Early Interventionist Practitioner Coach Guide

Developed by: Ashley MacNish, Erin E. Barton, and Lise Fox

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Introduction

Welcome! As the practitioner coach for an early intervention provider, you will assist the early interventionist (EI) in providing guidance, support, and coaching to families and other caregivers using Pyramid Model practices. Practitioner coaching is a job-embedded professional development (PD) strategy used in parallel with early intervention services to support early interventionists who coach families and other caregivers in using evidence-based practices to promote the development of infants and toddlers. Coaching is grounded in the Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) framework to support intentional practice change through goal setting, observation, and reflection.

> Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) is a coaching approach focused on implementing specific practices. PBC occurs within a collaborative partnership and uses a cyclical process of action planning, observation, reflection, and feedback to support practitioners' use of recommended practices.

Where do you begin? This manual provides additional resources that build on the Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) training you have received. As a practitioner coach, you will need to think about three essential elements of coaching: **1)** Getting Ready for Coaching, **2)** Enacting Coaching, and **3)** Using Data to Make Decisions.

Getting Ready for Coaching

- Steps to Complete Before Coaching
- Coordination with Leadership Team
- Differentiating PBC from Family Coaching
- Caseload Planning and Scheduling
- Establishing Collaborative Partnerships
- Strategies for Effective Communication

Enacting Coaching

- Creating Shared Goals and Action Plans
- Conducting a Focused Observation
- Conducting a Debriefing Session using Reflection and Feedback

Data Decision Making

- Early Intervention Coaching Data Tools
- Using Look-Think-Act to Make Decisions
- Using Data to Determine When and How to Decrease Coaching
- Sustaining the Effects of Coaching

Key Terms

As you review this guide, you might encounter new terms related to practitioner coaching and the Pyramid Model. The definitions of these terms can be found in the documents listed below:

- The NCPMI Glossary of Terms provides an alphabetical list of definitions of many terms used in the Pyramid Model, Practice-Based Coaching, and this manual.
- The Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children (DEC) Recommended Practices Glossary (DEC, 2015) provides definitions of key terms used in the DEC Recommended Practices (April 2014)

Additional Related Resources

- National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (2024). *Program-wide support for Pyramid Model Implementation within early intervention services*.
- Snyder, P., Hemmeter, M. L., & Fox, L., (2022). *Essentials of practice-based coaching: Supporting effective practices in early childhood.* Paul H. Brookes Publishing.

Definition of Early Interventionist

In early intervention, many types of professionals may be involved (e.g., early childhood special educators, speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, occupational therapists, and service coordinators) in providing services to families and their children. For this manual, we use the term *early interventionist* (EI) to refer to any professional who provides direct support to families and caregivers of infants and toddlers with disabilities. Our use of *early interventionist* includes, but is not limited to, developmental specialists, family support specialists, service coordinators, and related service providers such as speech-language pathologists, physical therapists, or occupational therapists.

Getting Ready for Coaching

This section outlines important considerations **before** coaching begins. Many of these activities are planned in collaboration with your program's Pyramid Model leadership team and include:

- planning the implementation of PBC with the leadership team
- differentiation of PBC from family coaching
- caseload planning and scheduling
- establishing collaborative partnerships
- clear communication around PBC
- preparing for the implementation of Pyramid Model practices

Steps to Complete Before Coaching

Before beginning coaching cycles with early interventionists, it's important to ensure a strong coaching foundation is in place. Preparing thoughtfully helps build trust, provides clarity around roles and expectations, and sets the stage for effective implementation of Pyramid Model practices. These steps will help you get organized and establish a positive foundation for your coaching relationships.

Step 1. Understand your role as a practitioner coach to clarify your responsibilities within your program and how your role fits into the broader professional development system.

- Meet with your leadership team to define expectations and discuss the coaching schedule.
- Review your program's implementation plan for PBC and the Pyramid Model.
- Connect with other coaches or your program implementation coach for ongoing collaboration.

Resources to use: Role description, program coaching, and implementation plans

Step 2. Build your knowledge of the Pyramid Model practices in early intervention to build confidence and capacity to support early interventionists in implementing them in natural settings, including home and childcare environments.

- Complete the Pyramid Model Early Intervention Practices and the PBC Early Intervention training.
- Review the Early Intervention Pyramid Practices Fidelity Instrument (EIPPFI) and Early Intervention Implementation Checklist to deepen your familiarity with observable practices.
- Review other initiatives (e.g., family coaching framework, curriculum assessment, social-emotional assessment) that your program is already implementing to support alignment with the Pyramid Model.

Resources to use: NCPMI website, EIPPFI, Early Intervention Implementation Checklist

Step 3. Clarify the coaching process and gather the tools you will use during coaching cycles to understand how they support practitioner growth.

- Review the PBC cycle: shared goals/action planning, focused observation, reflection/feedback.
- Organize your coaching materials:
  - Practitioner Coaching Log and Summary Form
  - EIPPFI observation tool
  - Action Planning Forms
  - Reflective Feedback Questions
- Prepare a PBC orientation overview to share with early interventionists.

Resources to use: Coaching binder or virtual folder, training handouts

Step 4. Collaborate with the Leadership Team to align coaching with program goals, caseloads, and the needs of practitioners for support.

- Confirm how early interventionists will be assigned to coaches.
- Determine expectations for documentation and reporting.
- Determine coaching delivery methods and the expected frequency of coaching cycles each month.
- Discuss a communication plan for sharing coaching progress or practitioner needs.

Resources to use: Implementation plan

Step 5: Establish a plan for coaching delivery to plan a manageable coaching schedule and format (e.g., in-person, virtual, recorded video) that works for both you and your practitioners.

- Consider how many early interventionists you will coach at one time.
- Identify how frequently you will conduct observations and debriefs.
- Develop a plan for backup support or continuity if sessions are missed.

Step 6: Orient early interventionists to PBC to build rapport, explain your role, and outline what to expect throughout the coaching process.

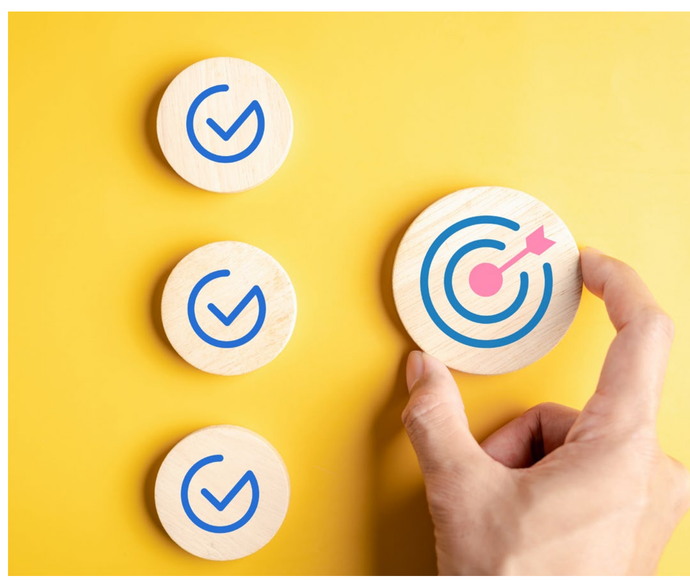
- Deliver an orientation overview of PBC to early interventionists, including how the EIPPFI will be used.
- Clarify the difference between family coaching and PBC.
- Share a coaching agreement that describes your partnership approach.
- Ask about their preferences for feedback and support (e.g., modeling, written feedback, role play).
- Provide a list of resources or handouts they can refer to during coaching cycles.

Resources: Coaching agreement; EIPPFI; coaching preferences survey (see page 24)

Step 7: Plan for data collection by reviewing the tools you will use to collect data and track progress.

- Review how to complete the Practitioner Coaching Logs and EIPPFI tool.
- Test the technology or virtual platforms you'll use for observations.
- Know how and when to share data with your program's data coordinator.

Resources: Log tutorials on the EIPPFI and coaching log spreadsheets



Role of the Practitioner Coach

Below is a list of roles the practitioner coach might have as part of your program's implementation of the Pyramid Model. If there are multiple coaches in your program, consider dividing and conquering based on the interests and capacity of each coach:

- Creation of materials to support the delivery of PBC and Pyramid Model practice implementation for early interventionists.
- Delivery of PBC to early interventionists.
- Provide training on technology, coaching processes, and coaching materials to early interventionists who will engage in coaching.
- Provide ongoing training around Pyramid Model practices to all staff.
- Create materials and provide orientation to new staff on Pyramid Model practices.
- Coordinate support with the behavior specialist and early interventionist to support families with the Prevent, Teach, Reinforce for Families process.
- Collect coaching data.
- Share coaching updates and coaching data at leadership team meetings.

Case Study: Role of the Practitioner Coach

Coach Rosa's early intervention program is in its first year of implementing the Pyramid Model. Rosa and one additional early intervention provider, Chris, have volunteered to be practitioner coaches and attend monthly leadership team meetings. The entire program completed its Pyramid Model Early Intervention practices training in the Fall, and Rosa and the other practitioner coach completed their PBC training in January. They started attending monthly practitioner coach calls. Rosa and her colleague created a shared coaching folder to store all their coaching materials and resources. They have decided they want to take time to become comfortable with the EIPPFI and the coaching forms shared during the PBC training, identify coaching caseloads and delivery methods to begin to create a coaching plan, and identify universal strategies for engaging staff with the early intervention Pyramid Model practices as they build their coaching and professional development systems as initial steps.

Coordination with the Leadership Team

Coaching is most effective when it is aligned with the goals, structures, and support systems of the early intervention program. The intentional inclusion of the coach on the Pyramid Model Leadership teams ensures that the program will create a strong foundation for professional development, sustain implementation of Pyramid Model practices, and respond to emerging needs in the system.

Part of the coach's role on the Pyramid Model Leadership Team includes coordinating coaching. Being a member of the Pyramid Model Leadership Team ensures that coaches are part of preparing for and planning PBC implementation within the program and have a working knowledge of the program's Pyramid Model implementation plan. During the "Getting Ready for Coaching" stage, the leadership team will have discussions around the implementation of PBC and should work collaboratively on the following:

- **Coaching Format:** Individual, group, peer, or mixed-delivery of coaching (see pgs. 40-41 of the Early Intervention Leadership Team Guide: Program-Wide Supports for Pyramid Model Implementation within Early Intervention Services).
- **Coaching Delivery Method:** In-person, virtual, or video recording.
- **Coach and Early Interventionist Training:** How early interventionists and coaches will receive initial and ongoing training in Pyramid Model practices and PBC.
- **Coaching Assignments:** Determining who will receive and provide coaching.

Key Coordination Activities

Focus	Collaborative Tasks	Examples
Identify Goals for PBC and Pyramid Model Implementation	• Meet with the leadership team before starting coaching to clarify how coaching fits into your program's overall professional development plan. • Review program-level implementation benchmarks and discuss how coaching can support progress toward those goals. • Ensure coaching goals align with expectations for high-fidelity Pyramid Model practices across home and childcare settings.	• "What are our program's current goals for Pyramid Model implementation?" • "Are there specific practices or areas of the EIPPFI we want to focus on first?" • "How can we use coaching to support staff in home visiting, childcare, and hybrid roles?"

Focus	Collaborative Tasks	Examples
Clarify the Coach's Role on the Leadership Team and their Communication with other Coaches	• Identify how the coach on the leadership team communicates with other coaches and shares feedback from coaches with the other team members. • Determine expectations for sharing data and feedback from coaching cycles (e.g., trends, practitioner strengths or barriers—not individual performance). • Clarify the division between coaching and supervisory roles, especially in programs where coaches and supervisors overlap or collaborate.	• Discuss how practitioner progress or system challenges will be communicated back to the leadership team. • Identify shared norms for confidentiality, support, and non-evaluative feedback.
Partner with the Leadership Team to Problem-Solve and Celebrate Success	• Share coaching trends and emerging practitioner needs with team members as a standing agenda item in the monthly leadership team meeting. • Collaborate to remove system-level barriers (e.g., time for coaching, tech issues, caregiver scheduling). • Celebrate practitioner milestones in implementation (e.g., completed goals, strong caregiver partnerships, improved child outcomes).	• Create an initial data-collection timeline (e.g., January-April) to allow coaches to build capacity and collect initial coaching data to inform next steps. • Create a coaching plan outlining next steps, implementation timelines, and follow-up times with the leadership team. • Create a practitioner spotlight to share at staff meetings or on social media, celebrating practitioner successes. • Create a plan to provide universal coaching support while coaches build their capacity.

