

You're A Consultant So What Do You Do?

Many definitions of *consultation* are out there – drawn from mental health (client focused) and behavioral models (problem-solving focused) a framework for early childhood education is emerging. Direct and indirect service delivery contributes to achieve shared goals and positive change (e.g. integrated services). The consultation process operates on two planes: Implementing positive changes while also paying attention to the interpersonal aspects of consulting relationships.

The Consultation Process

Stage One: Gaining Entry

What specific strategies did you use to learn about the program and the consultee? How well do you think the consultee understand the purpose and process of consultation?

Tips:

- ❑ Ask for and review program handbooks, policies, and mission statement. Ask for a tour and learn about the program's priorities. Also, ask how they hope that your contributions will help.

Stage Two: Building the Relationship

What strategies did you use to build trust? What have you learned about the consultee, the program, and the focus of concern?

Tips:

- ❑ Share information about your role, your experiences working with children with special needs, your philosophy on inclusive practices, etc.

Stage Three: Gathering Information through Assessment

What ideas and activities did the consultee contribute during the information gathering/assessment stage? What is the consultee's understanding of the priorities for focus?

Tips:

- ❑ Use a routines-based interview to gather information about a child's engagement in activities, social interactions, and independence. Routines-based assessments provide a wonderful opportunity for child care professionals and family members to contribute key information about children's functioning and participation in daily routines and activities.
- ❑ Ask child care professionals to prioritize child learning goals based on routines-based information.

Stage Four: Setting Goals

What specific strategies did you use to ensure collaboration during goals setting? How do you know if the consultee feels ownership of the goals?

Tips:

- ❑ If a routines-based interview approach is used, then goals emerge naturally from the concerns that caregivers and family members outline.

Stage Five: Selecting Strategies

How did you determine the potential success of each strategy? How confident does the consultee feel about implementing the strategies?

Tips:

- Model the use and implementation of strategies through integrated services.
- Ask how the consultee is doing and what s/he observes the child doing as the strategy is being implemented.
- Use consultee's input to suggest changes to the plan.

Stage Six: Implementing the Plan

In what ways did you model flexibility, encouragement, and problem-solving skills with the consultee during implementation? What adjustments were needed in the Intervention Plan?

Tips:

- Look for subtle changes in child's response based on consultee's report.
- Set up bi-weekly meetings with consultee to review how strategies are working out.
- Be flexible in finding common times to meet (nap time is often best for child care professionals).

Stage Seven: Evaluating the Plan

How do you and the consultee know you have accomplished the desired outcomes? Describe any unanticipated outcomes or the impact of the consultation process. How do you and the consultee feel about the outcomes and your relationship?

Tips:

- Review the learning goals and assess how well the instructional or intervention strategies match each goal attainment.

Stage Eight: Holding a Summary Conference

What specific strategies did you use to encourage the consultee to disclose his or her view of the consultation relationship and his or her overall satisfaction with the outcomes? What are the consultee's overall perceptions of the consultation process? What work, if any, remains to be done, and what are the plans for the next steps? What new goals should be addressed through future consultation?

Tips:

- Celebrate successes
- Ask for reflections from consultee to learn for future consultation work.