

SELECTING YOUR CHILD'S PROVIDERS

Before choosing service providers, think about what is important to your family. The following is a list of questions/considerations developed by other families that you may find helpful. Consider what you need for yourself, your child and your family and what you want from a provider. The questions listed may suggest other questions you want to ask. Take your list to your meeting with your service coordinator to help you when selecting a provider.

Thinking through my family's wants and needs:

- What does my family do or enjoy that we want to continue after beginning First Steps?
- What, if anything, are we willing to give up to fit services into our family life?
- What things are important for our child and our family in the next 6 months? one year? five years?
- How does our family react to challenges?
- What strengths do we bring to new situations?
- How are decisions made in our family?
- Who can we depend on for support (friends, family, church members)?

Thinking through what we need from a team member:

- Do we prefer a new graduate who may have new ideas or someone with years of experience in their field?
- When will services best fit into our schedule? How and where will services best fit our needs?
- Do we prefer someone business like or who feels more like family?
- How do we want a provider to respond if our child cries or doesn't want to work?

INTERVIEWING POTENTIAL PROVIDERS

Before you choose a service provider, it is important to talk with providers who can be there when and where you need them. Your planning team can give you names and telephone numbers of providers who meet your needs. You should feel free to call and speak to as many as you wish before making a decision. You may want to look at the following questions and mark those that are important to you before calling a provider. When you call, be sure to discuss your child's condition and needs.

As you decide when and where services best fit into your schedule, keep the following in mind for planning purposes:

- ✓ *Work schedules of family members.*
- ✓ *Scheduled activities of children including school, sports, music or dance lessons and other activities.*
- ✓ *Regularly scheduled appointments*
- ✓ *Schedule for church, clubs, organizations, committees and other social events.*
- ✓ ***Remember to block out personal time.***

Parental involvement as a team member

- ✓ *Communicate your goals for your child*
- ✓ *Consider short term goals (next 3 months) and long term goals (next 3 years)*
- ✓ *Use IFSP as a guide, but it can always be changed*
- ✓ *Attend therapy when possible and devise ongoing communication system with providers and other caregivers*
- ✓ *Follow through with suggested therapy regimen between visits*
- ✓ *Be sure providers communicate with each other*
- ✓ *Communicate any problems and concerns early – don't wait until it's a big deal*
- ✓ *Communicate family transitions with your team members (marriage, death, divorce)*

Provider Profile

- What is your educational background?
- What experience do you have with children age 0 to 3?
- Why did you choose your job?
- Are you a family member of a person with special needs?
- Are you a member of a professional organization?

Philosophy

- How do you involve families in reaching goals for their child?
- How do you deal with conflict if we don't agree?
- How do you work with a crying child? How do you work with a stubborn child?
- Will you give us activities to follow through with therapy at home?
- How will you teach us to work with our child between visits?
- Will you teach other caregivers such as grandparents or daycare providers?
- Will you give us a plan to follow at home?
- How do you share information with family members and service providers?
- What techniques do you use during your visits?
- What equipment do you use during your visits?

SPECIAL CRITERIA

- What hours and days are you available?
- Do you have an opening to take our child now?
- How flexible are you with schedules? (Can you come at 9:00 a.m. this week and 10:00 a.m. next?)
- Are you available between visits if we have concerns or questions?
- Will you work in homes, preschools or other places our child may be? (Will you come to my child's grandparents' home for visits?)
- With the family's permission, can we talk to other families with whom you have worked?
- Can we watch you work with another child (with the permission of the parents)?
- Have you ever worked with our child's disability or something similar?
- Are you able to help us select equipment and materials if needed (wheelchairs, communication boards, etc.)?
- Have you worked with medically fragile children?
- Are you able to continue to provide service to my child after First Steps if necessary? If so, how are fees handled?