

LEVELS OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT MODEL

Level 1: Minimal Emphasis on Family

Interactions with parents are institution-centered, not family-centered. Families are not regarded as an important area of focus, but parents are dealt with for practical or legal reasons.

The service provider deals with the family only as required by practical necessity or legal regulation and does not adapt educational activities to the particular needs of each parent or family.

Level 2: Information and Advice

Knowledge Base: Have content information about families, parenting, and child development.

Personal Development: Open to engaging parents in collaborative ways.

Skills:

1. Communicating information clearly and interestingly.
2. Eliciting questions.
3. Engaging parents in the learning process.
4. Making pertinent and practical recommendations.
5. Providing information on community resources.

The provider collaborates with parents and other family members and offers and receives information that is important to the child's well-being. Teaching is tailored to fit the learning needs of a particular family, as opposed to having a standard approach to all families. However, the provider does not intentionally inquire about family stress or family members' emotional reactions. If the family member mentions these concerns, the provider listens politely but tries to steer the conversation back to educational and child development issues.

Level 3: Feelings and Support

Knowledge Base: Understand individual and family reactions to stress, and the emotional aspects of group process.

Personal Development: Aware of one's own feelings in relation to parents and the group process.

Skills:

1. Eliciting expressions of feelings and concerns.
2. Empathetic listening.
3. Normalizing feelings and reactions.
4. Creating an open and supportive climate.
5. Protecting a parent from too much self-disclosure in a group.
6. Engaging parents in collaborative problem-solving discussion.
7. Tailoring recommendations to the unique needs, concerns, and feelings of the parent and family.
8. Identifying family dysfunction and psychological dysfunctions.
9. Tailoring a referral to the unique situation of the parent and family.

Level 3 builds on Level 2 by adding the dimension of emotional support. In addition to sharing and exchanging information about parenting and child development, the provider inquires about the experiences, beliefs, feelings, and needs of parents and other family members; emphasizes with their feelings; and shares knowledge about family stress and family coping. The provider probes for dynamics underlying the family's problems but does not try to intervene to change challenging family patterns.

Level 4: Brief Focused Intervention

Knowledge Base: Understand family systems theory.

Personal Development: Aware of one's own participation in systems, including one's own family system, the systems of the parents, and the larger community systems.

- Skills:
1. Asking a series of questions to elicit a detailed picture of the family dynamics of a parent's problem.
 2. Developing a hypothesis about the family system dynamics involved in the problem.
 3. Working with the parent for a short period of time to change a family interaction pattern beyond the one-to-one parent and/or child relationship.
 4. Knowing when to end the intervention effort and either refer the parent or return to Level 3 support.
 5. Orchestrating a referral by educating the family and the therapist about what to expect from each other.
 6. Working with therapists and community systems to help the parent and family.

Level 4 involves actively exploring a personal or family problem that is affecting the care of the child, such as conflict between caregiving adults, and generating ways to resolve or improve the problem by changing family patterns. The provider forms an assessment of the family dynamics and offers to help the family past their difficulty. If this brief, focused counseling does not help, then the family would be referred to therapy and the provider would return to Level 3 involvement. Providers offering Level 4 involvement have special training in family assessment and basic family interventions. Level 4 is appropriate for parents whose concerns are not helped by education and support but are not serious enough for a therapy referral. It may also be appropriate when the provider is working collaboratively with other professionals providing Level 5 services to the family.

Level 5: Family Therapy

Knowledge Base: Understand family systems and patterns whereby distressed families interact with professionals and other community systems.

Personal Development: Ability to handle intense emotions in families and self and to maintain one's balance in the face of strong pressure from family members or other professionals.

- Example Skills:
1. Interviewing families of family members who are quite difficult to engage.
 2. Efficiently generating and testing hypotheses about the family's difficulties and interaction patterns.
 3. Escalating conflict in the family on order to break a family impasse.
 4. Working intensively with families during crises.
 5. Constructively dealing with a family's strong resistance to change.
 6. Negotiating collaborative relationships with other professionals and other systems who are working with the family, even when these groups are at odds with one another.

Level 5 involves intensive work with families who have serious difficulties that cannot be helped with Level 3 or Level 4 involvement. At Level 4, the educator remains focused on family issues that affect parenting and the child's well-being. At Level 5, the therapist and family may end up focusing on problems only indirectly related to the child, such as serious marital distress, a parent's depression or alcoholism, or the family's conflict with various community agencies and systems.

Source:

Doherty, W. J. (1999). The levels of family involvement model. In *Tools for ethical thinking and practice in family life education* (pp. 14-19). National Council on Family Relations.

