EMPOWERING CONVERSATIONS:  
A Resource Guide for Team Building Between Families and Professionals to Support Action Planning for Young Children

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Empowerment is supporting individuals, children and families in discovering their own strengths and abilities, so that, they might gain a greater sense of confidence to address their personal and family challenges. This means “sharing” the responsibility between families and professionals when needs arise. It should also include assisting each other in building skills that will last beyond immediate needs.

The goal of this guide is to support the conversation between families and professionals that contribute to the empowerment and positive growth of young children and to provide some basic resources that encourage empowering care. The materials in this guide are developed to support both professionals and family members to join together in partnership in their work to assist young children with their personal challenges.

Concepts such as family driven and youth guided will be defined in a System of Care in the context of early childhood. In early childhood this can be a more challenging task because the child is just starting to develop verbal skills and a sense of self-understanding. The unique developmental characteristics of early childhood and how adults can better understand the communications and needs of children to provide more developmentally appropriate care will be explored. An appropriate understanding of early child development is essential in assisting the young child.

Advocacy is an essential element of empowerment for families caring for children with special challenges. This guide includes a helpful start for families who want to learn to advocate for their children. Professionals will also find the information helpful as they support family advocacy for the children in their care. Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc. is the statewide family, advocacy organization for Kentucky and the National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health is the national family, advocacy organization. (For more information about these organizations, please look in the resource section of this guide.)

Collaboration skills between families and professionals will be addressed as well as suggestions on how to utilize a team approach to create effective action plans to address the needs of children. Appropriate care in early childhood involves goal oriented action plans that are carefully crafted with partnership between professionals and adult family care providers. This guide will provide practical suggestions on ways to understand the young child more fully, provide child/family services that empower growth and self-sufficiency, as well as information on developing effective action plans and documentation of their results.

The resource section in the back includes several handouts that can be used to guide and support action plans with young children. There is also a list of helpful web links and resources that address topics covered in this guide as well as a current list Family Liaison’s in Kentucky and the counties where they work. These individuals can assist families as they work to advocate for their child.

The work arena is becoming increasingly more demanding with higher caseloads, larger class sizes and in many areas diminishing resources. This is making it increasingly difficult for families to find optimal support and care for their children. We understand fully the frustrations that this can bring to both families and professionals. Laura Beard brings a wealth of knowledge as an experienced Family Liaison and former early learning center professional. Michelle Sames has worked with young children in the areas of child care, preschool education, and in children’s school and community mental health centers as a therapist. We personally have experienced many of the challenges that you face daily as you attempt to help the children in your care. It is our experience and firm belief that when a strong partnership is developed between professionals and families, then we have the best opportunity to facilitate a bright future for our children. All children need the commitment and support of their community. This guide is to support and encourage you in this journey toward empowering care for young children. It is our belief that you will find that your work or your home life to be more successful and meaningful with the power of partnership.

Michelle & Laura
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Empowering young children involves understanding the developmental levels of the young child, supporting the primary caregiver – child relationship, as well as the engagement of a full partnership between professional and adult family care providers. An early childhood youth guided approach involves understanding the developmental level of the child, utilizing the growing expertise of the child about their needs, and supporting the adults in the family who are directing care for the child. All adults in the child’s environment can significantly influence the opportunities for the growth and development of the child on a daily basis. For this reason they should be provided information that fully informs them about the child’s needs, challenges, and development. The expertise of both the child and family members should be solicited and utilized. Skills should be taught to adult care providers that will assist the child grow and develop.

In early childhood the quality of the relationship between the child and their primary adult care giver is of central importance to the child’s emotional and physical well-being. When an infant or child experiences developmental or physical delays, the onset of mental health issues, or life stressors this has the potential to create significant stress for the child and negatively impact the quality of the caregiver child relationship. In consideration of this need, a major focus of early childhood work carefully considers and addresses the needs of the child within this relationship, providing education and support for the adult who is the primary support for the child. The goals developed to assist children should always be in support of primary care givers.

Action planning is at the core of successful support for the young child who is experiencing stress or significant challenge. These plans can range from simple strategic steps that are carried out in the home environment by primary care givers to more complicated plans that address situations in early learning centers or preschool settings. Action planning involves careful analysis of the situation, the development of strategic supports, and teaching skills to help the child successfully manage the targeted life situation. Action plans for young children can address areas of learning and development, social functioning, emotional coping and self-regulation, as well as life adjustment changes. Successful action plans for young children occur only when adult family members are able to participate fully in the planning of interventions.

