



Inviting a New Family to Consider Early Intervention

A script is only a guideline for the art of building a relationship with a family. This script was created to help invite discussion about concerns that family members may have about EI so that the parent leader can address them using principles of Motivational Interviewing.

Introduction:

Goal: Beginning a Relationship

I am so glad we are connecting today. Like you, I am a parent of a child who has hearing loss. My aim is to offer support and information that could benefit your child and family called early intervention services.

Prompting Question:

Goal: Get Perspectives with Empathy

How have things been since you learned about your child's hearing loss? What thoughts or concerns do you have about what lies ahead for your child or family?

Your Possible Responses: (Affirm Parent's Strengths/Highlight Benefits/Address Concerns)

- I hear you saying that you're concerned about (use parent's wording, e.g. enrolling your child in a special education program, having people visit the home, etc.)
- Early Intervention is designed specifically to foster the development of babies and toddlers. These services are given by specialists in childhood hearing loss and language development and can make a big difference in your family's well-being and your child's life. You will learn about their hearing difference and how to explain it to others. Connecting with other families and adults who have navigated similar experiences can offer invaluable support. You will learn strategies to help develop language and communication, even thinking skills and building early reading skills. Your child will learn the most language in these early years.
- You are an important member of the team that creates an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), for your child. The plan focuses on a full assessment of needs, and crucial aspects like developing communication and language, social interaction, and essential thinking skills crucial to their growth, along with any family needs and goals (funding, instruction, community connections, for example). As your child nears age 3, the early intervention team will assist you in transitioning out of the program and into school age services. They will update the evaluations to better inform the school if preschool is an option. A plan called an Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 Plan can support your child in preschool and beyond. (School may seem distant, but time does fly.) If your child has additional needs, they can support these, too.
- Studies show that children in early intervention before six months have the highest language outcomes.

Prompting Question:

Goal: Explore Any Doubts - Family Support Matters:

I can understand that services might bring up mixed feelings. Remember, your involvement as a family matters immensely. You will be helping your child practice what they learn and make progress even faster. You play an important role in helping the team know what is working and what is not. You can update the plan anytime; the plan is formally updated every six months to keep your baby's progress going forward.

What are your hopes for your child's development? What are you thinking about enrolling?

Prompting Question:

Goal: Offer Collaboration and Support:

Many parents, like me, found early intervention to be worth the time and effort. Your child will learn so much in these early years with you and the team working together. While it may seem daunting now, you are not alone. (Share Eight Reasons to Say Yes to EI). I invite you to consider this step. Would you like to work together? I can be here to support you with more resources and answer questions you have.

Prompting Question:

Goal: Summarize and Invite Action:

Sounds like you would like help with making sure your child is on track to learn like other children. (Use the parent's own words.) You sound ready to act and explore how early intervention could help. What is your next step? What can I do to help?

Learn more:

- Making a Plan for Your Child (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/freematerials/PlanforYourChild.pdf>
- 8 Reasons to Say Yes to EI: <https://www.handsandvoices.org/fl3/resources/pdfs/SayYestoEI.pdf>
- Parent's Guide to EI Recommendations from JCIH: <https://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/jcih-parent-guide.html>

Tips for Use by Parent Leaders:

- If you are not a parent, give your connection, such as "I have a child with complex medical needs and am working with ___ to connect with parents of deaf/hard of hearing children." Letting families know your connection upfront helps with relationship-building.
- Note that hearing loss and hearing differences as well as deaf/hard of hearing are used here; feel free to use any term your local parents identify with and/or use their terms to ensure understanding.
- Listen for "red lights" and "green lights". If the parent throws up a red light of any kind, they are asking you to stop or slow down while they process. Regroup and try to address the concern behind the comment or go back to a place of agreement (green light).
- For families from culturally diverse backgrounds, note that EI programs provide training to be respectful of a family's values and beliefs and support the home language.
- Along with expectations noted in the outline, the JCIH recommends that parents are involved at every level of local ELDI programs, have opportunities to give feedback on systems, connect with other families and DHH leader support, and are invited to become leaders for other families. All are considered best practices of EI programs.
- Always customize your discussion to meet the family's needs. Listen more than you are talking. For a simplified version of the same concepts, email parentadvocate@handsandvoices.org.
- Comprehensive information is available on these topics from the resources noted, your local Part C organization, and the FL3 Center.