

Bright Beginnings



A newsletter for families and educators of infants and preschool-age children with special needs

Natural Environments Support Early Intervention Services

All young children tend to thrive when they're in familiar surroundings and with the people and objects that are most dear to them. For young children with disabilities, those reassuring surroundings are an essential part of their early intervention services. Called "natural environments," they're where children can practice new skills and reap the full benefits of professional intervention services.

Natural environments are more than people, places, and objects. They're an essential part of your child's right to inclusive early childhood special education services under Part C of the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Many parents wonder what natural environments are, how they can help their child, and what role the parent plays. Here are answers to some common questions.

What is a natural environment?

A natural environment is any place your child and family live, learn, and play. It includes:

- Settings, such as your home, backyard, or place of work. Settings also include places such as a child-care site, relative's home, park, grocery store, or library.
- Materials, which can be anything found in your child's physical environment—toys, rocks, books, swings, grass, spoons, a high chair, or a favorite wagon.
- People, such as parents, siblings, relatives, friends, neighbors, teachers,

or anyone else with whom your child might interact.

- Activities that incorporate the interests and routines of your child and family.

These might be daily activities such as eating, bathing, and dressing; recreation such as playing, reading, walking, camping, swimming, and going to the playground; and community participation such as going to worship, celebrating holidays, taking part in cultural practices, going to the grocery store, and riding in different forms of transportation.

Why are natural environments important?

Natural environments make every moment of your child's day an opportunity for inclusion and for developing new skills. That's important because when children are engaged in activities and playing with objects in which they are interested, they learn best. Natural environments help your child model the behavior and skills of family and peers. They also make it more comfortable for your child and family to practice new skills to determine what does and does not work.

What law supports natural environments?

The idea of using natural environments comes straight from Part C of IDEA. The law says:

- "Early intervention services must be provided in natural environments, including the home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate, to the maximum extent that is appropriate." (Sec. 303.12)



- "[Natural environments are] those settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities." (Sec. 303.18)

States must have policies that explain clearly when it is acceptable for a child not to receive services in a natural environment. Exceptions are allowed only if early intervention goals may not be achievable in such settings.

What role do parents and the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team play?

Through the development of the IFSP, the team must provide individualized services that meet the unique needs of your family and your child with disabilities. Deciding on what those services should be and where they should be provided is a key role of the team, which includes the parents.

As a parent and IFSP team member, you will be asked to identify the natural environments for your child. The team may help you explore other natural environments in your community as well.

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Ban On All Drop-Side Cribs

Cribs that have movable drop-down sides have been banned by federal regulators after reports of more than 30 infant deaths occurred over the past 10 years. Drop-side cribs made it easier for parents and caregivers to lift babies in and out of cribs, but they can also trap children especially when the cribs have broken or missing hardware.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) has issued new safety standards for cribs. More than 9 million drop-side cribs have been recalled since 2007, the CPSC says. They are urging consumers to check to see if their drop-side crib has been recalled by going to www.cpsc.gov. The new rules which will take effect in June, 2011 will ban the manufacture, sale or resale of drop-side cribs.

“These new standards will markedly reduce crib related hazards and help to ensure that young children sleep more safely in their cribs,” said CPSC chairman Inez Tenerbaum. The new rules are “a better fix than announcing recall after recall.”

Under federal safety rules, it's considered a defect if products repeatedly break or otherwise malfunction during normal use. USA Today reported in August that the analysis of CPSC data found that more than 14 crib companies amassed more than 900 incident reports about drop-side cribs that were falling apart, injuring and killing infants. Parents and caregivers with drop-side cribs should not try to modify or secure the crib themselves. This can also be dangerous. Do NOT purchase a new crib before June unless you are absolutely sure it will meet the new safety standards. Companies will be trying to unload their old stock before it is illegal to sell.

Source: Reprinted with permission from “Words from Wendy,” February 2011. By – Wendy Taylor, RN CCNC, 100 1st Street NW, Suite 200, Mason City, IA 50401, 1-800-657-5856 ext. 16.