For families of young children this means being sensitive to issues that affect the ability of family members to attend meetings and appointments. Issues such as nap schedules for young children and child care needs must be recognized and addressed. It is not feasible to expect family members to care for their children and participate in the meeting at the same time. Their attention can’t be focused and directed on the discussion and important decisions to be made in these circumstances. Determine where, when and how to have the meeting so that these needs are met for adult family care providers and the children in the family. Expectations that the child will sit quietly and let adults talk are not sensitive to the young child’s need to be moving and interacting in the environment. A focus on the child involves an understanding of what constitutes appropriate environments for the young child. While the child will not participate in the meeting process, this does not exclude the child from the action planning process. Every adult team member should have an ongoing relationship with this child outside of the meeting so that they have a realistic working knowledge of the child’s strengths, needs and development.

Understanding the child’s developmental level will guide the team in knowing when and how to include children in action plans. From birth, children communicate with vocalizations, facial expressions, eye-gazing and body language. They learn very quickly how to communicate their preferences, needs, and opinions. Primary caregivers learn quickly to differentiate between cries that suggest hunger, a need to be changed, fear or an illness. Primary caregivers can encourage infants to make choices by holding up two items and allowing the infant to gaze at the items; the infant will naturally be drawn to one item more and will eye-gaze longer at that item. Later this will be followed up with the infant reaching for the item and other gestures to communicate his or her wants and needs. Recognizing the expertise of the infant involves acknowledging and understanding infant communication and allowing it to inform care.

At about the age of two children begin to understand cause and effect and are developing communication skills. This is an age when the child can begin to enter the intervention process. At about the age of two, developmentally appropriate communication about the goals of actions plans with young children can be communicated with simple words, pictures, child friendly charts, and experiential learning. The child is not ready to sit through an adult planning meeting, but can do simple tasks such as choosing their own behavior plan rewards. The adult communicating goals to the child should have excellent early childhood communication skills and should be one of the adults supporting the implementation of the plan. This person can be a professional or family member, or a small team including both.

Children develop in all domains rapidly. An infant or toddler does not understand connections between events. However, around the age of two, children develop this ability. We all have witnessed the melt down of a two year old who has been told “no.” They understand what “no” means and are very unhappy about this meaning. At one year of age, being told “no” was a meaningless concept to this child because they did not understand cause and effect. The child continues to expand these cognitive skills and at around age
seven, thinking skills develop that are more logical but still tied to concrete activities and tasks. The elementary-age child can understand what behaviors will result in positive reinforcement as well as what behaviors will elicit negative consequences. At this point the child may not function fully on the action planning team, but should be included in the discussion of issues, possible interventions and positive or negative consequences. At adolescence, the child develops the ability to think abstractly, problem solve and to develop their own possible solutions. Remember this is a gradual developmental process that should be supported and encouraged from birth.

The ability to develop action plans is an advanced thinking skill that is developmentally not appropriate for young children. However, it is important to recognize the cognitive growth and development of the child gradually including the child in developmentally appropriate ways in the actual plans that are developed. In this way we facilitate a move from having care directed solely by adult family members to care that is guided increasingly by the child as they reach developmental milestones which enable them to fill this role. The adolescent is ready and should be encouraged to have a guiding role in their action plans as it gives them more ownership into their own goals and improves self-direction.

**Youth guided** is not simply a term relating to this final stage of development in adolescence, but implies that there is developmental sensitivity to the child’s growing abilities so that the child is included in ways that are appropriate to their developmental level in this process throughout their journey from infancy to adulthood.

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## Development of Youth Guided

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infancy</th>
<th>Infant communications of preferences (through eye-gazing or reaching) and emotions (facial expressions and vocalizations) should be recognized and utilized by adult family care givers and professionals in guiding the infant's care.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood years</td>
<td>Children around age two understand basic rules and can choose rewards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childhood years</td>
<td>Children around age seven understand behavior plans goals and participate in discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence</td>
<td>Teens are capable of abstract thought and problem-solving and can be effective members of their own team setting goals and directions.</td>
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**Family Driven System of Care**

Family-driven means families have a primary decision making role in the care of their own children as well as the policies and procedures governing care for all children in their community, state, tribe, territory and nation. This includes:

- Choosing culturally and linguistically competent supports, services, and providers;
- Setting goals;
- Designing, implementing and evaluating programs;
- Monitoring outcomes; and
- Partnering in funding decisions.