Case Study: Collaboration with the Leadership Team

As members of the program's Pyramid Model leadership team, Rosa and Chris collaborated with team members to lead the planning and roll-out of PBC. The program has been using reflective supervision with staff for a couple of years, but it will be new to coaching. They developed a plan with small steps to support staff engagement and build the coaches' capacity. Some of their steps include:

- Create and deliver a staff presentation to share PBC and next steps.
- Create a staff survey to understand what staff will find helpful and what information they would like to know, and to identify volunteers for coaching.
- Create materials to support coaching, including a video consent form for EIPPFI and focused observations, a coach agreement template, and an action planning template to document staff coaching and reflective supervision goals.
- Create a coaching plan to identify timelines for collecting data to inform next steps and communicating coaching to staff.
- Plan and deliver universal strategies to support staff in using Pyramid Model practices during the initial PBC rollout.

The leadership team would like to explore group coaching as a delivery method and aims to provide PBC experience to the new coaches and to collect data to inform what their coaching system might look like. For now, they have decided to engage in an initial data-collection period during which each coach will provide 1:1 PBC delivery to one volunteer. Coaches will complete an EIPPFI and aim to engage in two monthly coaching cycles for four months.

Tips for Practitioner Coach Engagement During Leadership Team Meetings

- Be proactive: Initiate regular conversations with the leadership team rather than waiting for issues to arise.
- Keep shared notes, templates, or timelines to clarify roles and commitments, and be prepared to discuss coaching progress.
- Be a thought partner: Bring insights and ideas—not just problems—to your leadership team conversations.

Universal Coaching Supports

When coaching systems are just getting started—or still evolving—it's important to provide flexible and accessible support to EIs. These **universal coaching supports** help build familiarity with the Pyramid Model and the coaching process while fostering trust and momentum. Think of these supports as "on-ramps" to full coaching implementation. They introduce foundational concepts, create touchpoints for connection, and allow practitioners to begin reflecting on their practice before engaging in formal PBC cycles.

Why Universal Supports Matter

- Help reduce anxiety or hesitation about coaching
- Create access to practice-based learning
- Build readiness for deeper, individualized coaching
- Provide consistent support across practitioners, regardless of coaching status
- Allow practitioners to create habits for practice and reflection outside of coaching.

Planning for Universal Coaching Supports

Universal coaching supports might be provided in the following ways:

1. Community of practice meetings – coaches can convene or co-lead a community of practice (CoP) meeting with staff to stay connected and provide real-time coaching reminders or resources. Strategies to use include:
    - Highlight examples of Pyramid Model practices in action.
        - Celebrate coaching and implementation successes.
    - Invite staff to bring questions or problems to the group for problem-solving around shared challenges.
    - Offer mini-teachings on high-interest topics.
    - Embed opportunities for information and practice of Pyramid Model practices into staff meetings.
    - Create a practice challenge and invite EIs to share reflections at the next staff meeting.
2. Provide introductory sessions or informal check-ins before starting PBC. Use these to introduce yourself, explain what coaching is (and isn't), and check in on current needs or priorities. These might include:
    - Scheduling a short 1:1 meeting or virtual drop-in session.
    - Hosting an orientation to PBC delivery for your program at a staff meeting or for a small cohort of volunteers.
    - Follow-up "coffee-chat" to check in and answer coaching or practice-related questions.
    - Texting an early interventionist after a visit: "Hey, how did it go with trying that new question strategy?"

3. Share tip sheets and videos on foundational Pyramid Model practices. Even before completing an EIPPFI or action plan, you can support practitioners' learning by sharing targeted resources that match what they're experiencing in the field. Strategies you might use include:
   - Using NCPMI handouts on caregiver engagement, routines, and responsive interactions.
   - Sharing the Infant-Toddler Caregiver Reflection tool.
   - Pairing resources with a reflection prompt.
   - Creating 10-minute videos or podcast episodes on specific practices for staff to watch on the go.
   - Creating a staff newsletter that highlights a monthly practice.
   - Emailing a handout on embedding communication goals into play routines.
   - Sharing a video clip with a provider and asking them to reflect before your next meeting.

Additional ideas for providing universal coaching supports can be found in the *Early Intervention Leadership Team Guide: Program-Wide Supports for Pyramid Model Implementation within Early Intervention Services*, pp. 42-44

Case Study: Planning Universal Supports to Engage Staff with Pyramid Model Practices

Rosa, Chris, and the other members of the leadership team decided that it would be important to provide universal supports to promote staff in the program's implementation of Pyramid Model practices. Rosa and Chris developed a plan for the following universal supports, which they brought to the next leadership team meeting for review by the other team members.

4. Review the NCPMI website for resources to share with caregivers and create a folder for staff to access when planning for visits.
   - All responsible, before the next leadership team meeting.
5. Monthly staff newsletter- add an EIPPFI practice and resource to support implementation.
   - Program Administrator and coaches
6. Use the Infant Toddler Caregiver Practices form to create short video clips modeling practices for families to post on social media. The goal is to have one clip by the end of each quarter.
   - Coaches, Speech Language Pathologist, and Family Member
7. Create a staff practice challenge for monthly staff meetings. Developed by the 2nd monthly staff meeting, and then one per month.
   - Coaches

Differentiating PBC from Family Coaching

As an early intervention practitioner coach, it's critical to help early interventionists understand how **Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)** differs from the coaching they provide to **families**. Both are valuable, both use relationship-based strategies, and both aim to improve child outcomes—but their focus, purpose, and structures are distinctly different.

Family Coaching

Family coaching (i.e., coaching with caregivers) is a core part of early intervention service delivery. It focuses on building caregivers' knowledge, skills, and confidence to support their own child's development through everyday routines and interactions. This type of coaching typically happens during a home or community visit and uses a flexible, strengths-based approach that emphasizes caregiver-child interactions. Family coaching is often triadic, involving the early interventionist, the caregiver, and the child.

Practice-Based Coaching

PBC is a professional development framework. It supports early interventionists in intentionally and consistently using evidence-based practices—such as those outlined in the EIPFFI—in their work with families and childcare providers. PBC uses a structured cycle: shared goals and action planning, focused observation, and reflection and feedback, all delivered within a collaborative partnership.

Differentiating Family Coaching from PBC

Family Coaching	Practice-Based Coaching (PBC)
Focused on caregiver-child interactions and building caregivers' competence and confidence in enhancing their child's social-emotional competence	**Focused on EI's use of practices** with families and child care providers
Happens **during** home or childcare visits	Happens **outside** (planning/debriefing) and **during** (observation) visits
Flexible and responsive	Structured with a defined cycle
Uses tools like IFSP outcomes and family reflections	Uses tools like EIPPFI, coaching logs, and action plans
Data informs child/family outcomes.	Data informs professional practice and implementation fidelity.
Guided by adult learning principles	Also guided by adult learning, but as PD for EI, not the caregiver

Caseload Planning and Scheduling

Coaching schedules in early intervention vary depending on the number of early interventionists, the chosen coaching format and delivery option (e.g., individual, peer, group, in-person, or distance coaching), and the specific needs of practitioners. Coaches should work with the leadership team to make data-informed decisions about caseload planning, coaching frequency, and delivery formats that best support early interventionists using Pyramid Model practices with families and childcare providers.

Considerations for Planning Coaching Caseloads

New Coaches	Experienced Coaches	Partnering for Delivery

• Start with a smaller number of early interventionists (1-2).
• Focus on orientation, relationship-building, and completing initial observations and assessments.
• Engage in delivering 1:1 coaching to gain experience implementing PBC.
	• Balance the timing of observations and debriefs across caseloads.
	• Coordinate with other professional development staff to streamline support.
	• Plan to deliver PBC in formats that are responsive to staff needs.
		• Work with supervisors or coordinators to determine optimal delivery methods and formats:
		  ◦ **method:** in-person, virtual, or hybrid
		  ◦ **format:** individual, group, peer, self-coaching, or mixed delivery
		• Use shared calendars or scheduling tools to avoid missed visits and improve time management.

Determining Coaching Frequency for Early Interventionists

The frequency of coaching will depend on the early interventionist's needs. It may vary over time, based on the early interventionist's experience implementing evidence-based practices, their coaching goals, and the length of time they have received coaching support. For example, suppose you are working with a new early interventionist, or that they are supporting a family with a child who has persistent challenging behavior. In that case, you might need to plan for more time with the early interventionist. If you are working with an experienced early interventionist who is fine-tuning their practice, you might plan less time for coaching support.

Many practitioner coaches have their own caseloads of children and caregivers. The approximations in the following table help you consider when planning coaching caseloads.

Coaching Activities and Time Allocation

Coaching Option or Activity	Estimated Time*	Coaching Tasks
EIPPFI Administration	3-5 hours for each EI	• Attend at least two in-person early intervention sessions OR watch at least 2, 1-hour recorded videos of early intervention sessions to score through observation. • 0.5-1 hour to interview and review documentation to complete scoring. • Enter EIPPFI observations into the spreadsheet and create a score summary.
1:1 Individual Coaching	0.5-2.5 hours per coaching contact with each EI Initial Shared Goals and Action Planning Meeting (1 hour) • Focused Observation (15 -60 min.) • Reflection and Feedback (15-45 min.)	• Review data from the EIPPFI and goal planning forms. • Prepare materials for focused observations and debriefs. • Travel between visits in the home, community, or childcare settings. • Review video submissions. • Develop or locate materials to support action plan goals. • Complete coaching logs • Communicate with early interventionists between coaching sessions.

Coaching Option or Activity	Estimated Time*	Coaching Tasks
Reciprocal Peer Coaching	1-3 hours per coaching dyad • Initial Shared Goals and Action Planning Meeting (1 hour) • Time to coach each partner in the Focused Observation (15 min. - 1 hour per person) • Facilitating Reflection and Feedback discussion (30 min. to 1 hour) Note. A coach will need to prepare materials and teach the dyad how to coach each other reciprocally. The coach might be present for the initial 1-3 cycles to ensure the dyad is comfortable with peer coaching. A lead coach should check in with the dyad periodically to ensure the cycles are being implemented and goals are met.	• Review data from the EIPPFI and goal planning forms. • Prepare materials for focused observations and debriefs. • Travel between visits in the home, community, or childcare settings. • Review video submissions. • Develop or locate materials to support action plan goals. • Support documentation and coaching logs. • Communicating with early interventionists between coaching sessions.
Group Coaching	Time will vary based on the size of your coaching group. We recommend no more than eight early interventionists per group. • 1-1.5 hours per group meeting • 1 hour per individual coaching meetings	• Review EIPPFI practices and group coaching materials. • Meet with individual early interventionists to prepare for focused observation and feedback in the group setting. • Review the early interventionist's goals. • Prepare and review the video • Prepare group-coaching materials for each coach meeting. • Support coaching documentation. • Communication with early interventionists between coaching sessions.

Coaching Option or Activity	Estimated Time*	Coaching Tasks
Self-Coaching	1-2 hours per early interventionist • Initial shared goals and action planning - 1 hour • Monthly check-in to review progress and debrief- up to 1 hour	• Review data from EIPPFI, observations, and goal planning forms. • Prepare materials for monthly check-in meetings. • Review the early interventionist's focused observation data and goals. • Develop or locate materials to support action plan goals. • Support coaching documentation. • Communication with the early interventionist between coaching sessions.

*Estimated times will vary depending on whether the coach is traveling to in-person visits with the early interventionist and the support needed for individual early interventionists.

Tips for Using Technology in Coaching

- Confirm early interventionists have access to the technology needed (e.g., Wi-Fi, devices, video software and tools).
- Provide practice opportunities to use video software and tools and upload recordings.
- Prepare for tech issues with a backup plan (e.g., rescheduling options, phone-based observations).
- Share user guides or tip sheets for any platform used (e.g., Coaching Companion Manual, Zoom, Google Drive).

Scheduling and Time Management Tips

- Set aside 60 minutes for initial goal setting and orientation with each early interventionist. This will include a review of the strengths and needs assessment data, EIPPFI data, and observations; completion of goal-planning forms; and writing goals and action steps.
- Pre-schedule focused observations and debriefs, and confirm via email or text.
- Plan enough time for in-person, focused observations, including travel time.
- Determine whether you will observe the entire visit or a specific part of it when the targeted practice is most likely to occur.
- Adjust your schedule based on individual needs—some early interventionists may require more frequent support (e.g., longer debriefing sessions, additional goal-setting sessions, additional focused observations).
- Use observation data to determine coaching frequency (i.e., the number of coaching cycles) and duration (i.e., the length of focused observation and debriefing sessions)—some early interventionists may need weekly cycles, while others may require monthly cycles.
- Cluster visits by geography to reduce travel time.
- Many coaches find developing a weekly calendar very helpful for planning their time.
- If using peer or group coaching, group early interventionists working on similar goals to reduce preparation time.
- Reserve weekly time to complete documentation and prepare materials.
- Use video calls for debriefing sessions to reduce the time required for in-person meetings. However, it might be helpful to meet in person initially to build the relationship.
- Observe via video recording to reduce travel time.
- If you are using distance technology, plan with the early interventionist on how you can observe their practice. Depending on the goal, an on-site focused observation might be needed.
- Schedule a consistent time in your weekly calendar to complete coaching documentation and tasks, including coaching logs, follow-up emails, and scheduling.
- Encourage early interventionists to create a list of families and childcare providers who are open to PBC during their visits, and to develop alternate plans for focused observations if a visit is cancelled. Support the early interventionist in clearly and proactively communicating when PBC will be part of their visits.
- Keep accurate records of the time spent traveling for coaching and other coaching-related tasks. Use this information to plan your schedule and to provide the leadership team with accurate estimates of the time required for coaching.