SONGS

ROW BOATS ON THE WATER*

Tune: Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Activity: The children form pairs. Show them how to make a boat with their partner by sitting on the floor, facing each other with legs apart and feet touching. Show them how to row their boat by stretching forward and backward, holding hands. Then sing “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” Repeat two times. Change partners if desired, ask what else a boat can do (tip, rock, sail, etc.) and have the children with a partner and hands joined, rock side-to-side, tip over to one side then to the other side, sail (arms raised high and arms raised up and down together). The children may change partners with each different action. Add your own actions.

*Busy Bodies – Thematic Early Child Movement Activities, Sewell & Trettin.



THE ANTS GO SOFTLY ROUND AND ROUND*

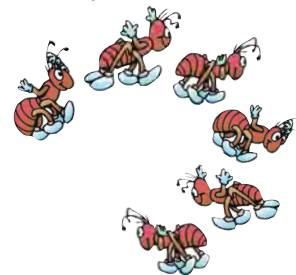
Tune: When Johnny Comes Marching Home

Activity: March around a picnic basket, then creep or crawl at the appropriate time while singing the song:

*The ants go softly round and round,
Sh! Sh!*

*The ants go softly round and round,
Sh! Sh!*

*The ants go softly round and round,
They creep and crawl upon the ground,
And they all move closer,
Eyeing the picnic feast.*



*Busy Bodies – Thematic Early Child Movement Activities, Sewell & Trettin.

Source: “Physical Fun for Little Ones,” 2001 Iowa Department of Education.



Ideas for Summer Fun!

1. Take a family hike on one of our many nature trails.
2. Go swimming in your local town swimming pool.
3. Erect a tent in the back yard and have a sleepout under the stars.
4. Run through the sprinklers on a hot day. Use squirt guns or spray bottles.
5. Go to story hour at the local library.
6. Take a picnic to the park for lunch.
7. Draw pictures on the sidewalk with colored chalk.
8. On rainy days, make a tent inside with a sheet draped over chairs – have a picnic lunch under the “tent.”
9. Catch lightning bugs.
10. Go visit a botanical garden.
11. Fly a kite.
12. Have the kids pull their stuffed animals around town riding in a wagon.
13. Build a fort with card board boxes.
14. Take a walk and collect some smooth rocks. Let the kids paint them with acrylic paint while you supervise.

Finger Plays for Fun and Learning

Finger Plays are fun for you and your preschooler. Because you don't need any equipment, you can do them anytime and anywhere—even while you wait in line at the supermarket.

Finger plays help your child learn many things:

- * Language skills
- * Motor skills
- * Memory and thinking skills
- * Listening skills
- * How to follow directions

Try them out to see which ones you want to commit to memory. Then, whenever you want something fun to do, it will be there for you.

Planting Fun

I dig, dig, dig (Pretend to dig)
And I plant some seeds. (Stoop down and plant seeds)
I rake, rake, rake (Pretend to rake)
And I pull some weeds. (Pull out weeds)
I wait and watch (Bend over and look at ground)
And soon I know. (Nod head)
My garden sprouts (Raise hands from ground as if sprouting)
And starts to grow.



The Squirrel

These are the brown leaves fluttering down, (Flutter hands to ground)
And this is the tall tree bare and brown. (Hold up right arm)
This is the squirrel with eyes so bright; (Form fist with left hand, thumb up)
Hunting for nuts with all his might... (Form two circles)
This is the hole where day by day, (Form hole with fingers)
Nut after nut he stores away. (Pretend to place nuts in hole)
When winter comes with its cold and storm, (Circle right hand around left fist)
He'll sleep curled up all snug and warm.

Falling Raindrops

Raindrops, raindrops (Move finger to imitate falling rain)
Falling all around.
Pitter-patter on the rooftops, (Tap fingers softly on the floor)
Pitter-patter on the ground. (Repeat)

Here is my umbrella (Pretend to open umbrella)
It will keep me dry. (Place over head)
When I go walking in the rain (Hold high in air)
I hold it up so high.