**Guiding Principles of Family-Driven Care**

1. Families and youth, providers and administrators embrace the concept of sharing decision-making and responsibility for outcomes.
2. Families and youth are given accurate, understandable, and complete information necessary to set goals and to make informed decisions and choices about the right services and supports for individual children and their families.
3. All children, youth, and families have a biological, adoptive, foster, or surrogate family voice advocating on their behalf and may appoint them as substitute decision makers at any time.
4. Families and family-run organizations engage in peer support activities to reduce isolation, gather and disseminate accurate information, and strengthen the family voice.
5. Families and family-run organizations provide direction for decisions that impact funding for services, treatments, and supports and advocate for families and youth to have choices.
6. Providers take the initiative to change policy and practice from provider-driven to family-driven.
7. Administrators allocate staff, training, support and resources to make family-driven practice work at the point where services and supports are delivered to children, youth, and families and where family and youth run organizations are funded and sustained.
8. Community attitude change efforts focus on removing barriers and discrimination created by stigma.
9. Communities and agencies embrace, value, and celebrate the diverse cultures of their children, youth, and families and work to eliminate mental health disparities.
10. Everyone who connects with children, youth, and families continually advances their own cultural and linguistic responsiveness as the population served changes so that the needs of the diverse populations are appropriately addressed.
Finding Services for Your Family

Get help early. If you have concerns about your child’s behavior or emotions, tell your doctors, teachers, counselors, social workers, spiritual advisors, friends, and relatives who know about the child. Ask for their help to find out what the problem is and where to get services.

Explore all options available to meet your child’s and family’s needs. Check your library, the health department, and the social service section of the telephone book for places that might offer the kinds of help you are looking for. A large amount of information on resources can also be found on the Internet. Many family-run organizations have resource centers and advocates and mentors who know about available services and what resources may be available in your area.

What is it that you need to know? First know that you are the expert when it comes to your child. You know your child better than anyone else. You know:
- How your child responds to different situations
- Your child’s strengths and needs
- What your child likes and dislikes
- What has worked to help your child
- What has not worked

You are the person who decides what services and supports your family and child need. Include your child in decision making whenever possible. You child needs to be an active participant in the services you receive. Every child is different, yet there are children similar to yours. You are not alone. Other families have faced similar problems and shared the same experiences. Getting connected to other families who are willing to help you can make all the difference.

You need to begin asking the following questions:
- What do I need to know and to do to help my child?
- What agencies in the community have programs or services that can help my child and other members of my family? How do I get services from them?
- How will my child’s health, growth and development, social interaction, and ability to learn be affected by the problem we face?
- What has helped other children like mine?

You may already have experienced that getting the help your child needs is not always easy and sometimes it requires you to become an advocate. Becoming an effective advocate is not always easy to do as sometimes emotions get in the way of clear communication. In the next few pages you will learn effective advocacy and communication skills to help keep your emotions from diluting the message you would like to send.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which Type of Advocate Are You?</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Defender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Protector</td>
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<tr>
<td>Promoter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Enabler</td>
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<td>Investigator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mediator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporter</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monitor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Teacher</td>
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### Assertiveness and Effective Family Advocacy

Amended from Marie Sherrett*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Caregivers are not assertive if they:</th>
<th>Caregivers are assertive if they:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Beat around the bush</td>
<td>• Express themselves clearly, directly and without guilt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fail to describe problems</td>
<td>• Are not intimidated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feel guilty or are afraid to be vocal</td>
<td>• Prepare for meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Agree with professionals to keep peace</td>
<td>• Stay together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ignore the right to services</td>
<td>• Are informed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Leave everything to others</td>
<td>• Keep records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accept excuses for inappropriate or inadequate services</td>
<td>• Collaborate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Beg for what the law says a child should have</td>
<td>• Effectively communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Abdicate to others the right to advocate for a child</td>
<td>• Demonstrate self-confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Depend on others to advocate</td>
<td>• Advocate effectively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give up because of red tape</td>
<td>• Are self-reliant and independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are too hasty to act</td>
<td>• Persist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Fail to act</td>
<td>• Analyze problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Accept the status quo</td>
<td>• Organize to effect change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Give in to defeat</td>
<td>• Are positive and strong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Are comfortable with accomplishments</td>
<td>• Have pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discourage your child from having hope for success</td>
<td>• Encourage others and hold people accountable</td>
</tr>
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*Information available from Wrights Law Web Site, www.wrightslaw.com

There is both safety and strength in numbers. If you can go over a hill and change a classroom, you can go over a mountain and change a state’s respite care services, early infant and toddler program, inclusive educational situations and training manuals. Parents put together Public Law 94-142 (the first special education law). Parents who vote urged Congress to pass the law that became the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. There is no end to the positive changes one family member can achieve! There is no limit to the system and program change that can occur when family members and caregivers connect, assemble and organize to create a powerful network! You must take these steps for your children and the children who will come along behind your children.

