

Strategies that Support Families with Low Intellectual Capacity

The following approaches respect the family's abilities, reduce information overload, and ensure that the IFSP is meaningful and achievable within their capacity.

1. Simplify and Visualize Information

- Use **plain language**, avoiding professional jargon.
 - Break down complex information into small, manageable parts.
 - Incorporate **visual supports** such as pictures, symbols, or step-by-step charts to explain goals, services, and routines.
 - Use repetition and concrete examples tied to the child's daily routines (e.g., "During snack time, we can practice pointing to what your child wants").
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2. Collaborative and Hands-On Planning

- Involve the family directly in activities that show how goals work in real-life contexts (e.g., modeling strategies with their child during play).
 - Provide **guided choices** rather than open-ended ones (e.g., "Would you prefer we work on helping your child use more words at mealtime or during play?").
 - Reinforce their input by summarizing what was said and checking for understanding.
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3. Build in Ongoing Support and Review

- Schedule **shorter, more frequent meetings, if possible**, to revisit the plan and confirm understanding.
- Locate resources like a **family support worker or family advocate** who can help them process information. When a caregiver's cognitive or emotional limitations could impact the parent-child dyad, involving an **Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC) consultant** can be transformative. These specialists support social-emotional development and the caregiver-child relationship through dyadic-focused strategies and reflective support.
- Provide **written or pictorial summaries** of the IFSP goals and next steps that she can reference at home.

References

- Kansas Inservice Training System. (n.d.). *Writing family-guided IFSP outcomes*. University of Kansas. <https://kskits.org/writing-family-guided-ifsp-outcomes>
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- State of Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services. (2023). *Alabama's Early Intervention System: Policies and procedures handbook* (Rev. Dec. 2023). https://www.rehab.alabama.gov/documents/ei/policies_and_procedures/AEIS%20Handbook%20%28rev%2012.2023%29.pdf
- Washington PAVE. (2021). *Getting to know the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)*. <https://wapave.org/getting-to-know-the-individualized-family-service-plan-ifsp>