



Why won't they follow through?!

Creating a Collaborative, Caring, and Cohesive Team within our Program and with Families.

Course Objectives:

- Label a strategy to establish cooperative, reciprocal, and impactful relationships in your role
- List methods to increase family engagement, connection, and follow through
- Identify ways to reduce stress in your critical work

“Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”
- Helen Keller

Cohesive Teams:

Cohesive: Unified, consistent, solid, interconnected, organized

Teams: Troupe, club, crew, squad, cadre

“An ERSEA Specialist collaborated with a Family Service Worker to understand the parent's journey so far, their unique strengths and potential goals, and to gain common knowledge that will ensure a smooth and rewarding transition for the family

***The answer to gaining follow through? - Build the Relationship!**



What are your goals when working with families?

What are the barriers to reaching these goals?

What are the strategies to reach these goals *anyway*?

- What do you and your team do to ensure a smooth process and connect with parents in a way that keeps them in the program (even when on wait list)?



Increasing Follow Through: Creating a Collaborative, Caring, and Cohesive Team



The Goal: To Collaborate

To work jointly with others or together especially in an intellectual endeavor.

*Cooperate *Join forces *Unite *Participate *Team up *Coproduce *Be in "Cahoots"

"A Family Advocate *collaborated* with the family to identify helpful community resources."

"A partnership suggests mutual respect, an acceptance of equivalent expertise, and a reciprocal relationship in which each partner shares information and expectations with the other." Pugh 1985

Family's Main Question:

"Can you help my child blossom?"



"How your actions answer [this] question will affect the parent's relationship with their child and their wellbeing... And their relationship and partnership with you."

Source: Zero to Three Podcast by Jerlean Daniel, Ph.D.

***Value my child = I value you = I make an extra effort**

Value me = I value you = I make an extra effort

***The answer to forming collaborations that work = *Build the Relationship!**



What do you currently do to build a strong relationship with the families you work with?

1) Be Curious:

- Take the time to get to know the family and child and show genuine interest
- From the start: Ask valuable connection questions



- What is your main goal as a parent
- How did you choose your child's name?
- What brings your family joy?
- What brings your family stress?
- What is day-to-day life like for your family?
- How has your parenting journey been so far?
- What do you enjoy about parenting?
- What has been challenging about parenting this child?

2) Increase Positive Communication:

"Effective communication requires more than an exchange of information. When done right, communication fosters understanding, strengthens relationships, improves and builds trust." -Liz Papadopoulos

- ✓ **Be positive:** Developing a "proactive, multilayered communication plan, ... can help keep the majority of the messages to families positive, constructive, and encouraging."



- ✓ **Check your ratio:** Keep your messages a minimum of at least 5+ to 1-
- ✓ **Avoid negative communication:** Judgement, defensiveness, distracted interaction, advice giving, lack of interest, raising intensity, denying feelings, lecturing, "me too"

- ✓ **Increase positive communication:** Active listening, validation, mutual sharing, specific praise, supportive statements, checking in, reframing, focused attention, seek clarification



What do you "do" that shows this child will be valued in this program?



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3) Use Brain-Based Methods to get into a Helpful State of Mind

- ✓ **Switch your "Mode":** Switch from your "Default mode" to the "Focused mode" to remain open and helpful.

If you don't like something, change it. If you can't change it, change your attitude. - Maya Angelou

- ✓ **"Catch" negative thoughts and reframe: Give the family member the benefit of the doubt.**

First Thought	New Thought
"They are being lazy/difficult."	"The system is difficult to navigate."
"They don't care about the program."	"They are in survival mode right now."
"They stood me up again. My time is clearly not valuable to them."	"Something unexpected happened that was more urgent than this meeting, and they might be too embarrassed to call and explain."
Use the Reframe in your communications: "Hey [Name], I'm sorry we missed each other today! I know life can get chaotic and things pop up at the last minute. I'd love to get this wrapped up for you so it's one less thing on your plate. Would a quick 5-minute phone call be easier than meeting in person, or should we try a different time next week?"	
"They're just keeping the kid home because they don't feel like getting up. It's a waste of a slot."	"Consistent attendance is a learned skill, and there may be underlying stressors (lack of sleep, laundry, or mental health) making getting here tough for them."
Use the Reframe in your communications: "Hi [Name], we missed [Child's Name] today! We love having them in class. I wanted to check in and see if everything is okay at home. If mornings are becoming a struggle or if there's anything we can do to make getting to school a bit easier, please let me know. We're here to help!"	

- ✓ **Value Family's Strengths, Efforts and Contribution:**

Show gratitude and appreciation for what the family *does do*

I appreciate that you...

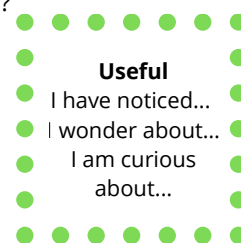
- Showed up for our visit
- Filled out these forms
- Working hard to provide for your family
- Put time into finding community resources
- Trust us to care for your child
- Others?

4) Communicate Concerns and Issues thoughtfully

- ✓ **Explore the issue together:** Why is this important? What might be the barriers for the parent?

- ✓ **Ask first.** Seek to understand the parent's perspective.

- "You seem to be doing so much, tell me more about what life looks like for you."
- "How are you holding up lately?"
- "I noticed your child has not been able to get all of the learning opportunities each week. I am curious what has been happening in your world?"



* Intently listen for understanding

* Beware (or BE-AWARE) of the human brain's negativity-bias: Make sure to attend longer and interpret less

First



Attend and really listen

- Listen, really listen, letting your heart be the driver
- Continue active listening

"It sounds like..."

"Tell me more..."

"I am hearing_____, am I getting it?"



Then

- Share your insight



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Decreasing Stress to Create a Collaborative, Caring, and Cohesive Team

5) Take Steps to Decrease Stress while doing Your Critical Work

✓ Take time to decompress:



Reflect: What actually helps you calm, reset, and relax?

How can you incorporate steps to stay calm and centered in your role?



✓ **Reframe Negative Thoughts (We are ALL Easterseals and all critical to this work.)**

"Front Line" (Family Service Workers) and the "Gatekeepers" (ERSEA) often experience a natural friction. It's a classic case of Service vs. Compliance.

Co-worker's Statement

FSW: ERSEA workers are "nitpicky" and lack empathy for the human chaos that comes with living in poverty.

FSW: "Why do they need a third proof of address? This family is living in a car; they don't have utility bills!"

ERSEA: This FSW just handed me another incomplete application. They are being lazy and just 'dumping' paperwork on my desk so they can check a box."

The Reframe

ERSEA is acting as a shield for the program. Their 'nitpicking' ensures that if a federal auditor walks in tomorrow, this family's spot is untouchable."

"By being specific now, ERSEA is preventing a much more stressful 'emergency' request for documentation three months down the line."

"I bet they are super busy triaging a crisis I can't see. The FSW has already done a lot of work and trust building to get me this paperwork at all."

✓ **Focus on what you can control**

WHAT DO YOU HAVE CONTROL OVER?

WHAT DOES THE OTHER PERSON CONTROL?

✓ **Increase positive thoughts (to intentionally grow your focused mode)**

“Every day may not be good. But, there is something good in every day.
-Alice Morse Earle”

Celebrate what you did well?



List three things you can celebrate that you and your team accomplished this year.



Objective Check: List methods to increase family engagement, connection, and follow through