*You must learn the art of persuasion, advocacy-style!*
Building Effective Partnerships with Professionals

Equal partners does not mean that parents and professionals assume each other’s roles, but rather that they respect each other’s roles and contributions. While professionals bring technical knowledge and expertise to this relationship, parents offer the most intimate knowledge of their children, and often special skills. (Allen & Peter, 1995)

1. Establish a relationship of trust with the professionals/providers by being honest in your family’s strengths and needs.
2. Your child is given a diagnosis or label, research it on the computer or at your local library. This will increase your ability in communicating with the professionals serving you and your child.
3. Each agency you work with will have a different language: different terminology and acronyms. Ask for clarification if you do not understand something that is being said. Ask for an example or ask “what would that look like?”
4. Share the successes you see your child accomplish with other team members.
5. Inform the provider or agencies about family activities you enjoy and ask about needed resources.
6. Ask if there are any parent networks or support groups in your area for families that have children with disabilities and contact information for how to get involved in those groups.
7. If there are educational needs or training you might be interested in, ask your provider if they can connect you to those resources. Pay close attention to information posted on bulletin boards in office waiting rooms or newsletters sent out by agencies. They often include training and educational information on them.
8. Make sure your contact information is always up to date. Any address or phone number changes are essential for your provider to have current.
9. Speak up if you believe the action plan for your child needs to be changed to meet their needs. Be organized with your thoughts about the plan and be flexible to trying new things.
10. Celebrate success with your provider when things are working and going well.
11. Be clear about what time and day are easier for you to make appointments or accept phone calls. Read letters and documents that your provider may give or send to you, as they often have important information about your child in them. Return phone calls and cancel appointments in advance if possible.
12. When you or your child has an immediate need let the provider know as soon as possible.
13. Stay focused on your child. As a caregiver you help bring voice to young children. It is imperative that you advocate for them rather than accepting the status quo.

Building Effective Partnerships with Families

The creation of a working alliance with adult care givers in the child’s family is essential for effective support and intervention with the young child. The following is a list of tips to help you achieve this goal:

1. Establish a relationship of trust with the family and maintain their confidentiality.
2. Discuss disabilities and/or diagnoses with family members and assist them in identifying resources that will increase understanding of their child’s challenges.
3. Utilize family friendly language and make terminology clear and understandable.
4. Provide the family with regular reports about their child noting successes as well as challenges.
5. Provide information about various community resources, parenting information, support and assist with referrals.
6. Provide information about the state’s family support program.
7. Give family members information about local training opportunities.
8. Let family members know how to reach you to schedule appointments and how to communicate with you.
9. Partner with family members to create action plans that help the child to grow, develop and address his/her challenges more effectively.
10. Affirm positive family communication, action planning, discipline, and parenting skills.
11. Establish a mutually acceptable mode of communication between yourself and family members. This will vary according to professional settings, nature of your schedule, and family resources and schedules. Regular communication with the family of some type (verbal or written) is necessary in order to fully assist the child.
12. Address issues with an immediate positive approach before time creates a larger difficulty for the child.
13. Help keep everyone’s focus on the child. Children with challenges can create difficult situations for their families. Your job is to make sure that the best care is provided for the child. If parents need additional personal support to handle the stress, provide them with a resource for this adult support. It is essential that the child have you as their professional advocate to help the adults stay centered on meeting the child’s needs.
1. **Through a child’s eyes** In the context of your interactions with young children, consider the world from the child’s point of view. What joys and challenges exist for this child each day? What is their level of ability and support to meet their challenges? Who are their friends? Is the child’s life basically happy or full of considerable stress and loss? Too often as adults we view the child from the adult lens thinking about how the child’s behavior affects our work or our day. Instead, remember what it was like to be very young and consider what daily life is like for this young child. When you truly understand the needs of the child then you have a much stronger ability to assist this child with your professional skills.