Establishing Collaborative Partnerships

Establishing collaborative partnerships is the foundation of effective Practice-Based Coaching (PBC). These relationships create a safe, supportive space where early interventionists can reflect, grow, and implement Pyramid Model practices with confidence. A strong partnership allows the coaching process to be meaningful, empowering, and aligned with each early interventionist's strengths and goals. A strong collaborative partnership creates a supportive, secure space where early interventionists can ask questions, reflect on their practices, and feel safe trying new strategies. This relationship develops over time and is grounded in trust, mutual respect, and shared goals.

Essential Characteristics of Effective Collaborative Partnerships

1. Mutual respect and trust – Establishing a foundation of honesty, transparency, and professionalism.
2. Shared responsibility – Both the coach and early interventionist actively contribute to planning, observation, and reflection.
3. Equality – Recognizing and valuing the expertise each person brings to the partnership.
4. Active participation – Engagement from both partners is key to making progress.
5. Purposeful interactions – Each interaction should serve a clear goal within the coaching cycle.
6. Ongoing communication – Maintain regular, open communication through check-ins, reminders, and shared reflections.
7. Commitment to growth – The partnership is driven by continuous improvement and learning.

Initial Meetings with Early Interventionists

Gaining buy-in is essential to the success of the coaching partnership. The first meeting is a time to establish rapport, discuss expectations, orient the early interventionist to the coaching process, and learn more about their experiences and preferences. This meeting sets the tone for a collaborative, growth-focused relationship.

Initial Meeting Activities:

- Share your background and experience as a coach.
- Discuss your role as a professional development partner—not a supervisor.
- Learn about the early interventionist's background, preferred learning style, professional goals, current caseload, and experiences with coaching.
- Establish preferred communication methods (e.g., email, phone, text).
- Review the purpose and structure of PBC, including how the EIPPFI will be used, and provide a handout.
- Share expected timelines for initial EIPPFIs, shared goals, and action planning meetings, and the start of coaching cycles.
- Develop and use a coaching agreement.

Connection Questions to Build the Relationship

- What are your strengths as a provider working with families and caregivers?
- What do you hope to get out of coaching?
- What are your experiences with coaching, mentoring, or reflective supervision?
- What do you feel confident about in your current work? What areas feel more challenging?
- What is your preferred way to receive feedback and support?
- What's the best way for me to communicate with you between coaching sessions?

Orientation to the Coaching Process

You will work with the leadership team to decide when and how coaching will be introduced to early interventionists. This might be done through individual meetings between the coach and the early interventionist, in group meetings with multiple early interventionists, or at the end of a training workshop. If your program provides a group orientation, plan to check in individually with the early interventionist to see if they have any questions or concerns about what was shared.

Be mindful that when initially sharing coaching information with early interventionists, there may be a range of reactions, including excitement about more support or wariness about having someone observe their interactions with families and children. Here are some helpful tips to use when introducing coaching to early interventionists:

- Clarify the differences between current program initiatives and PBC.
- Use multiple mechanisms for communicating information, including visuals, to describe the PBC process.
- Emphasize PBC as a tool for their own professional growth, not an evaluation or duplication of what they already do.
- Explain that PBC focuses on improving specific intervention practices through goal setting, observation, and feedback. At the same time, reflective supervision emphasizes emotional support and professional growth through reflective dialogue about one's experiences and relationships in the work.
- Ask about concerns and hesitations, and use active listening when early interventionists share them. Respond in ways that communicate you hear those concerns and share how PBC will ensure coaching is a safe space.
- Be confident and enthusiastic about coaching as an opportunity to help early interventionists identify their strengths and grow in their competence and confidence to try a new practice or enhance an existing one.
- Normalize the idea that coaching is a supportive, growth-focused experience—not an evaluation.

- Clarify your role as a professional development partner (not a supervisor). Explain how they can share their voice and choice in the coaching process.
- Explain that PBC uses tools like the EIPPFI to assess fidelity of practice implementation. This information guides action planning and coaching decisions.
- Clarify that EIPPFI and coaching logs are not supervision tools—they are professional development supports—and that information from these tools is used in partnership to reflect and grow.
- Plan connection opportunities to check in individually with early interventionists in a warm, friendly way.
- Describe how family coaching may use developmental assessments or caregiver reflections to inform IFSP goals and service delivery, but these are distinct from the practice-focused tools used in PBC.

The following are ideas of topics for a coaching orientation session and the discussion points to make.

Overview of PBC

- Provide an overview of the PBC and coaching cycles and what the early interventionist can expect:
  - Needs assessment process (e.g., use data from the EIPPFI)
  - Action planning: setting a goal based on strengths and needs
  - Focused observation: virtual or in-person, video or live
  - Reflection and feedback: sharing what was observed and planning next steps
- Communicate the focused observation and debrief coaching strategies. Consider using a coaching strategies survey (See page 24) for sampleto identify individual preferences for coaching.
- Share initial coaching materials and their purpose:
  - Coach Agreement
  - Early Intervention Implementation Checklist
  - Early Interventionist Goal Planning Form

Scheduling

- When using the EIPPFI, you will need to schedule the following:
  - 2, 1-hour in-person observations (or 2, 1-hour recorded visits)
  - 1, 30-minute to an hour post- observation interview and review of documentation
- Shared Goals and Action planning: 1-hour meeting. Some early interventionists may need 1-2 initial meetings to complete initial goal setting.
- Focused observations will begin once goals are created. Explain that focused observations will occur during early intervention visits when the early interventionist is using the targeted Pyramid Model practice (from the action plan) with caregivers. Share the following:
  - How often observations will happen each month
  - How long they might take- will you be observing video clips of a practice or observe an entire early intervention visit?
  - Any technology support that will be provided, and how you will work with early interventionists to build their confidence in using it.

- Debrief meetings will occur as soon as possible after the focused observation, during a time when you and the early interventionist can engage in reflection and feedback with minimal distractions, in a protected space without others present. Share the following:
  - How often they will happen each month
  - How long they might take
  - Where and how you will meet (e.g., in person or virtually)

Alignment of the Pyramid Model with other program initiatives

- Early interventionists might want to know how the Pyramid Model aligns with current program initiatives or how it differs from other evidence-based practices in early intervention.
- Consider sharing the following information to share how the Pyramid Model aligns with their current practice and how it will support their practice:
  - Work with the leadership team to determine how coaching will align with current policies and procedures for professional development plans.
  - Connect the Pyramid Model to past professional development experiences and to other program initiatives and practices (e.g., family coaching, assessments).
  - Explain the Pyramid Model as a framework that supports what early interventionists are already doing.
  - Emphasize the Pyramid Model's focus on social-emotional development and supporting caregivers with their child's challenging behavior.

Resources with ideas and strategies for developing strong collaborative partnerships:

- Unpacking Coaching Webinar Series - A Day in the Life of a Practitioner Coach: Planning for Coaching Caseloads
- Coaching Corner Webinar Series - A Day in the Life of a Coach
- Practice-Based Coaching: Collaborative Coaching Partnerships

Strategies for Effective Communication when Coaching

Use a Coaching Agreement

A coaching agreement is a helpful tool for establishing clear expectations between the coach and the early interventionist. It outlines how you will work together and creates a foundation for effective, respectful communication. Each coaching agreement should be individualized to each coaching partnership and can be changed as you learn more about each other's preferences and work styles.

Elements to include in a coaching agreement:

- Frequency of coaching meetings (e.g., weekly, biweekly)
- Preferred format (in-person, virtual, video-based)
- Feedback preferences (written, verbal, live, or recorded)
- Confidentiality agreements
- Documentation procedures and shared responsibilities

Communicate the PBC Process Clearly

Explain the purpose of each step in the Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) cycle to help early interventionists feel informed and confident. Provide materials that describe PBC, such as practitioner FAQs, visual overviews, or family-facing explanations. Remember, you may need to share information multiple times and in different ways as early interventionists become familiar with the coaching process.

Make sure to describe clearly:

- Action planning, observation, and reflection
- What early interventionists can expect at each step
- That coaching is supportive, not evaluative
- Coaching as a professional development resource provided by your program

Offer a Preferred Coaching Strategies Survey

Each early interventionist may prefer different types of support. Use a coaching strategy survey or checklist to gather this information early in the partnership. This allows coaching to be individualized and responsive. See this handout for definitions of Early intervention practitioner coaching strategies.

Examples of strategies to ask about:

- Modeling or demonstration
- Observation with written feedback
- Verbal reflection conversations
- Use of video for self-reflection
- Reviewing relevant resources together

Coaching Preferences Survey Example :

Coaching Preferences Survey

This short survey will help your coach understand how you prefer to receive coaching support. There are no right or wrong answers—your responses will help us tailor coaching to fit your style and needs.

1. Contact and Meeting Preferences

Preferred method(s) of communication between sessions (check all that apply):

- ☐ Email
- ☐ Phone call
- ☐ Text message
- ☐ Video conferencing (e.g., Zoom, Teams)

Best times/days for coaching meetings: ____

2. Observation Preferences

Which types of observation do you feel most comfortable with? (check all that apply):

- ☐ In-person observation during a visit
- ☐ Live virtual observation
- ☐ Video recording and reviewing later
- ☐ Audio reflection (coach listens to recorded visit)

3. Feedback and Reflection Preferences

How do you prefer to reflect and receive feedback? (check all that apply):

- ☐ Verbal discussion after an observation
- ☐ Written feedback (notes or summaries)
- ☐ Video review with discussion
- ☐ Visual aids or tools (e.g., checklists, diagrams)
- ☐ Modeling or demonstration of practices

4. Helpfulness of Coaching Strategies

Please rate how helpful you find the following strategies on a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 5 (very helpful):

Modeling or demonstrating strategies during a visit: ______ / 5

Side-by-side support during a visit: _________ / 5

Verbal feedback after observation: ________ / 5

Written summaries with suggestions: ________ / 5

Video review and reflection: ________ / 5

Use of tip sheets, visuals, or handouts: ______ / 5

Collaborative goal setting and action planning: _____ / 5

Problem-solving specific challenges together: _____ / 5

5. Additional Information

What else would help you feel supported in coaching?

Preparing for Implementation of Pyramid Model Practices

Coaches should be familiar with the content and practices that early interventionists will be implementing. This includes Pyramid Model practices for infants and toddlers across settings, such as home and childcare.

Preparation Activities:

- Review foundational early interventionist and EIPPFI practices and implementation guidance
- Review other evidence-based practices implemented in your program and be prepared to discuss how they align with the Pyramid Model.
- Explore the resources on the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations (NCPMI) website and ECTA's website for Part C resources (e.g., Key Principles and Practices of Early Intervention).
- Observe early interventionists during their visits with families and providers.

Key Tools to Review:

- Early Interventionist Pyramid Practices Fidelity Instrument (EIPPFI)
- Early Intervention Implementation Checklist
- Infant-Toddler Caregiver Reflection Checklist
- Family-facing planning and reflection tools
- Definitions of Family Centered Coaching Handout

Getting Ready for Coaching: Reflection Questions

Use these reflection questions to guide your preparation as a coach supporting early interventionists in implementing the Pyramid Model.

8. **What are the expectations for my role from the leadership team?**
   Clarify your responsibilities as a coach. Are you supporting all interventionists or a subset? Are you expected to document progress or share data at team meetings? Having a shared understanding with the leadership team will help set realistic goals and ensure consistent support for early interventionists.

9. **What supports do early interventionists need as they begin PBC?**
   Consider what your coachees may need to feel confident and ready. Do they need a basic overview of the Pyramid Model? Are they new to being coached? Would tip sheets, FAQs, or visuals be helpful? Think about how to scaffold the coaching introduction to make it feel supportive and manageable.

10. **Have I clarified the difference between family coaching and practitioner coaching?**
   Be sure to explain that PBC is professional development for early interventionists—not direct coaching of families. This distinction helps early interventionists understand that PBC focuses on their skills and practices as they support caregivers, not on the caregivers themselves.

11. **What is my plan for caseload management and scheduling?**
   Consider your availability, the number of practitioners to support, and logistics such as travel time, virtual coaching platforms, and shared calendars. Have a flexible but clear plan for when and how you'll conduct observations, debriefings, and follow-up. Use a coaching log or weekly calendar to stay organized.

