



## GETTING TO KNOW THE FAMILY

Families come in different shapes and sizes. Likewise, the roles and perspectives of family members will vary from one to another. The professional may find it useful to get to know the family by gathering information in several key areas. These include information on who the family members are and what their roles are in decision making regarding the child. It also will be useful for the professional to understand which cultural or ethnic groups the family identifies with and what languages family members speak and read. When working with some families, interpreters (for spoken communication) and translators (for written communication) may be required. Some general knowledge of a family's preferences regarding customs and child-rearing practices will be useful to professionals as they establish working partnerships with the family.

Most families, particularly those with young infants, do not want to fill out more questionnaires or sit down for formal interviews. Getting acquainted may be more successfully accomplished with an open, conversational style of communication when the opportunities arise during office or home visits or telephone interviews. This information will be acquired over time as the family and professional get to know one another.

### FAMILY COMPOSITION

- Who is in the family (what members are included in the family circle)?
- What are the roles of the family members?
- Who are the baby's primary caregivers?
- Who makes the decisions about child-rearing and health issues?
- What other family members or friends are included in the family's circle of support?
- How are these other individuals included?

### FAMILY CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

- With which cultural and linguistic groups do family members identify?
- What languages do family members speak?
- Is an interpreter needed for communication?
- Do written materials need to be translated into the family's preferred language?
- Do family members have a preference for written materials or information through another medium, such as oral discussion?

### FAMILY CUSTOMS AND PREFERENCES

- How would family members prefer to be greeted (e.g., by their title [*Mr.* or *Mrs.*] or by their role [mother, father, grandmother])?
- What are the family's household customs (e.g., removal of shoes when entering the home, not patting the child on the head, not touching family members unless invited to do so)?
- Where and when would families prefer to meet or discuss issues?



### **CHILD-REARING PRACTICES**

- What are family mealtimes like? Food preferences? Mealtime practices?
- Who typically feeds the child?
- Does the baby sleep in the same room as the parents?
- What is the bedtime routine?
- What are the family's views about child discipline (e.g., when, what method, how much, at what child age)?

### **FAMILY PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THE CHILD'S DEVELOPMENT AND TREATMENT**

- What are the family members' beliefs and perceptions about the child's condition?
- What is the family's approach to health care?
- On whom do family members rely for medical and health care treatment?
- What education and treatment approaches do they use?
- What are their hopes and dreams for the child's development?

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