2. **Look for the positive** Develop an extensive list of the skills, interests, motivators, and personality attributes of this child. This becomes essential information when you develop positive action plans to help the child address challenges in their life. Regardless of age, we all are much more effective in responding to difficulties when personal strengths are identified and utilized to address needs.

3. **Meet at the child’s level** Develop professional plans that start at the child’s level of comfortable functioning. If required skills are above the child’s functional developmental level then the child will not be successful. Since children are unique, it is normal for there to be variation in developmental levels across the developmental domains (cognitive, social, emotional, behavioral, and physical). Assessment should include evaluation of each of these domains independently and is critical for a thorough understanding of the child’s strengths as well as challenges.

4. **Success planning** Interventions and strategies should be designed with success in mind. Don’t create a plan if there is a question about the child being able to accomplish the goal. Behavior plans should include positive incentives which will encourage increased self-esteem and motivation for change and growth.

5. **Child as expert** At an early age we all find ways to communicate our likes and dislikes in life. Gifted caregivers learn to recognize these communications and respond to them. Be sensitive to the child’s communication and find ways to include the child in intervention planning. Even small children can choose their own rewards and acknowledge simple rules. As the child grows, increase their participation in all decision processes about them.
Empowering Action Plans

Whenever a child is experiencing an ongoing issue that creates stress, interferes with any area of development, or is contributing to a negative life experience; then this deserves the attention of caring adults to initiate a solution-focused approach to support this child in addressing the challenge. Effective action planning has been demonstrated over time, to be a best practice approach in addressing many issues for children. Quality action plans are an essential way to help children address targeted goals, learn new skills, cope with stressful situations, and to facilitate the child’s overall growth and development.

Action plans can address areas of learning and development where a child is experiencing difficulty understanding core content knowledge at the same rate as peers. Quality academic action plans support the child’s knowledge and motivates them to use increased effort to learn. Educational action plans can assist everyone (child, family, and professionals) to learn about the child’s preferred learning modalities so that the child’s learning strengths are identified. In the state of Kentucky, Response to Intervention (RTI) is state law requiring documented intervention to address areas of academic need for children. These action plans can be a very effective means to assist children.

Underlying mental health concerns frequently result in issues that can be addressed through action planning. Typically, mental health concerns surface in the form of difficulties experienced by the child in areas of social functioning, emotional coping and expression, or in behavioral self-regulation. Action plans can be very effective ways for children to learn coping strategies that help them function positively in their environment, improve communication skills and learn to handle stress. Children are never too young to address these issues! The earlier issues are identified and addressed, the better it is for a child. Effective early action planning has the potential to prevent later crises. When we help children develop social skills, regulate their own behaviors, and cope with their emotions, they are happier and have a greater opportunity for success.

Most children have difficulty at some point in their lives adjusting to change. Action plans are an effective way to support all children during this time. There are an unlimited number of issues that can create these stressors. Examples of some common stressors include: family relocation or moves, difficult peers, death in the family, parent divorce, economic stress on the family, or a prolonged illness of the child or of a family member. An effective action plan brings support to the child in their time of need and helps the child with skills they need in order to manage their present challenge. The development of these skills will also provide tools for the child to use in coping with future life changes.

Well-documented action plans are often needed in order to qualify for more intensive assessment and services. At the same time you are addressing an identified need, you are also assisting the assessment process for the child and helping them to qualify for other necessary supports. Documentation is needed for both adults and children. Adult forms are needed to record the action plan details and communicate results to other adults. Adult forms should be clear and comprehensive, including all necessary information. The child’s documentation form is a tool to help the child learn to self-monitor and record their own progress. The child’s form should be creative and appealing. There is a wealth of information available with sample forms and many creative variations on how to document plans for both adults and children. Two examples are included later in this guide book.

Effective action planning for young children is a foundation of care to address life stressors, learning difficulties as well as mental health challenges. Action planning that creates a partnership between professionals and adult family caregivers, that includes children in developmentally appropriate ways, and that focuses on the child’s greatest point of need are an essential tool for the effective professional in empowering the growth and development of children.

Included in this guide are some tools to assist you in your work to assist young children and their families. A reproducible worksheet is included in this guide to assist the team in creating an effective action plan. There is also a sample Documentation Communication Form that can be used for adult communication in monitoring an ongoing action plan. There is also a child form entitled Daily Behavior for Child’s Name that can be used to help children understand and monitor their own behavior. The final list is an Empowerment Checklist for Professionals that is a quick guide for you to use in evaluating your own approach so that it becomes one that is highly effective and empowering for the young children that are in your care.
Empowerment Checklist for Professionals

Use the following checklist to help guide your professional approach with children and their families to be one that is empowering.