Fuzzy Wuzzy Caterpillar

Fuzzy, wuzzy caterpillar
Into a corner will creep. (Make fingers creep)
He'll spin himself a blanket,
And then go fast asleep. (Rest head on hands and close eyes)
Fuzzy, wuzzy caterpillar
Wakes up by and by
(Children wake up)
Look! He has beautiful wings.
He's now a butterfly.
(Make flying motions with arms)



Source: Reprinted with permission from: LeFebure J. (2007) *Finger Plays for Fun and Learning*. "Parenting the Preschooler," University of Wisconsin Extension. Retrieved from <http://parenting.uwex.edu/parenting-the-preschooler>.

The Gift of Laughter



Humor is an important part of our everyday lives. As a form of intellectual play, it grows more sophisticated with age. The kind of humor children express depends, in part, on the level of cognitive development they have achieved.

A child first experiences humor in the second year of life in the context of playing with objects. A 3-year-old usually thinks it's hilarious to give objects or events names that she knows to be incorrect. She probably will giggle if a rabbit is called a bird. Most 4-year-olds laugh at objects primarily on the basis of their appearance. A drawing of a car with square tires, for example, might keep a boy laughing throughout the day.

Unexpected behavior also provokes laughter in young children. Seeing a grown-up jump rope or dress up in play clothes and wig can send a kid into a fit of laughter. A description of an impossible event, such as the term "It's raining cats and dogs" also can produce giggles.

Most 3- to 5-year-olds don't understand many of the jokes, riddles, or puns that seem funny to older children. Younger children do enjoy changing the words of jokes and repeating them often. For example, "Why did the chicken cross the road?...Because he wanted to!" can break up a child. We adults may not understand the joke, but we can appreciate the reaction it brings to our children.

Humor is more than just a chuckle or a belly laugh. It releases pent-up energy and permits the expression of ideas and feelings. Growing up is stressful, and good mental health—which includes a sense of humor—allows children to cope with sources of conflict and distress.

Reprinted with permission from "Family-Friendly Communication for Early Childhood Programs."



F2F Family to Family Iowa

*Interested in
attending a training
or conference through
the Family to Family
(F2F) Iowa network?*

Who can apply?

- A youth with special needs (developmental, physical, behavioral, emotional)
- A parent, guardian, or family member of a child or youth (0-25 years) with special needs

What types of trainings or conferences are covered?

You may apply to attend any type of training, workshop or conference related to special needs. Be creative! Ideas may be found through your local Area Education Agency or www.disabilitytraining.org, etc.

How much can I apply for?

In order to extend this opportunity to as many people as possible, we are limiting requests to a maximum of \$350 per family per year. If the cost is greater, you can apply for the maximum amount and cover the remaining expenses out of pocket. We will fund a maximum of eight scholarships per conference or training event.

Who has priority?

- 1) First-time applicants.
- 2) First-time attendees to a specific conference or training. (We will fund a maximum of eight scholarships per conference or training).
- 3) We will process applications as they come in. All applications are subject to the availability of funding.

Is this only for trainings in Iowa?

No. You may apply to use the funding to attend a training or conference anywhere.

How do I get the funding?

F2F will pay for conference registration fees before the conference or training. Hotel, mileage and meals will be reimbursed after you attend. Therefore, you must save original receipts and request reimbursement after you return home. The total funds you request may not exceed \$350. (In some circumstances, the hotel may be paid in advance. Please call Erica Zito to request.)

For more information contact:

Erica Zito
Family to Family Iowa
Child Health Specialty Clinics
100 Hawkins Drive, Room 247 CDD
Iowa City, IA 52242

If you have questions, please contact Erica Zito, Co-Program Coordinator for Family to Family Iowa at Erica-zito@iowa.edu or 319-356-7741

Have An IEP Meeting Coming Up?

At least once each year, every student who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) has a planning meeting. IEP meetings can be great opportunities for communicating, planning and building relationships. They can also be stressful and frustrating.

