child?

✓ Expect of their other children?

✓ Hope the family will be doing in 5 years?

✓ Think the child will be doing in 5 years?



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Slide 17

Build on family strengths

What professionals can do:

✓ Reinforce the strengths of each family member

✓ Validate parents for their contribution to their child's development (many do not realize that their skills are valuable or important)

✓ Incorporate parent and family strengths in developing IFSP goals and activities

✓ Follow-up home visits with strengths based phone calls



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Slide 18

Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Service Providers

3. Preparing for the IFSP meeting

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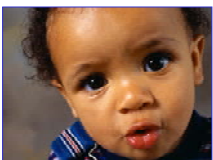
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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

### Slide 19

Preparing for the IFSP meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Call parents before the visit to answer any questions. No phone? Mail info and include your phone number</li><li>❖ Explain the purpose of the meeting and its expected outcome</li><li>❖ Explain who will participate and their roles</li></ul>	

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### Slide 20

Preparing for the IFSP meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Find the best days and time of day for parents to meet, considering the schedules of others in the family</li><li>❖ Be sure not to schedule on cultural or religious holidays or observances (in some Muslim homes, parents may need a break during the meeting for scheduled prayer times)</li></ul>	

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### Slide 21

Preparing for the IFSP meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Recognize the importance of community elders and spiritual leaders or healers that families use for guidance and direction</li><li>❖ Some people may not come to the meeting, but will still participate in important decisions affecting a family</li><li>❖ These people should be invited if the family wishes</li></ul>	

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 22

Preparing for the IFSP meeting	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Many diverse families show respect through offering food or refreshments to guests</li><li>❖ If you are unable to accept, share this information before the visit in an informal way</li><li>❖ You may also bring something, like bottled water, so that the family sees that you have what you need</li></ul>	

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Slide 23

Preparing for the IFSP meeting	
<b>Find out if the family needs an interpreter</b>	
At first point of contact:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Ask if the family needs or wants an interpreter</li><li>❖ Ask whether the family prefers written information in English or their primary language</li><li>❖ Do not ask family members, especially children, to translate for the family (if at all possible!)</li></ul>	

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Slide 24

Preparing for the IFSP meeting	
<b>Help parents understand their role in services and supports</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ “Parents as experts” may be a concept that takes time for families to fully understand</li><li>❖ “Getting along” may take priority for some parents over expressing opinions that are different from the professionals or the team</li></ul>

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 25

**Ending the IFSP meeting**

- ❖ Explain what will happen next for the young child and the family
- ❖ Encourage parents to call with questions or concerns
- ❖ End on a positive note!
  - Praise a child or family strength
  - Thank parents for their participation



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Slide 26

**Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Service Providers**

**4. Strategies for working with families**

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Slide 27

**Effective IFSP meetings**

**Greet each family personally**



- ❖ Share a bit of personal information about yourself
- ❖ Talk to both parents (unless the family has expressed another preference)
- ❖ Expect that extended family may be present at the meeting, either relatives or non-relatives

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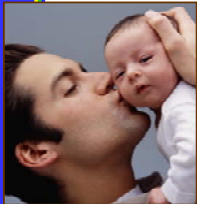
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Slide 28

Effective IFSP meetings

Explain the process carefully



- ❖ You will likely need to explain the IFSP process and the systems involved
- ❖ New immigrant parents in particular cannot be expected to know the systems or the terminology
- ❖ Describe each part of the process and invite questions. Repeat more than once

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Slide 29

Effective IFSP meetings

Be sensitive to emotional states



- ❖ Be sensitive to the family's emotional state as you decide the issues to address
- ❖ Expect some families to say there is nothing wrong with their child; acknowledge this and build the relationship so that the parent is able to later consider your input

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Slide 30

Strategies for Working with Families

Reinforce the value of parent participation

- ❖ Rather than initially using the word "rights," help parents to understand how highly their role is valued
- ❖ "Rights" can then be explained as a structure for reaching agreement, and a way to honor the knowledge of families



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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 31

Strategies for Working with Families



- ❖ Some parents may be reluctant to have their young child identified for early intervention services if the child's disability is not visible
- ❖ Take the time needed to work on the relationship so that parents are comfortable with decisions
- ❖ Allow enough time in the process for families to make decisions in a way that makes sense to them

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Slide 32

Strategies for Working with Families

- ❖ Many families fear being judged for the appearance of their home or for their parenting skills
- ❖ Initially meet in another appropriate setting if the family is reluctant to meet in their home
- ❖ Diverse families are often wary of strangers in their home. Build the relationship!