- The child’s needs are the guiding force for all decisions
- Evaluate/assess the child within your own skill base & training
- Utilize best practice approaches for the child’s developmental age and issue(s) that are the focus of care
- Seek knowledge and expertise of adult family members about the child
- Acknowledge complexity of issues
- Provide an honest appraisal of available resources
- Refer to other professionals for additional supports & assessments that are indicated
- Obtain authorization for releases of information for additional service providers so care can be coordinated & comprehensive
- Include adult family members as full partners in action planning
- Include the child at developmentally appropriate levels in action planning
- Explanation is given to the child and family about all initiatives and interventions
- Provide regular feedback, including positive growth, to the child & family
- Reinforce positive social skills for the child
- Educate child & family about educational & legal rights
- Encourage family member advocacy on behalf of the child
- Support qualities that lead to hope and resilience in the child/family
- Facilitate a positive solution focused approach to issues

Empowerment Checklist for Families

Use the following checklist to help guide the approach of your family with professionals to be one that is empowering for the child.

- Know the Laws and your Child’s Rights
- Come to meetings prepared with written questions and thoughts
- Never leave a meeting until you are in full understanding of what took place and what is going to be the next step
- Make sure any verbal agreements are put in writing
- Take along a peer or other support person when needed
- Advocate for the best interest of your child
- Be willing to negotiate
- Take notes and keep a list of people present at any meetings pertaining to your child
- Know your child and family strengths
- Document phone calls and make copies of letter correspondence
- Stay connected to the plan, asking for updates and feedback
- Provide information to professionals about how things are going at home and any changes whether positive or negative are occurring
- Be persistent and assertive
- Tell your child’s story
- Keep the focus on what will support your child in reaching his/her goals
SMART and FUN Action Plans that Empower Young Children

- **Specific**
- **Measurable**
- **Action Oriented**
- **Realistic**
- **Time line**

- **Family driven & youth guided**
- **Understandable for children**
- **Need based**

The following work sheet can be used as a guiding tool in preparation for intervention planning meetings for children. All team members should have input into completing this form.

1. Make a comprehensive list of:
   - a. Strengths and interests of the child.
   - b. Family member strengths and resources.
   - c. Strengths and resources of teachers and other professionals working with the child.
   - d. Identify additional resources and programs, or people that might benefit this child.

   This should be extensive and space on this worksheet will not be made for this list. Attach an additional page or list information for each category on the back of the worksheet forms.

2. Identify developmentally appropriate ways to communicate action plans with young children. The following questions can be utilized as a guide in this process.
   - a. Does the child understand basic rules or expectations that guide behavior?
   - b. Is the child learning about consequences of behavior?
   - c. Can the child identify and choose positive incentives for rewards?
   - d. Can the child discuss/identify stressors or personal goals?

   If “yes” is the answer to any of these questions, then the child is ready to have action plans explained in ways that are developmentally appropriate. Even very young children can choose positive incentives and identify stressors and goals through the use of pictures. When the child understands the action planning process, then the goal is owned by the child. This empowers the young child to learn how to help themselves more effectively. At the meeting identify who will talk to the child and explain the expectations of the child and help the child choose positive incentives.

3. Identify three areas of need, that if addressed, would benefit the child:
   - a.
   - b.
   - c.
4. The intervention team should agree upon and choose one of the three areas of focus, and develop a goal that is the basis of an action plan. As children approach the age of 2 to 3 years of age they develop the ability to understand rules and goals of behavior. Try to include the child in developmentally appropriate ways in understanding the action plan. The older the child, the more involved they should be in the action planning process.

   a.

5. What change are you expecting from the child? Specifically, how will it be measured? When the child has met the specified goal, what does it look like?

6. Describe the intervention, identifying who will do what, when and how they will do it, and where it will be done.

   a. Who:
   b. What:
   c. When:
   d. How:
   e. Where:

7. Decide on a form of documentation for the plan. When the action plan is utilized, results need to be documented. Include all behavioral, social, and emotional responses. Sometimes with young children the behavior will get worse, before it starts to improve. Include the following in documentation:

   a. Date
   b. Time of day
   c. Nature of child’s response to the intervention
   d. When interventions address specific child behaviors, make a note of what was going on prior to the behavior, the child’s behavior, and what happened as a result or consequence of the behavior.
   e. Develop a child friendly documentation form that is understandable for the child so they can monitor their own progress. Use stickers and pictures to create an engaging form.
   f. Identify a procedure and form for giving family members updated information as well as solicit information from the child and family about action plan implementation.