12. **How will I build rapport and establish collaborative partnerships with early interventionists?**
    Think about ways to connect early. Ask about their experiences, goals, communication preferences, and concerns. Make space for trust to build before diving into data or action plans. Clarify that your role is supportive—not supervisory or evaluative—and that coaching is a space for shared learning and growth.
13. **Have I communicated clearly about the PBC process and gathered feedback on preferences?**
    Provide a visual or written overview of the PBC cycle. Ask for feedback on how early interventionists prefer to engage—what kinds of feedback they like, what makes them feel supported, and how they best learn. Use tools like coaching agreements or strategy preference surveys.
14. **What do I need to review or learn about the Pyramid Model practices to feel confident as a coach?**
    Familiarize yourself with the practices outlined in the Early Interventionist Pyramid Practices Fidelity Instrument (EIPPFI) and the resources on the NCPMI website. Review videos, checklists, and reflection tools to ensure you're ready to support implementation with confidence and accuracy.

Preparing for Coaching

Getting ready for coaching involves a lot of preparation! The Implementing PBC in Early Intervention Preparing for Coaching Checklist will help you make sure you don't miss a step.

Case Study: Getting Ready for Coaching

Rosa and Chris created a staff buy-in presentation to share at the next staff meeting, with help from their program implementation coach. They included an overview of the PBC process, how it differs from family coaching as a form of professional development for staff, the expected timeline staff who volunteer for initial coaching can expect, how the program will support staff to engage with practices when not receiving coaching, and how the Pyramid Model will be compatible with the approaches used in their program. After the presentation, the leadership team sent out an anonymous survey to gather staff feedback on coaching options and the coaching plan, and to ask staff if they had any questions or concerns. They identified three volunteers for Rosa and Chris to coach for their initial coaching rollout.

Rosa was paired to coach Julie and scheduled a meeting to get to know Julie, answer questions, and schedule her initial EIPPFI and shared goals/action-planning meeting. Rosa wanted to prioritize building a collaborative coaching partnership from the first meeting and drafted a few questions to get to know Julie's learning and communication preferences, as well as the coaching strategies and supports Julie will find most helpful for engaging with the Pyramid Model practices.

At the initial meeting, Rosa and Julie reviewed the coaching agreement, early intervention implementation checklist, PBC coaching strategies, and the goal planning form to help Julie prepare for the shared goals and action planning meeting.

Rosa also checked in with Julie about her current caseload and helped her create a plan for scheduling the focused observation and debriefing meeting to reflect on and provide feedback. Rosa wanted to ensure it aligns with the program's expectations for two coaching cycles per month. She let Julie know she will check in to make sure Julie can balance coaching with early intervention visit responsibilities and to share with the leadership team whether any adjustments are needed.

Enacting Coaching

Review Practice-Based Coaching Foundations

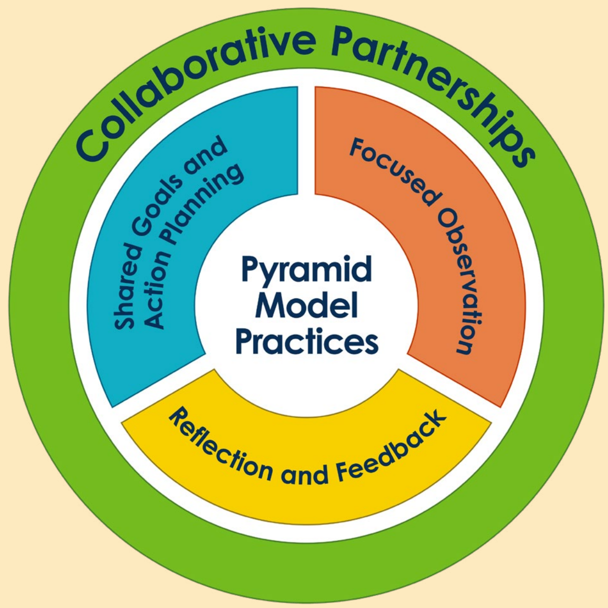
Practice-Based Coaching (PBC) is not a one-time event—it's a **cyclical, relationship-based process** that supports early interventionists in using evidence-based practices to promote child and family outcomes. Coaches should stay grounded in the delivery of PBC: a cyclical process within a collaborative partnership that includes action planning, focused observation, and reflection/feedback. Staying grounded in the PBC framework helps coaches maintain consistency, focus, and fidelity to the framework, especially as individual coaching relationships and caseloads evolve.

The PBC Cycle at a Glance

PBC occurs within a **Collaborative Partnership** that is a trusting relationship between the coach and the early interventionist. It is **non-evaluative** and centered on growth, not compliance.

The **cycle** of PBC has three core components:

1. **Shared Goals and Action Planning**
   Collaboratively develop goals based on identified strengths and needs (often using the EIPPFI), and co-create action plans that are specific, achievable, and tailored to each early interventionist's context.
2. **Focused Observation**
   Observe the early interventionists's use of the identified practices with families or childcare providers. Observations can be in person, virtual, or via video review.
3. **Reflection and Feedback (Debrief)**
   Use information gathered from observations and tools to facilitate meaningful reflection, provide supportive and constructive feedback, and make decisions about next steps.



Creating Shared Goals and Action Plans

Shared goals and action plans should be informed by data, individualized to meet each early interventionists needs around a practice, and created through collaboration with the coach and the early interventionists. A quality goal and action plan provide direction and purpose to the focused observation. This section will outline the process for creating shared goals and action plans, define the components of high-quality action plans, and present considerations for implementing them successfully.

In PBC, goals are written based on the results of a strengths-and-needs assessment process that involves data collected by both the coach and the early interventionists. The data collected can help determine which practices are already in place and which to strengthen, prioritizing them for goal setting.

Steps for creating shared goals and action plans

1. Identify strengths and needs	
Description	**Resources**

• Schedule EIPPFI observation and interview
  ◦ Each EIPPFI observation consists of two 1-hour sessions, either in person or recorded.
  ◦ Plan a 30-minute to 1-hour follow-up meeting to interview and review any documentation needed to complete scoring.
• Complete scoring and print the Excel graph.
• Complete the Coach Goal Planning Form.
• Provide the early interventionist with the Early Intervention Implementation Checklist.
• Early interventionist completes the Early Interventionist Goal Planning Form.
	• Early Interventionist Pyramid Practices Fidelity Instrument (EIPPFI)
	• Early Intervention Implementation Checklist
	• Early Intervention Coach Action Plan Goal Planning (Coach)
	• Early Interventionist Goal Planning Form (Early Interventionist)

2. Prepare for Goal Setting with the early interventionists

Description	Resources
• Review the early interventionist goal planning form together. • Invite the early interventionist to share their priorities. Review the EIPPFI information and the coach goal planning form. • Review the EIPPFI information and the coach goal planning form. • Provide any additional information. **Conversation Starters** • "Let's start by reviewing the checklist you completed during practices training." • "I want to show you the goals I thought about based on my observation."	• Early Interventionist Pyramid Practices Fidelity Instrument (EIPPFI) • Early Intervention Implementation Checklist • Early Intervention Coach Action Plan Goal Planning (Coach) • Early Interventionist Goal Planning Form (early interventionist)

3. Set goals based on strengths and needs

<table>
<tr><th>Description</th><th>Resources</th></tr>
<tr><td>

Look for similarities between the Early Interventionist and Coach Goal Planning Forms.
Work with the early interventionist to create 1-3 initial goals and action steps.

<h3>Goal Considerations</h3>

Work with the early interventionist to prioritize goals based on universal practice needs.
Consider any areas of focus prioritized by programs, if applicable.
Create goals that the early interventionist can use with multiple families to maximize practice opportunities.
Create goals that are achievable within 2-3 coaching cycles.
Write goals that are individualized to the early interventionist’s needs:

Initial use of the practice
Using the practice more often
Building knowledge around the practice
Building confidence to use the practice
Individualizing the practice to meet the needs of families

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Action Plan Form
Action Plan Quality Checklist

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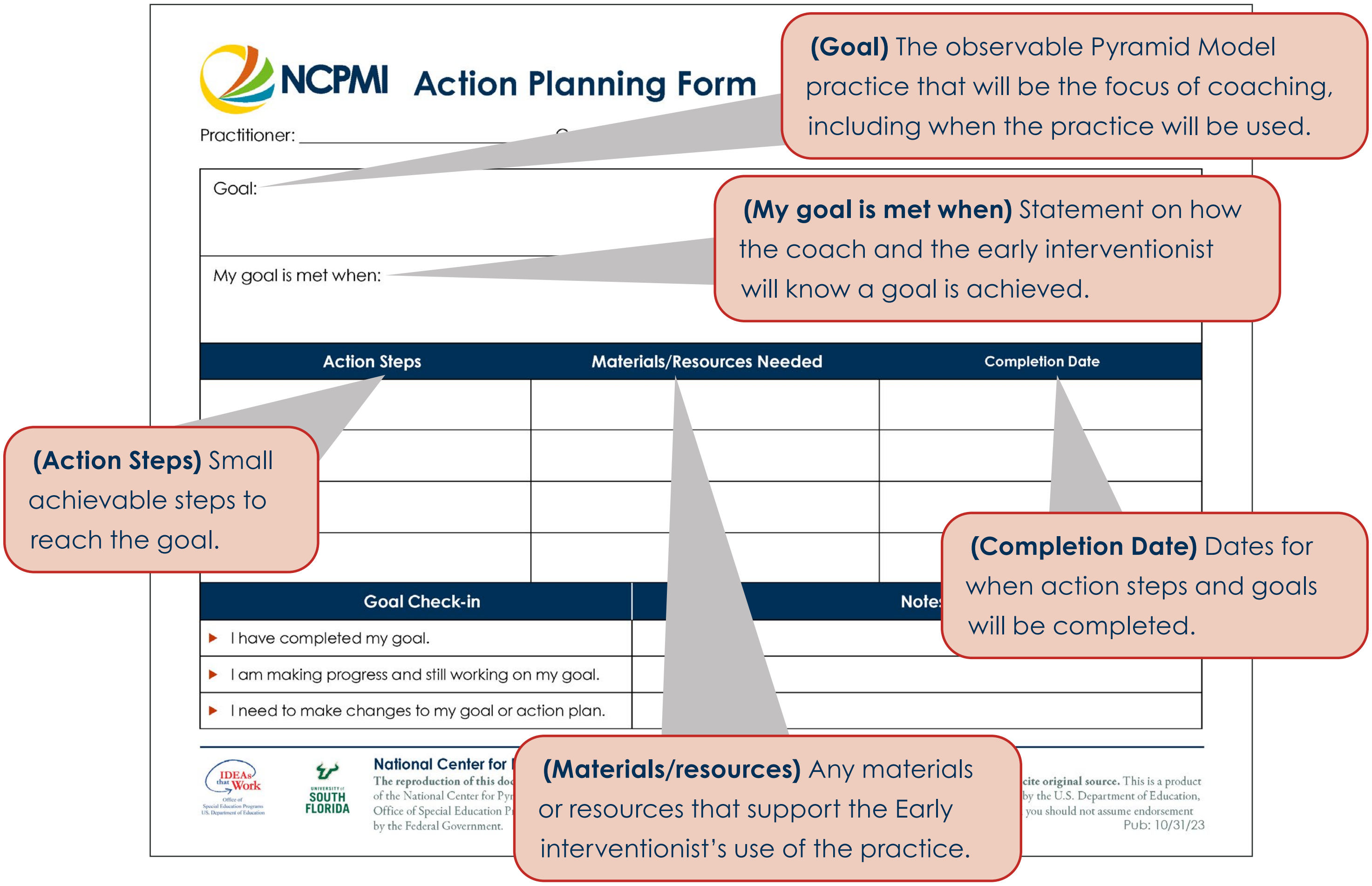
4. Create action plans to support goals

Description	Resources

• Write action plans that support the achievement of the goal statement.
• Action plans include the following components:
  ◦ action steps
  ◦ materials and resources needed to achieve the goal,
  ◦ timelines for completing action steps and the targeted practice, and
  ◦ a statement that identifies when the goal is complete.
	• Action Plan Form
	• Action Plan Quality Checklist
	Materials and resources might include handouts from training, NCPMI resources, videos, or other materials.
	Resources from NCPMI
	Definitions of Family-Centered Coaching Practices
	Reflection Questions for Families on Social and Emotional Development
	Caregiver Planning Form
	Caregiver Practices to Support Infant-Toddler Social-Emotional Development
	Caregiver Responsive Routines Planning Form
	Infant-Toddler Caregiver Reflection Tool
	NCPMI Family Engagement Page

5. Plan for next steps

Description	Resources
• Provide copies of the goals and action plans to the early interventionist • Schedule the first focused observation and debrief	



Writing Effective Goal Statements and Action Plans

Goal statements help both the coach and the early interventionist understand the focus of the actions the early interventionist will take during early intervention visits, as well as what the coach will observe and provide reflection and feedback throughout the coaching cycle. Effective goal statements include:

- The observable Pyramid Model practice that was identified in the strengths and needs assessment.
- A measure, or how much or how often the practice will be seen or heard.
- The activity, when or where the practice will be implemented.