If you have an IEP meeting in your near future, here are some things you might want to do to make the most of the meeting:

- Review the current IEP and discuss how accommodations and instruction are working for your student. Talk about what accommodations are being used, which ones help and which ones don't. Find out what the student thinks is the best approach to his/her learning. Does it help to read material aloud? Does it help to sit closer to the front of the classroom?
- Think about questions you may have about the current IEP and how it is being put into action.
- What are your concerns? Are there some issues you have not discussed with the school that you think are important? If you would like to discuss a problem, be as specific as you can in describing it, and be open to suggestions made by others at the meeting.
- What are your priorities for next year? What would you and your student like him/her to accomplish by this time next year?
- What do you think needs to happen to help your student achieve those goals?

Many people find it helpful to take notes in preparation for the meeting and to keep the notes with them during the meeting so they don't have to remember every thing off the top of their heads.

Remember, the IEP meeting is a team meeting, with a number of people who have different perspectives. Teamwork results in the best outcomes for students.

If you have questions about the IEP process or would like some assistance in preparing for an IEP meeting, contact the AEA 267 Family & Educator Connection. Andy Lawler serving the Marshalltown and surrounding area at 800.735.1539; Deb Paton serving the Cedar Falls/Waterloo and surrounding area at 800.542.8375 or Sandy Kraschel serving the Clear Lake/Mason City and surrounding area at 800.392.6640.



The Arc of Cedar Valley serves persons of all ages with intellectual and development disabilities and their families. Some of the services and supports The Arc provides:

- Information regarding what services are offered in your community.
- Attend IEP meetings at school and advocate for your child's needs to be met at your request.
- Help you navigate through paperwork, funding sources, and eligibility for service requirements.
- Advocate for needed funding, services, and supports through local, county, and state policy makers and legislators.
- Limited funds for camperships, respite care, and other disability-related items and situations for which no other funding is available.

Contact Kim Jensen for more information.

Phone: (319) 232-0437

E-mail: arccv@episervice.org

Website: www.arccv.org

Find us on Facebook

Transition...A Time for Change

Transition can be an exciting time, one that can provide new opportunities for your child and family; it can also be a time of great change and adjustment. A coordinated set of activities prepares the child and family for leaving Early ACCESS to enter Part B/Special Education or other community services.

Spring is a time of change outside with flowers coming up, buds on trees and grass turning green. It is also a time when families start to think about changes for the next school year. Children who will be turning three and received services through an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) may qualify for service through special education on an Individualized Education Program (IEP). Sounds confusing? It can be. A Comparison Chart, part of the Transition Toolbox, A Guide for Families, explains the two programs side by side.

A Comparison Chart: Special Education, Part C to Part B

Part C-IFSP Individualized Family Service Plan Serves children 0-2 and/or their families	Part B-IEP Individualized Education Program Serves students 3-21
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serves children who have a condition or disability that is known to have a high probability of later delays, if early intervention services were not provided, or the child is already experiencing a 25 percent delay in one or more areas of growth or development. • Services are available at no cost to families. • A service coordinator is required to be a single point of contact and to work with the family to implement IFSP. • Family-Centered services are usually in the home or in the child's natural environment. • Outcomes and activities are developed to address the needs of the child and the family. • The Early ACCESS system includes community services and interagency involvement. • An IFSP can be updated at any time, with formal reviews required every six months. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education) to all children with disabilities, including special education and related services designed to meet their individual needs. • Services are available at no cost to families. • A Case Manager (Special Education General Education, child care) is appointed to coordinate services. • Child-focused services are usually in a center or school-based setting (Least Restrictive Environment, LRE). • Measurable annual goals are developed to address the child's specific needs in reaching educational outcomes. • Educational focus with community linkages. • A parent may request an IEP meeting at any time, otherwise an IEP meeting is required annually.
<p style="text-align: center;"><i>Source: Transition Toolbox, A Guide for Families. 2007 Step 5, Additional Handouts</i></p>	



New Materials Available Through The Family & Educator Connection Libraries

A few new items have been added to the Family & Educator Connection library and are available for your use:

Adolescents on the Autism Spectrum, A Parent's Guide to the Cognitive, Social, Physical, and Transition Needs of Teenagers with Autism Spectrum Disorders written by Chantal Sicile-Kira; A practical guide for parents and others with strategies to help children with Autism as they progress through the teen years. Topics include potential health risks, practical self-care and social skills for puberty, teen emotions and sexuality, and transitioning to adulthood.