8. Set up a time for the group to meet to evaluate the effectiveness of the action plan, make adjustments to the plan, or establish new action plan goals.

   Date: ____________________ Time: ____________________ Location: ____________________

9. Have a process for celebrating all successes! The greatest motivator for change is success.
Child’s Name: ________________________________________________________________

Target Behavior: _____________________________________________________________

Positive Incentive: ___________________________________________________________

Adult Monitor: ______________________________________________________________

Date: _____________________________________________________________________

Please Record Hourly how the child is doing with the targeted behavior:

E = excellent          G = good          I = improving          N = needs improvement          P = poor

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1. These are things________________________________________ (the child) did well this week:

2. Areas where________________________________________(the child) needs to improve next week:

Parent/Guardian Signature ___________________________ Monitor’s Signature ___________________________


DAILY BEHAVIOR CHECK

Daily Behavior for

Date:

Today I will:

As a reward I will:

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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Great Job!</th>
<th>Try Harder</th>
<th>Hard Day</th>
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KEY ADVOCACY SKILLS
IMPORTANT TIPS TO REMEMBER

1. Know the Law and Your Child's Rights
2. Be Persistent
3. Follow Procedures
4. Remain Calm
5. Be a Team Player
6. Document Everything

Negotiate
REGION 003 GREEN RIVER - Counties of Daviess, Hancock, Henderson, McLean, Ohio, Union, Webster

MICHELLE HICKMAN
michellehickman@rvbh.com
River Valley Behavioral Health
1100 Walnut Street, Owensboro, KY 42302
Phone: 270-689-6634

REGION 004 BARREN RIVER - Counties of Allen, Barren, Butler, Edmonson, Hart, Logan, Metcalfe, Monroe, Simpson, Warren

JASON GARRETT
jgarrett@lifeskills.com
Lifeskills Service Center
112 Sartin Drive, PO Box 600, Edmonton, KY 42129
Phone: 270-432-4951

REGION 005 LINCOLN TRAIL - Counties of Breckenridge, Grayson, Hardin, Larue, Marion, Meade, Nelson, Washington

T.J. KIMBLE
tkimble@communicare.org
Communicare
1308 Woodland Drive, Elizabethtown, KY 40161
Phone: 270-737-5676

REGION 06J JEFFERSON - County of Jefferson

TITERRIEL MACKLIN
tmacklin@sevencounties.org
Seven Counties Services
Kentucky IMPACT Program
914 E. Broadway, 3rd Floor, Louisville, KY 40204-1037
Phone: 502-736-3080 Ext. 2310

REGION 06S SALT RIVER - Counties of Bullitt, Henry, Oldham, Shelby, Spencer, Trimble

KATHY ALSUP
KAlsup@sevencounties.org
Seven Counties Services
PO Box 136, Shelbyville, KY 40066
502-633-5683 Ext. 6530

REGION 001 CUMBERLAND VALLEY - Counties of Bell, Clay, Harlan, Jackson, Knox, Laurel, Rockcastle, Whitley

Cope House
369 Harold Leforce Road, Williamsburg, KY 40769
606-549-5440 & 606-549-5460
Cumberland River Ccc
PO Box 568, American Greeting Road, Corbin, Ky 40702

REGION 007 NORTHERN KENTUCKY - Counties of Boone, Campbell, Carroll, Gallatin, Grant, Kenton, Owen, Pendleton

JOYCE WILLIAMS
jwilliams@northkey.org
NorthKey
19 East Pike Street, Covington, KY 41011
Phone: 859-491-1361

REGION 008 BUFFALO TRACE

TERRI SRINIVASAN
Srinivasan@windstream.net
Comprehend Inc.
611 Forest Avenue, Maysville, KY 41056
Phone: 606-564-4016

REGION 009 GATEWAY - Counties of Bath, Menifee, Montgomery, Morgan, Rowan

DENISE BROWNING
Denise.Browning@pathways-ky.org
Pathways
PO Box 284, Frenchburg, KY 40322
Phone: 606-768-2131 x 4495

REGION 010 FIVCO - Counties of Boyd, Carter, Elliott, Greenup, Lawrence

BARBARA WORDEN
bworden@pathways-ky.org
Pathways Inc.
PO Box 790, Ashland, KY 41101-0790
Phone: 606-324-3005 x 4515