Goal statements and action plans should be individualized to the needs of each early interventionists. Coaches might consider the following when helping early interventionistss to think about how they would like to engage in their use of the practice:

- Is this a practice that the early interventionist is just learning to use, or one they would like to use more often?
  - Consider ways to help the early interventionist remember to use it during visits. That might be to track the use of the practice, identify when they are most likely to use it, or a visual to remember to use the practice.

- Is this a practice the early interventionist would like to use with more intention?
  - Provide information and resources to help the early interventionist understand why the practice is used and how it can help support family and child outcomes.
  - Reflect with the early interventionist on parts of the visit or situations with a caregiver where they might use it, and what it could look like.
- Is this a practice the early interventionist would like to build more confidence using?
  - Discuss coaching strategies that could support confidence building (e.g., role play, video reflection).
  - Reflect with the early interventionist about beliefs, emotions, or experiences that arise when using the practice and might be impacting their confidence.
  - Identify caregivers the early interventionist feels comfortable using the practice as they build their confidence before expanding to all caregivers on their caseload.
- Is this a practice the early interventionist created with a specific caregiver in mind?
  - Some early interventionists might want support in using a practice with a specific caregiver and help individualize it to the situation.
  - Engage in problem-solving and reflective discussion to discuss how the practice can be applied.
  - Support the early interventionist in brainstorming a list of caregivers on their caseload who might also benefit from the practice.

Helpful Resources:

- Action Plan Form: Coaches and early interventionists can use this form during shared goals and action planning to document goals and action plans.
- Early Intervention Coach Action Plan Goals Planning: Use this form to guide your discussion during the goal-planning session.
- Early Interventionist Goal Planning Form: Early interventionists complete this form and review it with their coach during coaching meetings.

Case study: Shared Goals and Action Planning

Rosa met with Julie for their shared goals and action planning meeting. After reviewing the results of the EIPPFI observation and their goal-planning forms, Julie shared that she often finds herself telling caregivers what to do during family coaching rather than engaging them in reflective discussion to help them develop solutions themselves. Most of her families are working on goals related to their child's communication.

Julie identifies that she would like to write a goal around **DR11: Practitioner supports the caregiver in observing, interpreting, and responding contingently and positively to the child's emotions, communication, and cues, with a focus on asking open-ended questions to engage in their own observation and reflection of what their child is communicating.** She shared that she would like to become more fluent at asking questions rather than giving caregivers her interpretation of the child's cues. Julie and Rosa created the following goal statement:

I will use open-ended questions during caregiver practice opportunities and during joint planning to help caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues.

Julie and Rosa used the Action Plan Quality Checklist to complete their action plan.

NCPMI Action Planning Form

Practitioner: Julie   Coach: Rosa   Date: 6/27/25

Goal: I will use open-ended questions during caregiver practice opportunities and during joint planning to help caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues.

My goal is met when: I am observed on two consecutive visits helping caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues by asking questions before offering my own interpretation.

Action Steps	Materials/Resources Needed	Completion Date
Identify families on caseload where this practice will most likely be used.	Caseload list	6/30
Create a list of reflective questions specific to helping families observe and interpret their child's cues.	NCPMI Handout: Reflection Questions for Families on Social and Emotional Development.	By 7/8
If needed- roleplay with coach Rosa	List of created reflective questions	At 7/18 meeting

Goal Check-in	Notes
I have completed my goal.	
I am making progress and still working on my goal.	
I need to make changes to my goal or action plan.	

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Explaining the Shared Goals and Action Planning Process

Early interventionists may feel confused or apprehensive when initially engaging in shared goals and action planning. Coaches can use the collaborative partnership strategies to ensure effective communication with early interventionists about what will happen and why during initial shared goals and action planning. Below are some strategies coaches can use to support communication around shared goals and action planning.

- **Describe the use of the EIPPFI –** Talk about when and how the EIPPFI observation will take place, what information the EIPPFI will capture, and emphasize EIPPFI as a coaching and professional development tool, not an assessment.
- **Explain how the early interventionist can use the Early Intervention Implementation Checklist** – Describe the checklist as linked to practices on the EIPPFI. State that the checklist will provide an opportunity for the early interventionist to reflect on their practices, note their strengths, and identify questions or concerns about their practice.
- **Offer a choice:** share with the early interventionist that you can help them complete the goal planning form, or they can do it on their own.
- **Emphasize the importance of the process and progress –** Let the early interventionist know that action plans are working documents that reflect the growth that the practitioner wants to make in their practice. The EIPPFI supports their goal planning; it is not an evaluation of their proficiency as an early interventionist.
- **Describe the use of action plans –** Action plans capture what the early interventionist will be working on between meetings with the coach. They help the coach and early interventionist identify the practices that are the focus of observations and that the coach uses to support the early interventionist's reflection on their goal achievement.

Shared Goals and Action Planning Coaching Questions

1. How do I know what goals to write?
    - Ask the early interventionist to share their priorities.
    - Ask the early interventionist about challenges using practices with any caregivers on their caseload.
    - Review the information gathered from the EIPPFI with the early interventionist and reflect on areas to strengthen.
    - Look for similarities identified on the coach and early interventionist goal planning forms.
    - If there are differences between coach and early interventionist, find a goal you can agree on; or start with a goal the early interventionist feels is a priority. You can ask the early interventionist to agree to revisit addressing other goals at another time.
2. When writing multiple goals and action plans, how do I know which goal to work on first?
    - The first goal might be one that the early interventionist can easily complete quickly to build confidence in the PBC process and Pyramid Model implementation.
    - Uses a strengths-based approach by considering:
        - What is the early interventionist already doing well?
        - How can you build on these strengths?
        - Identify practices the early interventionist is already using but would like to implement differently or more often with specific families or during particular parts of their early intervention visits.

- Identify a practice the early interventionist is already doing well, but could be enhanced or done in a different way (e.g., the early interventionist is comfortable asking open-ended questions but needs help offering wait time for a caregiver response).

3. What if the early interventionist is not making progress with their goals?
   - Ideally, goals should be achieved within 2-3 coaching cycles. If the early interventionist is not making progress, work with them to identify any barriers to implementation.
     - Start with reflection before giving feedback to the early interventionist about lack of progress (e.g., “What has been hard about implementing [goal or action step]?”)
     - This is a collaborative process; it will be important for you to open the dialogue, ask questions, and make changes to the goal and action plan based on your conversation with the early interventionist.
     - Explore problem-solving around barriers:
       - Help the early interventionist identify caregivers with a consistent early interventionist visit schedule. You want the early interventionist to have multiple opportunities to work on their practice goal.
       - Are they struggling with time or with technology?
       - Is this an issue related to a leadership team decision associated with the frequency of coaching cycles or early intervention caseloads that are impacting early interventionists’ ability to achieve the goal? Let the early interventionist know you are working with the leadership team to find solutions.
   - You might consider whether the goal or action plan needs to be revised, or if the early interventionist’s opinions were considered when the goal or action steps were created.
     - Do the action steps need to be simplified, or a new action step written?
     - Does the early interventionist understand the goal and action steps as written and how to implement them?
     - What is the early interventionist’s confidence in being able to use the written action steps or strategies?
     - Does the early interventionist need additional coaching strategies, such as modeling the use of the practice or other observation and coaching strategies?
     - During the debrief, you should review the action plan as written and consider the following:
       - Does the early interventionist have the resources needed to implement the goal?
       - Is there a prerequisite or foundational practice that is not fully in place that needs to be in place before addressing this goal or action step?
       - Is this goal a priority for the early interventionist? If not, is there a practice that may be more important? If so, is there an action step that is missing?
4. How do I transition to another goal after one goal is achieved?
   - Reflect with the early interventionist on what they might like to work on next.
   - Discuss ways to expand the practice(s) in the current goal to support individual caregivers, parts of the visit, or other skills or behaviors for child outcomes.
   - Use the Early Intervention Implementation Checklist to guide the reflection process.

Coaches can use the PBC checklists in the Appendix of this guide to ensure they are following the elements of PBC and the coaching cycle. Coaches will find these helpful as they build their fluency with PBC.

- Revisit the early interventionist's goal planning forms. Offer a few choices related to the early interventionist's original priorities.
- Revisit the information gathered from the EIPPFI and coach goal planning forms to share other options for goals.
- Plan for maintenance of achieved goals by identifying the steps of the action plan to continue implementing. Plan for when you will check in on the achieved goals (e.g., you might say, "When I see you using a previous goal in observation, I might point it out and offer some supportive feedback on it even if we don't have an action plan on that practice anymore.").

Conducting a Focused Observation

The term "observation" refers to the process of gathering and recording information about the implementation of desired early intervention Pyramid Model practices during early intervention visits. **Focused observations** are guided by the selected goals and action plans discussed in the previous section. The information gathered during focused observations helps the coach support early interventionists' reflection and feedback tied to the specific goal and action plan during their debrief after the focused observation.

Preparing for the Focused Observation

It is important to be prepared to conduct a focused, intentional, and systematic observation. Coaches will need to coordinate with early interventionists on when and how focused observations will occur. Below are some considerations to help coaches prepare for focused observations with early interventionists.

The Conducting a Focused Observation with Early Interventionists document supports coaches in preparing for and conducting focused observations with early interventionists.

A critical step for planning focused observations is identifying when they will occur (i.e., during early intervention sessions with specific caregivers). The coach should provide the early interventionist with materials to use with the family to explain PBC and obtain their agreement for the focused observation.

Early Intervention Checklist for Reviewing Practice-Based Coaching with Families

Practice-Based Coaching and the Pyramid Model Family Agreement

Considerations for preparing for focused observations

What goal and action plan will be the focus of the observation?	During initial action planning, you might have supported early early interventionist to create 1-3 goals or action plans. Help them to prioritize which goal they would like to be the focus of the observation: • What is your current priority? • Is there one goal that might provide you more relief in achieving than others?

Will the focused observation occur in person, virtually, or be video-recorded?	You should decide with the early interventionist: • The method of observation: in-person, virtually, or video • The caregiver you will observe them working with. • The day and time of the focused observation. If recorded, the date the early interventionist will post the video for you to review.
What coaching strategies is the early interventionist comfortable receiving?	Before the observation, ask the early interventionist about what coaching strategies they feel comfortable/uncomfortable receiving, or that might support the implementation of their goal or action plan. These conversations should be ongoing as preferences might change. Some questions to consider when asking about preferences include: • Can the coach help during the early interventionist visit (e.g., guidance for challenging behavior, conversations with caregivers, offering solutions during problem-solving discussions with caregivers)? • Does the early interventionist feel comfortable with the coach modeling or providing feedback during the visit? For more information on coaching strategies to use during focused observations, refer to the Early Intervention Practitioner Coach Log with Definitions of Practitioner Coaching Strategies.
Which caregivers on the early interventionist's caseload are comfortable with PBC being a part of their early intervention visits?	The early interventionist should explain PBC to the families they support and identify which caregivers are comfortable with PBC during their early intervention service visits. Sometimes, early intervention visits with caregivers get cancelled at the last minute. Proactive communication is key. Encourage early interventionists to create alternative plans with caregivers for focused observations. **Example:** *"I have a focused observation planned on Friday with a family. If they cancel, would you be open to recording our visit so my coach can observe? I can send a message before I arrive to let you know."* ***Note.*** *If early intervention is delivered in childcare settings, these conversations will need to happen with both families and childcare providers.*

What data or information should be gathered during the focused observation?	Engage in conversations with the early interventionist prior to the focused observation about what information will be most helpful as they work towards their goal. • Is there anything specific you would like me to pay attention to? • What data or information would you like me to collect around this goal? • Is there a specific caregiver you would like me to observe as you use this practice? What would you want me to look for?
Are both the coach and the early interventionist comfortable with how to use any technology being used to support coaching?	Common technologies used for focused observations include: • Video recording equipment (e.g., cameras, tripods, iPads, phones provided by the program) • Virtual meeting platforms where the coach can be present during the early intervention session. • Virtual Coaching Platforms (e.g., Head Start Coaching Companion or Torsh) Coaches will need time to learn the technology themselves and to coach the early interventionist on how to use it to support focused observations. Coaches should consider working with their program leadership team to ensure they have video consent forms for early interventionists and caregivers if focused observations will be recorded.

Collaborating with Caregivers to Conduct Focused Observations

Focused observations take place in the natural environment, where early interventionists work directly with caregivers. Because of this, caregivers must be informed about PBC and the options they have related to focused observations and their early intervention sessions. These conversations may occur before sessions via email with just the early interventionist, in person with both the coach and the early interventionist present, or with the coach partnering with the early interventionist to share information with caregivers during their sessions. Caregivers may want to know, for example:

- Practice-based coaching as a program-wide approach to their early interventionist's professional development.
- Who you are as a coach:
  - Your role
  - Your experience

- If using video:
  - What will be recorded and why
  - Who will see the video (may include the early interventionist, coach, or participants engaged in group or peer coaching)
  - How the video will be stored and/or deleted
  - Offer the option to record only the early interventionist if the family is comfortable recording but doesn't want to be on camera.
  - Offer video as a family coaching approach for reflecting on their own use of caregiving practices with their child.
- Provide opportunities to ask questions and to share their preferences and choice regarding their family's participation- conversations should be ongoing, and caregivers should know they can change their preferences at any time.