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Slide 33

Strategies for Working with Families

- ❖ In many Somali and Asian homes, it is better not to initiate a handshake unless the parent extends their hand first (belief system may affect physical contact)
- ❖ Try to start and end the meeting as scheduled (parents may not want to interrupt, even if they have something else to do)



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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 34

Strategies for Working with Families	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ In some Asian homes, families use both Western and Eastern medicine</li><li>❖ In Native American homes, traditional healing practices are often combined with Western medicine</li><li>❖ When parents use massage, smudging, cupping or other healing practices, consider the interventions in planning the IFSP</li></ul>	

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Slide 35

Strategies for Working with Families	
<p><b>Understand child rearing practices across cultures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ Play: sand, mud, water (valuable sensory experience or a messy consequence?)</li><li>❖ When do children begin independent toileting?</li><li>❖ Expected age for first steps?</li><li>❖ Do children wear shoes when learning to walk?</li></ul>	

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Slide 36

Strategies for Working with Families	
<p><b>Understand child rearing practices across cultures</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>❖ When does a child first use words?</li><li>❖ Is early language encouraged?</li><li>❖ Sleep: how long, where?</li><li>❖ When do children stop nursing or using a bottle?</li><li>❖ When do children begin to eat solid foods?</li><li>❖ When do children feed themselves?</li><li>❖ How independent are other children in the family?</li></ul>	

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Slide 37

Strategies for Working with Families	
<b>Discover how parents perceive their child and the child's future</b>	
Parents may have:	
❖ Different images of their child than you carry	
❖ Different beliefs about their child's success as an adult	
❖ Different thoughts about services would be useful	
❖ Different expectations for all their children	

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Slide 38

Strategies for Working with Families	
<b>Ask about learning differences for the young child</b>	
❖ What could other children in the family do that this child cannot do at the same age?	
❖ If parents had a dream that came true for their child, what would the child be doing differently?	

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Slide 39

Strategies for Working with Families	
<b>Open-ended questions encourage conversation:</b>	
❖ "I really want to be helpful. Is there anything I should learn about your community or culture that would help me do a better job with your child?"	
❖ "Help me understand what resources you have found helpful in your community?"	

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 40

Strategies for Working with Families	
<b>Check frequently for understanding:</b>	
❖ Questions like "Do you understand?" may receive a "yes" response, even when parents do not understand	
❖ Try: "Do you think this sounds right, or.....?" "Can you tell me what you think of this idea?" "Do you know what you can do next?"	

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Slide 41

Strategies for Working with Families	
<b>Focus on services and supports that benefit the entire family</b>	
❖ How does helping a child learn to sit unaided benefit the family?	
❖ Is independent skill development for the child important to the family?	

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Slide 42

Strategies for Working with Families	
<b>Celebrate successes as family achievements</b>	
	❖ Family ownership of a child's achievements builds confidence and knowledge that they can help their child
	❖ It also helps the family to take charge of their own lives and reduce the future need for formal services

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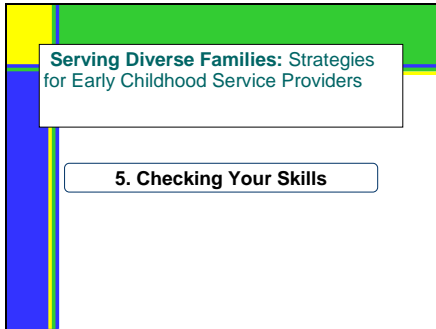
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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 43



**Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Service Providers**

**5. Checking Your Skills**

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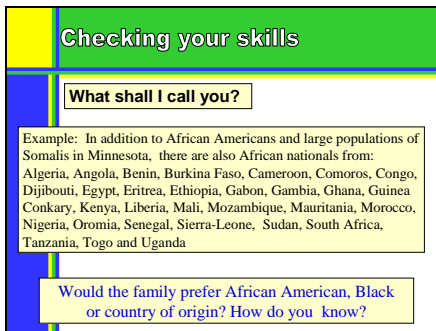
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Slide 44



**Checking your skills**

**What shall I call you?**

Example: In addition to African Americans and large populations of Somalis in Minnesota, there are also African nationals from: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Comoros, Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Conkary, Kenya, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Oromia, Senegal, Sierra-Leone, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Togo and Uganda

Would the family prefer African American, Black or country of origin? How do you know?

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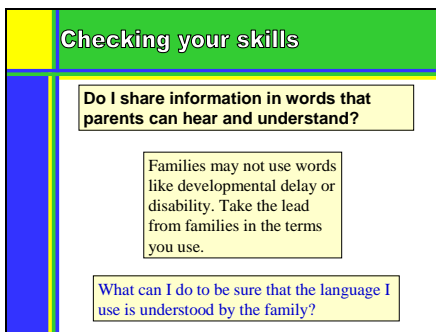
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Slide 45



**Checking your skills**

**Do I share information in words that parents can hear and understand?**

Families may not use words like developmental delay or disability. Take the lead from families in the terms you use.

What can I do to be sure that the language I use is understood by the family?

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 46

Checking your skills	
<b>Do I really listen to parents and families?</b> Many families say that they have never felt listened to by others who are involved in their lives. Being heard establishes trust, willingness to share, and follow through	
What can I do to be sure that each family I work with feels that what they contribute is heard?	

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Slide 47

Checking your skills	
<b>Do I ask families what they want to do about their concerns for their young child?</b> It is the skills and strengths of families that will help them gain expertise in helping their child with a disability	
What can I do to be sure that families are comfortable expressing opinions or making suggestions?	
How can I show that I support their decisions even if I do not personally agree?	

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Slide 48

Checking your skills	
<b>Do I look for and spend time building on strengths of families?</b> None of us like to be told repeatedly about our failings but most of us really appreciate others who tell us what they think we do well	
What can I do to help families understand and use their strengths?	

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## Serving Diverse Families: Strategies for Early Childhood Providers

Slide 49

**Checking your skills**

**Do I provide options instead of advice?**  
Early childhood providers have a great deal of useful information for families. At the same time, many families want creative choices for their family. Most do not want advice so much as options from which they can choose



How can I help families understand that it is their role to make their own choices about their young child's life?

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Slide 50

**Checking your skills**

**Do I use language that is positive and hopeful?**  
Both children and adults who are treated "as if" they have the skills to solve their issues usually find ways to solve them. There is great power in feeling competent and capable



What can I say to families that builds on hope and optimism?

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Slide 51

**Checking your skills**

**Do I understand the special issues confronting new immigrant parents of young children?**  
What brought them to America? Were services for young children available in their home country? What are their expectations for early intervention services?



What questions can I ask (and how should I ask them) to help me understand the needs and strengths of these new arrivals?

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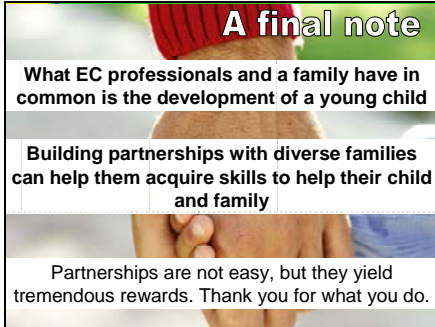
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Slide 52



**A final note**

What EC professionals and a family have in common is the development of a young child

Building partnerships with diverse families can help them acquire skills to help their child and family

Partnerships are not easy, but they yield tremendous rewards. Thank you for what you do.

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