REGION 012 KENTUCKY RIVER - Counties of Breathitt, Lee, Knott, Leslie, Letcher, Owsley, Perry, Wolfe

MONA BUSH
mona.bush@krccnet.com
EMILY CORNETT
Emily.cornett@krccnet.com
Kentucky River Impact
115 Rockwood Lane, Hazard, KY 41707
Phone: 606-436-5761

REGION 013 CUMBERLAND VALLEY - Counties of Bell, Clay, Harlan, Jackson, Knox, Laurel, Rockcastle, Whitley

Cope House
369 Harold Leforce Road, Williamsburg, KY 40769
606-549-5440 & 606-549-5460
Cumberland River Ccc
PO Box 568, American Greeting Road, Corbin, Ky 40702

OFL FAMILY LIAISON

LAHOMA AILIFF
lahomawork@verizon.net
PO Box 151, Fort Gay, WV 25514
Home: 304-648-5448 • Cell: 606-424-4513
WEB LINKS & RESOURCES

**Behavior Plan Resources:**
3. www.challengingbehavior.org
4. The Tough Kid Tool Box by William Jenson, Ginger Rhode, and Kenton Reavis, 1995, ISBN 1-57035-000-0. This is an excellent book with reproducible behavior plan forms for the educational setting.

**Resources for Understanding the Developmental Issues of Young Children:**
1. Bright Futures Web Site: This site includes a set of developmental tools for families and professional that help begin conversations that assist children. Look for What to Expect and When to Seek Help. It is available to print free of charge in both English and Spanish versions at http://www.brightfutures.org/tools/.

**Resources for Children with Disabilities and Family Training:**
2. Yellow Pages for Kids with Disabilities: Find educational consultants, psychologists, educational diagnosticians, health care providers, academic therapists, tutors, speech language therapists, occupational therapists, coaches, advocates, and attorneys for children with disabilities on the Yellow Pages for Kids for your state. You will also find special education schools, learning centers, treatment programs, parent groups, respite care, community centers, grassroots organizations, and government programs for children with disabilities. http://www.yellowpagesforkids.com/.
4. KyCARES is an online services/information directory and guide for Federal, State and Community Providers which can help you connect with providers http://kycares.ky.gov/
5. KPFC: The Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children, Inc. (KPFC) is a private, not for profit, family organization that serves children, youth, and young adults and their families throughout Kentucky. KPFC is the state chapter for the National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health and is the Center for Mental Health Services Statewide Family Network grantee for Kentucky, www.kypartnership.net. KPFC's mission is to nurture hope for futures through education, advocacy, and reaching out to groups that do not currently receive adequate services.
6. Ky-Spin Inc., Spinning@kyspin.com (e-mail), http://www.kyspin.com/ (web address), 10301-B Deering Road, Louisville, KY 40272, 1-800-525-7746. The mission of KY-SPIN, Inc. is to empower and support individuals with disabilities and their families to effectively advocate for and access needed information, resources and support networks in order to enhance the quality of their lives.
7. Opportunities for Family Leadership (OFL) is part of the Department of Mental Health and Mental Retardation Service. The goal of OFL is to ensure that the family voice is included in every stage of planning, implementation and evaluation of services for the special populations they serve. OFL offers various levels of training for both parents and professionals in advocacy, communication, collaboration, mediation, support group development, and school law. OFL offers a resource line for parents and caregivers. http://mhmr.ky.gov/mh/family/.
8. National Federation of Families www.ffcmh.org: Through a family and youth driven approach, children and youth with emotional, behavioral and mental health challenges and their families obtain needed supports and services so that children grow up healthy and able to maximize their potential.
This guide is provided for you from the funding of the KY SEED initiative. Kentucky’s System to Enhance Early Development (KY SEED) is a six-year cooperative agreement between the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Kentucky Division of Behavioral Health to support Kentucky’s further development of its system of care for children age birth to 5 who have social, emotional, and behavioral needs and their families.

**KY SEED’s Vision** is to facilitate the development of an integrated system of care that supports young children and their families to thrive socially, emotionally, and behaviorally.

**KY SEED’s Mission** is to significantly improve coordination of, access to, and effectiveness of services.

The values that underlie this effort is for service provision to be family driven, youth guided, community based, culturally competent, and developmentally appropriate.

For more information about KY SEED, please contact:

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Richmond, KY 40475-3102  
Phone: 859-622-6672  
Email: kristen.dahl@eku.edu