What to do before the focused observation:

1. Clarify with the early interventionist when and how the focused observation will happen
2. Identify the goal that will be the focus of the observation with the early interventionist
3. Review the goal and action plan
4. Decide what data will be collected
5. Confirm the focused observation with the early interventionist

Information Gathered During Focused Observations

During the focused observation, coaches gather information (i.e., data) on the early interventionist's implementation of the identified goal and action plan. The information gathered around the early interventionist's implementation of a specific goal should be specific and objective. This means describing the specific actions or behaviors of the early interventionist when implementing a practice. You might also note the responses of caregivers or children in response to the practice used by the early interventionist. Coaches should discuss with the early interventionist before the focused observation any specific information they would like the coach to collect.

Some ways that coaches might collect data include:

- Count or tally – Ratio of opportunities the practice is used (e.g., number of open-ended questions vs. closed questions when guiding caregiver reflection).
- Count - The frequency the practice is used by the early interventionist (e.g., early interventionist focused the caregiver's attention on a toddler's non-verbal cues five times during practice opportunities).
- Count - The frequency with which a caregiver or child uses a skill as a result of the early interventionist's use of a practice (e.g., the caregiver independently models the "more" sign 6 times to support their child's functional communication after the early interventionist models how to use and prompt the sign).
- Checklist – The early interventionist and coach create a checklist of the steps of a practice, and the coach observes what items are completed.

- Qualitative notes – The coach documents examples of interactions and caregiver or child responses that occur as the early interventionist uses the practice (e.g., "EI to caregiver: What do you think Josie was trying to say when she handed you her bottle?", "EI prompted the caregiver to observe the child's cues during meal time. Caregiver was able to model and say, 'all done' and cleaned up after the infant repeatedly dropped their spoon.").

Essential steps and strategies for focused observations

Step 1. Observe Pyramid Model goals

- Review current action plan goals.
- Apply the focused observation coaching strategies that were identified by the early interventionist.
- Model, demonstrate, or prompt for the early interventionist, as needed (in person).
- Observe the EI with specific caregivers, if requested.

Step 2. Take focused notes

- Collect data on the implementation of the goal.
- Use the NCPMI Early Interventionist Focused Observation Notes Form.
- Take specific notes on what you see and hear.
- All notes remain objective.
- Take notes on the implementation of specific action steps.
- Consider the response of caregivers and children to the implementation of the practice.
- Note the use of any previously achieved goals or action steps.

Step 3. Prepare for reflection and feedback (debrief)

- Confirm date and time of the debrief meeting with the early interventionist, preferably within 24 hours of the focused observation.
- Review observation notes.
- Review observation data.
- Prepare a positive feedback statement based on the observation.
- Prepare a constructive feedback statement based on the observation.
- Prepare questions to prompt early interventionist reflection on the use of the goal.

For more information, refer to the NCPMI Conducting a Focused Observation with Early Interventionists handout.

Case Study Example

Julie's goal: *I will use open-ended questions during caregiver practice opportunities and during joint planning to help caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues.*

Prior to the Observation:

Rosa shared the Practice-based Coaching and the Pyramid Model Family Agreement and the Early Interventionist Checklist for Reviewing Practice-Based Coaching with Families with Julie and helped her create talking points to use with caregivers in describing practice-based coaching and their choices to participate. Rosa engaged Julie in role-play to help her feel comfortable sharing the information and answering questions caregivers might have.

After Julie had time to engage the caregivers on her caseload in these conversations, Rosa helped Julie create a list of caregivers who communicated they were open to focused observations as part of their early intervention visits. Rosa reviewed Julie's current goal and asked if there were any families she would like to prioritize for focused observations when implementing this practice. Julie identified four potential caregivers. The caregivers included two with whom Julie had strong relationships and two with whom she felt less confident but wanted to challenge herself to generalize the practice with different caregivers on her caseload. Julie and Rosa identified a day and time when Rosa could observe a home visit via a virtual platform while Julie was in person with the caregiver and child. They decided to schedule the debrief for the same day after the focused observation in the morning. Rosa sent Julie calendar invitations and links to the virtual meetings.

Next, Rosa engaged Julie in conversation to identify coaching strategies that Julie felt comfortable with her using during the focused observation. Julie communicated that she would most like Rosa to observe and collect data as she and the family get acclimated to coaching being part of their visits. Rosa and Julie discussed the type of data Julie would like Rosa to collect during the observation that would provide helpful information about the use of her practice. Julie told Rosa that she would like feedback on: 1) the opportunities where she could use the practice that she might not have thought about, 2) the number of times she asks questions to help the caregiver observe and interpret their child's communication cues, 3) the specific questions she asks, and 4) how the caregiver responds.

Early Interventionist Focused Observation Notes

Early Interventionist: Julie Coach: Rosa

Date: 3/14 Time spent in observation: 45 Time spent in meeting:

Observation focus:
I will use open-ended questions during caregiver practice opportunities and during joint planning to help caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues.

What I observed:	What I want to share:
Practice opportunities: I Missed opportunities II Julie commented on examples of Thomas's communication when they happened (e.g., pointing, gestures, vocalizations). Julie paused to give the caregiver space to respond, but caregiver did not add comments. Julie asks: "What do you think Thomas is trying to communicate when he throws his spoon?" (open-ended) Caregiver responded she thought he was playing a game because he smiles when he does it. Joint Planning: 0 Missed opportunities: III Julie asked caregiver: "Do you have any questions about how Thomas communicates?" (close-ended) "Does that make sense?" (close-ended) Julie provided suggestions (e.g., narrating play, pausing for cues. Didn't observe asking caregiver perspective. Caregiver nodded and agreed but did not share examples or ideas.	

Follow up needed:

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Rosa reviewed the action plan and prepared the Early Interventionist Focused Observation Notes Form based on the information she discussed with Julie.

During the Focused Observation:
Rosa and Julie both signed in to the virtual platform at the agreed time during Julie's home visit with the caregiver. Rosa turned off her camera, and Julie focused the screen on her and the caregiver for Rosa to observe. Rosa observed the home visit and collected data during the practice opportunities and joint planning using the Early Interventionist Focused Observation Notes form. When the joint planning session was complete, Rosa signed off and sent Julie a text to confirm their debrief session later that afternoon.

Focused Observation Coaching Questions

1. What if I notice a pattern of the early interventionist cancelling focused observations?
   - Remind the early interventionist of the purpose of the observation. Make sure the early interventionist understands that coaching is not evaluative but is focused on facilitating their use of practices to ensure all caregivers and children have the support they need.
   - If cancellations are due to caregivers, help the early interventionist identify multiple caregivers on their caseload who are open to focused observations as part of their early intervention visits.
   - Reflect on what you are doing during observations, whether in person or on a virtual platform: what is your body language like? What is your face expressing? How are you communicating with the early interventionist? How do you respond to the caregivers or children? What is your relationship with the early interventionist?
   - Check that the early interventionist is comfortable with the coaching strategies you are using during the focused observations.
   - Reflect on the actual coaching process at the end of debriefing meetings (e.g., Are there other things I can do during the observation that would be helpful to you?)
   - Reference the coaching agreement to identify any additional strategies that might support the early interventionist during focused observations.
2. How do I know what coaching strategies to use?
   - Ask the early interventionist what strategies would be most helpful and comfortable for them.
   - Continue to check in with the early interventionist to assess their comfort level with selected coaching strategies.
   - After using a coaching strategy, ask the early interventionist for feedback about how useful it was during your debrief meeting.
   - Identify how the early interventionist prefers to receive information.
   - Ask the early interventionist whether they are comfortable with your use of modeling or feedback during the observation, whether in person or via a virtual platform.
3. When observing in person, how should I interact with caregivers or children?
   - Ask early interventionists their preferences for interacting with caregivers and children during observations.
   - Support early interventionists in engaging caregivers in conversations to identify caregiver-specific preferences.

- Even when early interventionists have communicated about PBC during early intervention visits, some caregivers still might have questions or be confused about who you are. Be friendly and briefly reiterate who you are and why you are there. Offer caregivers opportunities to ask questions and share preferences.
- Sometimes it is appropriate for the coach to interact with children. For example, engaging siblings to allow the caregiver and early interventionist to converse. In a childcare setting, coaches might support the early interventionist and childcare provider in transitioning toddlers from the classroom to the playground.
- If the early interventionist is comfortable with you interacting with caregivers or children, make sure you focus on the early interventionist's implementation and that your interactions do not distract the caregiver or the early interventionist and are supportive of the early interventionist-caregiver relationship.

4. What if a challenging behavior or situation occurs during the observation?
    - Identify the early interventionist's preferences for how they would like you to support them if a challenging behavior or situation occurs prior to starting.
    - Refer to practices outlined by the early intervention program for specific situations (e.g., knowledge of community-related resources, reporting child abuse or neglect).
    - If the observation unexpectedly gets cut short because of a challenging situation, identify if there are other families you might observe the goal the same day or later in the week.
5. What if I don't observe the early interventionist using the practice they identified during the observation?
    - Provide strengths-based feedback on any evidence-based practices used during the observation. This might also include previously achieved goals.
    - Ask the early interventionist how you can support their implementation of the goal and amend the goal and action plan as needed.
    - Check with the early interventionist to see if the identified goal is still a priority.

Conducting a Debriefing Session

Coaches should be prepared to conduct an organized, effective, predictable, and supportive debriefing session. Coaches will use the information collected during the focused observation to provide supportive and constructive feedback and prepare questions to engage early interventionists in reflecting on their implementation of the identified goal and action plan. Understanding the essential components of conducting a debriefing session is critical to the success of the coaching partnership and sustainable implementation of newly learned practices.

Before initial debrief sessions, provide information to early interventionists on the purpose of the debrief session and what to expect.

- Coaches will facilitate early interventionist's reflection on their implementation of their practice.
- Early interventionists will receive supportive and constructive feedback on the use of their practices.
- Early interventionists can share preferences, ask questions, communicate needs, and share insights on their use of practices.

Preparing for the Debrief Session

Step 1. Confirm plan for when and how to meet after the focused observation. If possible, debrief sessions should occur 24 hours after the focused observation, while the information is still fresh in the early interventionist's and the coach's minds. At the end of the focused observation, confirm that the early interventionist is still able to meet for the debrief session.

Step 2. Prepare documents or videos to share. Organize your focused observation notes and have copies of the most recent action plan ready for review with the early interventionist. Prepare any resources that will be shared with the early interventionist to support their implementation. If sharing a video, have the timestamps identified and ready to share.

Step 3. Review the debriefing coaching strategies and plan for how to engage in the essential coaching strategies of: 1) reflective conversation, 2) supportive feedback, and 3) constructive feedback. Similar to the focused observation, the coach should ask the early interventionist which coaching strategies they are comfortable receiving. Conversations should be ongoing as preferences and needs can change. For more information on coaching strategies to use during the debrief, refer to the Early Intervention Practitioner Coach Log with Definitions of Practitioner Coaching Strategies.

Conducting Debriefing Sessions

Essential Steps

1. Refer to the current action plan	
Strategies	**Examples**
• Do a quick review of goals and action steps. • Review the action steps as written. • Both partners should have an updated copy of the action plan.	• "Let's start by reviewing the practices you used this week. Tell me about how you used them." • "Are there other action steps you need to get you closer to your goal?"

2. Facilitate reflection

Strategies	Examples
• Ask the early interventionist to reflect on their progress towards meeting their action plan goal. • Ask open-ended questions to begin the conversation. • Share reflections anchored in the data collected during the focused observation. **Note.** If both partners agree that the goal is met, then write the next goal.	• "How comfortable were you trying the new practices?" • "How are caregivers responding to the new strategies? How is that impacting children's outcomes?" • "I was watching the caregiver prompt their toddler to use the "more" sign and wondered what changes you noticed since using the new practice." • "Your goal was to provide feedback to caregivers supporting their child's functional communication. I counted three examples during the visit. What are your thoughts about the goal?"

3. Deliver supportive feedback

Strategies	Examples
• Provide feedback based on observation of goals or specific action steps. • Provide feedback that is positive, specific, and highlights early interventionist's strengths. • Link early interventionist practice to child and family outcomes. • Try to give more supportive feedback than constructive feedback.	• "When you used descriptive language to let the caregiver see the connection between her actions and the child's responses, she was able to pause during the interaction with her child, and her child-initiated communication." • Supportive feedback starter phrases: • "You really got it when you…" • I noticed that you did ____. That really worked well for the caregiver/child to ____." • "It was great to see _____." • "I saw you do ____. It was a perfect example of ______."