Learning Outside the Lines, Two Ivy League Students with Learning Disabilities and ADHD Give You the Tools for Academic Success and Educational Revolution written by Jonathan Mooney and David Cole; Personal stories are coupled with insights and strategies for academic success. This is a good read for high school students and adults.

Unwritten Rules of Social Relationships, Decoding Social Mysteries Through the Unique Perspectives of Autism written by Dr. Temple Grandin and Sean Barron; Using their personal experiences, the authors explain the unwritten rules and patterns of social relationships and provide guidance for living and working with others.

Unthinkable, A Mother's Tragedy, Terror and Triumph Through a Child's Traumatic Brain Injury, written by Dixie Fremont-Smith Coskie; This book is a personal account from a mother whose 13 year old son suffered a traumatic brain injury. The journey takes the reader from injury to recovery and a new reality.

The Essential Guide to Psychiatric Drugs, revised and updated fourth edition, written by Jack M. Gorman, M.D. A comprehensive guide to medications typically prescribed to treat mental health problems. Written in language that is easy to understand.

Mental Health Medications for Children written by Ronald T. Brown, Professor of Public Health, Pediatrics and Psychology at Temple University; Laura Arnstein Carpenter, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics at the Medical University in South Carolina; and Emily Simerly, Clinical director of the Mental Health Unit at the Georgia Diagnostic and Classification Prison in Jackson, Georgia. This book is designed for educational teams who work with students who are being treated with psycho-tropic medications. This book includes guidelines for monitoring and documenting beneficial effects and adverse side effects. The appendix includes reproducible forms and documents that may be useful in this process.

To borrow materials from the Family & Educator Connection library, contact the FEC at 800-392-6640 (Clear Lake); 800-735-1539 (Marshalltown); 800-542-8375 (Cedar Falls).



Look us up on the Web

www.aea267.k12.ia.us/familyed/



Looking for Support? Support Groups

There are a number of support groups across Iowa and in AEA 267. Right now there are a number of active support groups in our areas focusing on the needs of children and young adults who have autism, Down Syndrome and other issues. Here are a few:

ADHD Support Group

Meets second Monday of the month during the school year at Upper Iowa University, 3563 University Avenue, Waterloo from 6:30 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. For more information contact Barb at 319-266-2901 or bum1992@cfu.net.

Autism Spectrum Support Group

Individuals wanting further information or a personal parent contact should contact: Chris and Tyann Rouw 319-266-5876, or the Family-Educator Connection at 319-273-8265.

More information about local news and information may be seen at Chris and Tyann's website: <http://www.autismiowa.com>.

Autism Dietary Network Support Group

For more information call Amy Roberts at 319-233-8043.

ASD Support Group Forming

Jeni Oelkers is a mom who is interested in establishing a support group for parents of children affected by autism and related conditions, and others who are interested in autism spectrum disorders.

If anyone is interested in making a connection through an ASD support group, please contact Jeni at 641-512-6230 or jhoelkers@gmail.com.

ASD/PDD Support Group

A support group for parents. Meetings are held at 3:00 p.m. the first Sunday of the month in Mason City and the third Sunday of the month in St. Ansgar. Locations are Whiskey Creek Woodfire Grill, 1519 4th Street SW in Mason City and Fourth Street Coffee Shop, 230 West 4th Street, in St. Ansgar. For more information, or to sign up for the group's E-mail, send a message to pddsupport@mchsi.com.

Designer Genes – A Support Group for families of children with Down Syndrome

Provides parent groups as well as family events and playgroups for young children.

For more information call 319-404-0396 or e-mail designergenes2005@yahoo.com.

