

JOINT PLANNING

One of the FIVE Evidence-Based Characteristics of Coaching

Adapted from: Rush D. D., Shelden, M. L. (2011) *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Co.

What is a Joint Plan ? Agreement by the coach and caregiver for what the caregiver will work on between visits and what will be the plan for the next visit. The joint plan has two parts:

1. “Between Visit Plan”: What activity the parent picks to work on between visits

The plan usually includes an activity that the caregiver did with their child while coach supported them in this activity. Strategies are developed jointly as the caregiver works on activities that naturally occur throughout their day and with their child. Focus is on a variety of learning opportunities present in the activity rather than on one isolated skill or area. Therefore strategies should address a VARIETY of learning opportunities present in an activity (all domains).

2. “Next Visit Plan”: The activity that the parent would like to focus on for the next visit

Coach explores what activity/routine the caregiver would like to focus on for the next visit including addressing the child’s interest within the activity. The goal is increasing child participation in the activity in order for learning to happen. If a parent suggests working on a skill (i.e. signing “more”) probe further: “What activity or routine do you regularly do that might be a good place to start for our next visit together?” Or “What activity do you think he might be interested in?” This determines when you need to come out again and allows focus on a variety of learning opportunities within the activity.

2 part Joint plans are developed at the end of every visit AND reviewed at the beginning of the next visit. Therefore every visit BEGINS AND ENDS with a review of the 2 part joint plan.

Reviewing the Joint Plan(“Between Visit Plan”):

Focus	Follow up Questions	Comments
Grand tour, generic	How are things going?	Do NOT ask this.
Skill focused	How’s her communication been since I’ve been there?	Not good: Parent only focuses or reports on skill or strategy
Strategy focused or Strategy-Focused in an activity	How has your hand over hand for getting him to use the sign “more” been going? So how much better is he using “more” at snack time?	Not good: If you ask this type of question parent only focuses on the specific strategy
Activity-focused question	-Tell me how snack time has been going since the last time I visited OR -Last time you were going to be doing... (i.e. state agreed-upon strategies for a variety of learning opportunities/domains) when you gave her snack. How has that been going?	Ask these types of questions! You may have to dig deeper into the specific strategies parent was going to be using for a variety of areas of development within the activity.

A few “light bulb” ideas around joint planning:

- Number one mistake practitioners make – not planning an activity with the parent - for the next visit!
- Your visit is “dead in the water” if you don’t start and end with a joint plan that includes an ACTIVITY (not just a skill)!
- All visits should start with revisiting the joint plan developed at the end of the last visit. It adds focus to the visit and gets deeper into what occurred than a simple “how are things going”.
- Have a plan but be flexible. You need to have a “next visit plan” for the activity for the visit (developed on the previous visit). But if you get there for the specific meal and child is already fed: “So what do you normally do during this time?”
- Coaches should support the caregiver in an activity and look at a variety of learning opportunities in many domains during that activity rather than focus only on one skill or a single strategy. The strategies used by the caregiver during these learning opportunities lead to skill development and behavior change for the child.
- Some families need 15 minutes to develop joint plan at end of session some need only 5 minutes because the joint plan has been clearly developing throughout the visit. Ask: “What do you think you might want to work on for your “between visit plan”? What would you like the activity to be for our “Next Visit”?

For more information: Rush & Shelden’s Early Childhood Coaching Handbook (referenced above) or CT. Birth to Three Website <http://www.birth23.org/about23/lookslife/>