4. Deliver constructive feedback

Strategies	Examples

• Share what you observed regarding the targeted practice.
• Give information and suggestions for improving or enhancing the practice.
• Ask the early interventionist to reflect on other ways to improve or enhance their practice.
	• "I observed you asking the caregiver open-ended questions to help them reflect on their child's communication cues. It seemed like the caregiver was still processing a response before you asked the next question or answered for her. When asking questions, try offering a longer wait time. Some strategies that might be helpful are taking a deep breath and counting to five in your head while you observe the caregiver's body language as you guide their reflection."
	• Constructive Feedback Starter Phrases:
	  ◦ "Tell me a little about what you were thinking when you/caregiver/child…"
	  ◦ "The caregiver was able to use that practice when you ____. What would happen if you used it more often?"
	  ◦ "You used ____ during ____. What about trying it during ____?"
	  ◦ "What do you think would happen if you tried…?"

5. Offer targeted supports

Strategies	Examples
• Help with individual caregivers or children. • If needed, suggest individual strategies or an individualized plan.	• "It looks like you have built a strong relationship with this caregiver. Are there any caregivers you are struggling to engage during your visits?" • "Are there any children you feel you need more strategies to support their goals or outcomes?"

6. Discuss next steps

Strategies	Examples
• Summarize the ideas for next steps that were raised during the reflective discussion. • Refer to resources, materials, or direct examples that may help with the implementation of the goal. • Facilitate a discussion of the steps for implementing the goals before the next coaching session.	• "You stated you would like more support around planning the types of questions you could ask to engage caregivers in reflection. Here is an NCPMI handout that goes through the types of questions with space to plan your own. Try filling in a few questions you could use during a visit. Email me what you come up with, and I can provide feedback. I also have a video example of a provider supporting caregiver reflection that you can watch before our next session."

7. Schedule next observation and debrief

Strategies	Examples
• Schedule the next focused observation and debrief date and time. • Plan a backup observation in case the caregiver's visit is cancelled. • Send an email follow-up within 24 hours to summarize the next steps and connect the early interventionist to any additional resources discussed.	• "Let's look at our calendars to decide a good time for me to observe you using the new strategies." • "Is there another caregiver I can observe you with that day if there is a cancellation?" • "Do you have time in your schedule for a debrief later that day, or should we plan for the following day?"

For more information, refer to the Conducting a Reflection and Feedback Meeting with Early Interventionists handout.

Facilitating Reflection with Early Interventionists

The purpose of using reflection during the debrief is to help the early interventionist reflect on what went well in their implementation of the goal and identify any changes they might make to feel more successful in achieving it. Coaches should plan questions that prompt early interventionists to intentionally reflect. Below are three types of reflective questions that coaches can use to prompt reflection.

Objective Questions - Prompt the early interventionist to reflect on what happened during their implementation of the practice.

- "What did you notice about the caregiver's response when…"
- "What did you notice about the child's response to the caregiver when…"
- "Tell me about what happened when…"

Interpretive Questions - Support the early interventionist in forming hypotheses or drawing conclusions about their practice implementation.

- "Tell me what you were thinking/feeling when…"
- Did you notice…. I wonder why that is?"
- Why do you think the caregiver/child was able to ____ when you…?"

Comparative Questions - Helps the early interventionist to evaluate events or interactions by comparing their experience to another point in time.

- "How was this experience using the practice different from when you…?"
- "What do you think went well on today's visit compared to…?"
- "You said it felt easier to use the practice with this caregiver. Why do you think it was easier with this caregiver and not others?"
- "What do you think the difference is about how you interact with ____ and ____ during the visit?"
- "How does using this practice compare to before?"

Reflection can sometimes prompt the discussion of sensitive topics or responses. The Using Motivational Interviewing in Coaching resource can support coaches in enhancing and guiding early interventionists' feedback and reflection during debrief sessions.

Case Study: Preparing for the Debrief

Julie's goal: *I will use open-ended questions during caregiver practice opportunities and during joint planning to help caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues.*

After the focused observation, Rosa reviewed her notes and the action plan and wrote down some potential questions she could ask Julie to help her reflect and what she would share in her supportive and constructive feedback. Rosa reviewed the coaching strategies that Julie had shared she was most comfortable with being used during the debrief session.

Early Interventionist Focused Observation Notes

Early Interventionist: Julie Coach: Rosa

Date: 3/29 Time spent in observation: 45 Time spent in meeting: 30

Observation focus:
I will use open-ended questions during caregiver practice opportunities and during joint planning to help caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues.

What I observed:	What I want to share:
Practice opportunities: I Missed opportunities II Julie commented on examples of Thomas's communication when they happened (e.g., pointing, gestures, vocalizations). Julie paused to give the caregiver space to respond, but caregiver did not add comments. Julie asks: "What do you think Thomas is trying to communicate when he throws his spoon?" (open-ended) Caregiver responded she thought he was playing a game because he smiles when he does it. Joint Planning: 0 Missed opportunities: III Julie asked caregiver: "Do you have any questions about how Thomas communicates?" (close-ended) "Does that make sense?" (close-ended) Julie provided suggestions (e.g., narrating play, pausing for cues. Didn't observe asking caregiver perspective. Caregiver nodded and agreed but did not share examples or ideas.	Practice used: I Missed opportunities: IIIII Reflection Questions: Did you notice a difference in the caregiver's response when you asked an open-ended vs. close-ended question? Supportive: You asked one open-ended question about the spoon. The caregiver was able to share their perspective which included the smile as a cue. Constructive: The majority of the questions you asked were close-ended. There were missed opportunities to invite the caregiver to share their ideas and perspectives which could make the discussion more collaborative and meaningful to the caregiver and child outcomes. Consider following up with positive descriptive feedback when you see the caregiver successfully interpret communication and reword questions to invite a deeper response ("Tell me about a time today when Thomas let you know what he wanted without using words.") This will help you in your goal of decreasing your interpretations and invite the caregiver to share their interpretation of the child's cues.

Follow up needed:
Update reflective question list for next visit with the family. Rosa can provide feedback if needed.
Role-play open-ended questioning strategies with Rosa to use in upcoming EI sessions with families.
Plan to ask 2-3 open-ended questions in the next caregiver interaction and reflect afterwards if you notice a difference in the caregiver's response.

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Case Study: During the Debrief

Rosa and Julie signed on to the virtual platform at the agreed-upon time for their debrief. Rosa thanked Julie for allowing her to be a part of her visit during the morning to observe her implementing her goal:

"Hi Julie, thank you for allowing me to join your visit this morning with Carissa and Thomas so I could see you asking open-ended questions to help caregivers observe and interpret their child's communication cues. Please let Carissa know I really appreciated the opportunity as well."

Rosa also reviewed the coaching strategies they agreed she could use during the debrief, as well as the data collection strategies they had discussed previously. "I know this is our first debrief, and I usually start just providing supportive feedback as we get to know each other. You did mention you wanted me to look for any missed opportunities where you might have used the practice. Are you still ok with me providing some feedback around those opportunities? You also mentioned you might be open to role play. Are you open to trying that out if an opportunity arises during our discussion?"

Julie agreed to Rosa's questions. Rosa started off asking Julie some open-ended questions about her experience trying to use the practice during the home visit with the caregiver. Additionally, Rosa shared the supportive and constructive feedback she planned to share from her notes.

Rosa offered to recreate the opening visit with Carissa and role-played to give Julie practice in asking more open-ended questions about following Thomas's communication cues. Rosa and Julie reflected after the role-play, and Rosa shared the Reflection Questions for Families on Social and Emotional Development handout. They practiced filling in a few questions based on today's observation, and Julie said she would fill this out before her next visit to practice creating more reflective questions with families as a next step. Rosa and Julie scheduled their next focused observation and debrief.

Debrief Meeting Coaching Questions

1. What do I do if the early interventionist appears hesitant to reflect or engage during the debrief?
    - Review the purpose of debriefing with the early interventionist.
    - Focus on building trust through a stronger collaborative partnership.
    - Refer to goals and action plans:
        - Are the goals meaningful to the early interventionist?
        - How much of a role has the early interventionist had in the decision-making process?
    - Review with the early interventionist their preferences about feedback or coaching strategies.
2. How do I prepare to address a challenging issue with an early interventionist, such as a comment they've made about a specific caregiver or child?
    - Using objective information gathered during the focused observation will help keep personal judgment out of the conversation (e.g., observed actions, comments, caregiver/child responses).
    - Begin statements using "I wonder…" or "I noticed…"
    - Focus on the impact of the early interventionist's practices on caregiver or child outcomes. Coaching is about helping early interventionists to support positive outcomes for caregivers and children, so centering conversation on caregiver or child experiences may be more neutral for the early interventionist."
    - Role-play with another coach to practice the conversation.
    - Write down the information you want to share or the questions you have before the conversation.
    - Make sure to deliver positive feedback before offering constructive feedback.
    - Use active listening skills to hear the early interventionist's point of view.
3. How can I make sure I do everything I am supposed to do in a session?
    - Take notes before the meeting to collect your thoughts and prepare. Review your coaching log and what you did during the previous coaching session with the early interventionist.
    - Review the early interventionist's action plan and your focused observation notes before conducting the session.
    - Use a coaching log, checklist, or an agenda, and make notes or highlight points you want to be sure to cover during the session.
4. How do I make the most of my time during a debrief session?
    - Review your coaching notes and pick one or two situations to focus on for feedback- depth is better than breadth.
    - Save problem-solving for the end of the meeting if this tends to be a lengthy part of the meeting for the early interventionist.
    - If an early interventionist does not review the resources you provide after coaching sessions, review them together in the debrief meeting. This way, you can support the early interventionist in focusing on the resource and its use during visits.
    - If the early interventionist is unable to create materials or complete action steps in between coaching sessions, offer to add time to the debrief to complete them together.
5. How do I conduct a debrief session if the early interventionist is unable to meet?
        - Meet virtually via email, phone, or a platform like Google Meet, Zoom, or Microsoft Teams.
        - Reschedule for a time that is most convenient for the early interventionist.

Data-Decision Making

Data are an essential part of Practice-Based Coaching (PBC). As a practitioner coach, you'll collect and use data to guide your decisions, tailor supports for each early interventionist, and collaborate with your program to ensure coaching is delivered as intended. In early intervention, data also help connect the dots between practitioner growth and family outcomes, ensuring that the supports provided are responsive and effective.

In this section, we describe the purpose of data in coaching, the tools you will use, and how to make informed decisions across coaching cycles. Data support both implementation fidelity and outcome monitoring—ensuring you are doing what you intended to do and that it is making a meaningful difference.

Why Data Matter in Practice-Based Coaching

There are three primary purposes for using data in coaching:

- To monitor fidelity of the coaching process—are you implementing coaching as designed?
- To inform decision-making within the coaching cycle—how can coaching be adjusted to support practitioner growth?
- To assess outcomes—are early interventionists implementing Pyramid Model practices and supporting positive outcomes for children and families?

Effective coaches use data to improve practice. Data give you a clear picture of where an early interventionist is thriving, where they may need more support, and how your coaching is contributing to their professional growth.

Early Intervention Coaching Data Tools

You'll primarily use these tools to guide your coaching with early interventionists:

- Early Intervention Practitioner Coaching Log
    - Captures the frequency, format, and strategies used in your coaching sessions.
    - Helps document your coaching delivery over time.
- Early Intervention Pyramid Practices Fidelity Instrument (EIPPFI)
    - Measures the use of Pyramid Model practices with families and caregivers.
    - Used to assess strengths and growth areas to set goals and track progress.
    - Can be used with the Early Intervention Implementation Checklist
- Family and caregiver-facing tools
    - Reflection forms, planning tools, and surveys that help connect practices to outcomes when working directly with families and caregivers.
        - Infant Toddler Caregiver Reflection Tool
        - Caregiver Planning Form
        - Caregiver Practices to Support Infant-Toddler Social Emotional Development
        - Caregiver Responsive Routines Planning Form
        - Family Centered Coaching Strategies
        - Reflection Questions for Families

In some cases, you may also use child-level or family-level data collected by the program (e.g., family outcomes data, developmental progress measures) to understand the broader impact of coaching on family experiences and child social-emotional development.

Steps for Data Decision Making

1. Identify and review early interventionist coaching data tools
2. Collect data
3. Review and analyze results using the Look-Think-Act process
4. Examine data (e.g., summaries, graphs, tables) for trends
5. Analyze the data by asking questions about what you see
6. Develop an action plan to address areas of concern identified during the analysis
7. Organize data to share with the early interventionist and the program leadership team.
8. Remember to provide positive feedback
9. Use data to determine when and how to adjust coaching
10. Plan for sustainability

Using Data to Make Decisions

The Early Intervention Practitioner Coaching Log is a quick and efficient way to collect data about what you are doing to support the early interventionist (i.e., coaching implementation) and how they are progressing (i.e., outcomes). Using the log helps you determine whether you are completing coaching cycles, how often, and how long you coach each interventionist, and what strategies you use. This information helps ensure that coaching is consistent and individualized based on the early interventionist's needs and progress.