Epilepsy Support Group

Waterloo, Cedar Falls area. Held at the Kimball Ridge Center, Conference Room 1, 2101 Kimball Avenue, Waterloo, IA. Held the second Thursday of every ODD month at 6:30 p.m.

For more information contact: Jessica Peters, Services Coordinator for Iowa Epilepsy Foundation North/Central Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, 1111 9th Street, Suite 275, Des Moines, IA 50314. Phone: 515-238-7660/Fax: 515-883-2292, Email: jpeters@efncil.org.

F.A.S.T. Families of Autism Standing Together

Autism and GFCF (Gluten-Casein Free Diet) Support Group that meets in the Independence area. For more information call Cory or Renae Kress at 319-334-3832.

Prader Willi Syndrome Association of Iowa

For more information please contact: Edie Bogaczyk, 515-987-0288 or dbogaczyk@msn.com.

Support Group for Parents of Children with Special Needs

Just forming in the Iowa Falls area. For more information contact Andy Lawler. alawler@aea267.k12.ia.us or 631-844-2469.

Calendar



Wednesday, May 4

Wrightslaw Special Education Law and Advocacy Conference

8:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Mid-Ohio Educational Service Center
890 West 4th Street
Mansfield, OH 44906

For more information contact:
Kate Kandel (419) 747-4808



Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, June 6-9

The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities 135th Annual Meeting

“Inclusive Communities: Pathways to Realizing the Vision”
Crown Plaza St. Paul Riverfront
St. Paul, MN 55101

For more information call:
AAIDD 1 (202) 387-1968 or
1-(800) 424-3688

Monday, Tuesday, June 13-14

Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) Basic Training

7:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Holiday Inn Hotel & Suites
Des Moines Northwest
4800 Merle Hay Road
Des Moines, IA

Venue Telephone 1 (515) 278-4755

For more information visit:
<http://www.pecsusa.com/workshop-cat.php?id=8>

Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, June 20-23

15th Annual Birth to Three Institute

“Hand in Hand: Collaborating to Support Our Babies, Toddlers, Families, and Communities”
Washington, D.C.

For more information contact BTT:
1-(202) 638-1144



Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, July 6-9

42nd National Conference of the Autism Society

Gaylord Palm's Hotel and Convention Center
Orlando, FL

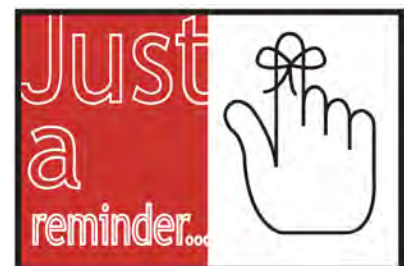
For more information contact:
Meg at Ellacott@autism-society.org
or phone 1 (302) 260-9487

Friday, Saturday, July 29-30

Special Education Law and Advocacy Boot Camp

Sponsored by: The Down Syndrome Association for Families of Nebraska

For more information contact:
DSAF President 1-(402) 466-7641 or
1-(402) 421-1338.



Remember to check the Disability Training Information calendar at www.disabilitytraining.org/ and the AEA 267 Professional Development web site at www.aea267.k12.ia.us/pd/ for information on more learning opportunities.

The Family & Educator Connection

The AEA 267 Family & Educator Connection provides information and support for families and educators around disability-related issues. Whether you would like to talk about family adjustment issues with a new baby or newly diagnosed disability, home-school communication issues, questions relating to understanding a disability, or parenting strategies, we are happy to take your call. We have quite a library of resources available for loan and a number of highly qualified people to consult. If you have a question, we will do our best to help you find the answer. We are available by phone, mail, e-mail or by appointment, in-person.

Cedar Falls/ Waterloo Office

Deb Paton

3706 Cedar Heights Drive

Cedar Falls, Iowa 50613

Ph. 1-800-542-8375 or 1-319-273-8265

dpaton@aea267.k12.ia.us,

Clear Lake/Mason City Office

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Mason City Airport Grounds

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