Family Goal Setting in Home Visiting
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NMAIMH competencies addressed

Working with Others
- building & maintaining relationships
- collaborating

Thinking
- analyzing information
- planning and organizing

As home visitors, the New Mexico Home Visiting Program requires that we support the families that we work with to identify and develop goals that are individualized, and clearly reflect what they hope to accomplish for their child and themselves by participating in home visits. Collaborative family goal setting is an important strategy to help parents build a number of life skills.

Getting Started
Before we begin the process of goal setting with families, we need to become very familiar with the following five CYFD Home Visiting Long Term Outcomes:

i. Babies are born healthy
ii. Children are nurtured by their parents and caregivers
iii. Children are physically and mentally healthy and ready for school
iv. Children and families are safe
v. Families are connected to formal and informal supports in their communities

These outcomes provide a framework for setting and documenting goals, and support us in organizing individual family goals.

As a home visitor, when we join with a parent in thinking about how our work together might look going forward, we have an opportunity to begin the process of setting specific goals that are important to them. Using a strength based approach, we can begin to have conversations with parents to help them gain clarity in identifying the areas of their life that are going well as well as areas of struggle and concern that are
real and most pressing for them. We can also support them in reflecting on their hopes and dreams for themselves and for their child.

Through the development of family goals, we assist the parent in shaping the way in which they access and interact with systems of care and support, and help them to see how this impacts the ways in which they live, and how they parent. Supporting families in figuring out what is most important and meaningful to them and identifying ways to get there, provides a road map for our ongoing work with them, and is the thread that connects one visit to the next.

The Importance of Relationship in Creating Family Goals
As we enter into relationships with families, we have an opportunity to create working alliances with parents around their strengths, needs and wishes. Through the process of reflection, empathy and attention, we begin to create a safe container in which to join them in developing goals and strategies that build on their strengths. This can be the starting point for creating the authentic connection that guides our work with them over time.

Where's the baby?
As we begin to explore these themes with a parent, we have an opportunity to support them in considering how their current life situation might affect their child. We can use these conversations as a way to deepen our relationship with the parent around issues related to the development of their child and their parenting.

Questions to encourage discussion and reflection…
In thinking about the goal setting process with families, it may be helpful to ask yourself the following questions:

- How can I use the goal setting process to deepen my relationship with the parent and help them to keep a focus on their child?
- How will the results of the screening tools used, be considered in setting goals with families?
- How will the goals be integrated with the curriculum?
- How will these goals impact the parent child relationship?
- What types of follow-up referrals and resources might this parent need to support these goals?
- How can I empower the parent by partnering with them in accessing resources?
- How will these goals impact what happens during our home visits?
- How can I support the parent in celebrating progress in meeting their goals along the way?
- How will I be responsive to the needs of the parent and child as their situation, priorities or concerns change?
How can I be thoughtful in connecting each home visit to family goals in an ongoing way?

As we join with parents in supporting them in accessing resources and supports, we have an opportunity to impact the lives of families in positive and lasting ways, and to deepen our own practice as a home visitor.

References/Additional Resources