What you do during coaching can be directly linked to the number and quality of action plan goals an early interventionist achieves. These outcomes can help guide decisions about when to maintain, adjust, or reduce coaching support. For example, if a practitioner consistently achieves action-plan goals and independently implements practices, you may shift to a maintenance coaching schedule.

The EIPPFI is used to support early interventionists in using Pyramid Model practices. The information from the EIPPFI can be compared to your coaching log data to help determine your next steps. For instance, if an interventionist has completed many action plan goals but has not demonstrated improved practice on the EIPPFI, you may need to revisit the type, focus, or specificity of the goals and coaching supports.

When EIPPFI data show that an early interventionist's practices have improved and your coaching log reflects consistent, high-quality coaching, you can feel confident that your coaching efforts are making a difference. You can also reflect on which coaching strategies—such as modeling, video reflection, or action planning—were most effective for that individual practitioner.

Some programs may also use family or child-level data (e.g., developmental assessments, family outcome surveys, or behavior data) to supplement coaching. These data can help guide coaching intensity, support planning, and monitor progress toward goals. For example, if a family is experiencing ongoing challenges during daily routines, you might focus coaching support on responsive strategies for that specific routine.

To learn more about data-based decision making, visit the National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations website for resources, tools, and recorded webinars designed to help coaches use data to support positive practice change and outcomes for children and families.

Beginning Documentation: Start Small

New coaches can feel overwhelmed by data collection. Here are tips to help you get started:

- **Start with one early interventionist**. Get comfortable documenting one coaching cycle from start to finish.
- **Use your coaching log consistently**. Keep it simple—record the essentials after each session.
- **Reframe expectations**. Documentation doesn't need to be perfect—consistency is more important than detail.
- **Ask for support**. Peer coaches, communities of practice, and your leadership team can help.

A Note About Program-Level Data

Your **coaching data** will feed into a broader program-wide process. While you'll use your practitioner logs and EIPPFI summaries to guide individual coaching decisions, the **data coordinator** for your leadership team/program will collect and summarize these data across all coaches and early interventionists. These summaries are not meant to evaluate your coaching, but rather to help your program assess coaching fidelity and effectiveness and guide decisions about professional development.

Using the Look-Think-Act Framework

The Look-Think-Act protocol follows three steps:

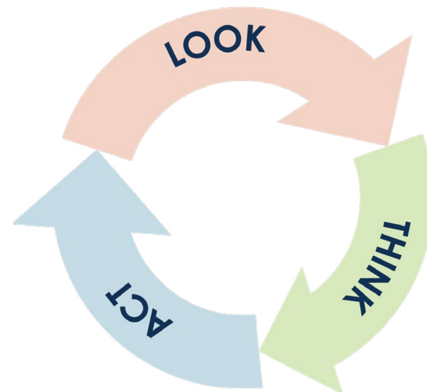
1. Look – Examine data for trends and meaningful associations
2. Think – Ask questions related to the data that might help with interpretation
3. Act – Make decisions to implement the decisions

The **Look-Think-Act** framework helps you make sense of your coaching data:

Step	Description	Coach Examples
Look	Gather data from logs, EIPPFI, checklists, or observation notes	"In the previous three sessions, we've focused on the same goal, and it's not progressing."
Think	Analyze what the data are telling you	"The early interventionist might be stuck and need new supports or a revised goal."
Act	Use what you learned to adjust your coaching plan	"Let's add modeling and a video example to support this practice."

Using Look-Think-Act for Early Intervention Coaching

The Early Intervention Coaching Log includes a spreadsheet and a Look-Think-Act (LTA) guide. These tools help you analyze your coaching implementation using data and make decisions about next steps. Using data from the coaching log and fidelity tools, the LTA process guides you to reflect on what's happening, what it means, and what to do next. It helps ensure that coaching is timely, responsive, and grounded in evidence.



Before You Begin

Before you begin using the LTA process, ensure that your data accurately reflect your coaching activities. If there are missing or incorrect entries in the coaching log, address them before interpreting the data. Consider any factors that might influence your data—such as large caseloads, scheduling conflicts, or limited access to providers—and discuss those with the leadership team. Once your data is accurate and complete, begin the LTA process.

Step 1: Look

In the **Look** step, examine your data in a neutral, fact-based way. Use the dashboard in your coaching spreadsheet to view summaries of your coaching activities and goal progress. Avoid drawing conclusions at this stage. You are simply identifying patterns or trends such as:

- Number of coaching cycles completed
- Time spent in observations and debriefings
- Number of goals written and completed
- Types of coaching strategies used

What is a coaching cycle?
A coaching cycle occurs each time the coach conducts a focused observation and reflection/ feedback (debrief) with the early interventionist (coachee).

Step 2: Think

In the **Think** step, begin asking questions and analyzing your data. Consider each element of the data and how it informs your coaching decisions:

- Are you completing enough coaching cycles with each practitioner?
- Are some practitioners meeting more goals than others?
- Are you using a wide range of strategies (e.g., modeling, feedback, reflection)?
- Are your goals aligned with observed needs and practices identified in the EIPPFI?
- Is your coaching time balanced across practitioners?

Step 3: Act

In the **Act** step, you develop actions based on your interpretation. This could include changes at the practitioner level (e.g., adjusting goals or coaching strategies) or at the program level (e.g., increasing coaching time or revising training content). The goal is to use your data to make coaching more effective and impactful. Example actions might include:

- Reducing the number of concurrent goals for a provider
- Increasing time spent with an early interventionist who is not meeting goals
- Shifting to more active strategies like modeling and role-play
- Adjusting your schedule to ensure all early interventionists receive sufficient support

Questions You Might Ask To Guide Your Coaching

As a coach in early intervention, data can help you tailor your support to meet each early interventionist's needs. This section addresses common questions coaches face and explains how data can guide your next steps.

When Do I Decrease the Frequency of Coaching?

Coaching is intended to be flexible and responsive. If a practitioner is showing consistent implementation and confidence, you may reduce the intensity of coaching while still offering support.

Look for:

- Multiple goals achieved over time, documented in the Coaching Log
- EIPPFI scores that reflect sustained implementation of targeted Pyramid Model practices
- Practitioner reflections that show self-awareness, confidence, and problem-solving skills

Act:

- Reduce frequency of coaching (e.g., shift from biweekly to monthly check-ins)
- Transition to focusing on new skills, deeper implementation, or generalization across settings
- Collaboratively create a maintenance plan with the early interventionist, including regular check-ins or review points

When Does This Practitioner Need More Support?

Sometimes coaching progress stalls or practitioners encounter new challenges. Data can help you recognize when to intensify support or adapt your strategies.

Look for:

- Stagnant or incomplete goals in the Coaching Log
- Little to no improvement in EIPPFI scores over time
- Practitioner feedback indicating confusion, frustration, or low confidence

Act:

- Add more intensive supports (e.g., modeling, co-planning, or video review)
- Revisit the action plan collaboratively—break down steps or adjust focus
- Reach out to your program implementation coach for additional ideas or cross-team support

How Do I Know I Am Delivering Coaching as Intended?

Use your coaching documentation as a reflective tool to assess whether you are implementing PBC with fidelity.

Look for:

- Consistent use of the PBC cycle (action planning, observation, reflection/feedback)
- Use of multiple coaching strategies across time (e.g., prompting, feedback, resource sharing)
- Clear documentation that reflection and feedback (supportive and constructive) are provided during debrief sessions

Act:

- Set a coaching goal for yourself (e.g., include modeling at least once per cycle)
- Review your own logs periodically to reflect on strengths and gaps
- Request feedback from a peer coach or implementation leader

How Do I Know if the Current Coaching Format Works?

Not all coaching formats work equally well for every early interventionist. Use data and feedback to ensure the delivery format supports engagement and progress.

Look for:

- Feedback from the early interventionist about their preferences or engagement
- Cancellations, missed observations, or shortened sessions
- Notes or reflections indicating discomfort or disconnection with a format (e.g., virtual)

Act:

- Offer flexible formats—consider video review, walk-and-talk calls, or hybrid sessions
- Discuss format preferences directly with the early interventionist and make shared decisions
- Adjust the structure of coaching to better match the early interventionist's schedule, caseload, or learning style

Sustaining the Effects of Coaching

Sustaining the use of Pyramid Model practices after a goal is achieved is critical to ensuring meaningful and lasting change for caregivers and children. As a coach, you can use data to support ongoing practice and encourage continued reflection—even when a goal is marked as complete.

Tips for Sustaining Practice Over Time

- Maintain a coaching log that includes a list of 'goal achieved' practices for each early interventionist. Periodically review these during observations and note continued use or areas needing reinforcement.
- Plan occasional booster coaching sessions even after regular coaching has tapered. These sessions can include a brief observation, followed by supportive feedback or resource sharing.
- Reinforce generalization by observing across different families, routines, or settings (e.g., from home visits to child care environments).
- Provide positive, specific feedback when you see sustained use of practices. Let early interventionists know their efforts are noticed and valued.
- Schedule brief reflection check-ins during staff meetings, community of practice calls, or follow-up coaching contacts.
- Track the ongoing use of practices with checklists or informal observation forms.
- Encourage early interventionists to self-monitor or co-reflect on previously achieved goals, especially when new challenges arise.
- Collaborate with the leadership team to embed sustainability supports in professional development systems.

Data-Related Coaching Questions

1. How do I handle confidentiality when sharing data?
   - Use a code for the early interventionist, child, and coach so there is no identifying information when data are shared.
   - All coaching tools (e.g., EIPPFI, Coaching Logs) should use assigned codes.
   - Aggregate data whenever possible to avoid identification.
   - Ensure those using the data understand confidentiality policies and limits.
   - Follow your program's specific policies and procedures for handling confidential information.
2. What is the best way to add a code so that the data remain confidential?
   - Use a simple system: EI1, EI2 for early interventionists; C1, C2, etc., for children.
   - Include a site code if working across multiple programs (e.g., S1EI1).
   - Maintain a confidential list of codes in a secure location, with limited access.
3. Why are coaching data important if I'm already keeping notes and things seem to be going fine?
   - Data help summarize large amounts of information in usable formats (e.g., graphs).
   - They offer objective insight into what's happening, not just impressions.
   - Data guide decisions and ensure coaching is implemented with fidelity.
   - They document what strategies led to growth or need revision.
   - If outcomes aren't as expected, data help pinpoint what needs to change.

4. How do I use data to make decisions on goals and action planning?
   - Summarize data visually (e.g., tables or charts from logs and EIPPFI).
   - Use the Look-Think-Act process to identify strengths, needs, and next steps.
   - Create simple tracking forms for practices like descriptive feedback or routine planning.
   - Use data to refine goals and action plan steps.

Appendix: PBC Checklists

These checklists can guide the implementation of PBC in each component of the coaching cycle. Coaches can use these checklists to ensure they are following the elements of PBC and the coaching cycle. Coaches will find these helpful as they build their fluency with PBC.

Collaborative Partnership	Yes	No	N/A
1. Program or coach shared information about the program's PBC process (individually or as a staff presentation).			
2. Coach met with the early interventionist to review and individualize the Early Interventionist Coach Agreement (this document may be updated as needed).			
3. Coach discussed the ways they can support the early interventionist and collaborated with the early interventionist to identify the coaching strategies they are comfortable receiving during the focused observation and debrief sessions (these conversations should be ongoing).			

Shared Goals and Action Planning	Yes	No	N/A
1. Coach conducted two one-hour EIPPFI observations with the early interventionist as they work with two separate caregivers (one observation per caregiver equals two one-hour observations), which the coach will use to score the EIPPFI.			
2. Coach met with the early interventionist to conduct the interview and reviewed documentation that supported completion of scoring the EIPPFI.			
3. Coach created a graph summary of the EIPPFI to inform strengths and areas of growth to be shared during the Shared Goals and Action Plan meeting.			
4. Coach completed the Early Intervention Coach Action Plan Goals Planning Form before the Shared Goals and Action Plan Meeting.			
5. Coach shared the Early Intervention Implementation Checklist and Early Interventionist Goal Planning Form with the early interventionist to complete prior to the Shared Goals and Action Plan Meeting			
6. Coach scheduled and conducted the Shared Goals and Action Plan Meeting with the early interventionist.			
7. Coach invited the early interventionist to share their priorities and reflections from the completed Early Intervention Implementation Checklist and the Early Interventionist Goal Planning Form.			
8. Coach reviewed the EIPPFI summary and reflections from the Early Intervention Coach Action Plan Goals Planning Form.			

Shared Goals and Action Planning	Yes	No	N/A
9. Coach used similarities between the coach and early interventionist goal planning forms and reflective discussion with the early interventionist to identify 1-3 action plan goals.			
10. Coach and early interventionist completed the Action Plan Form.			
11. Coach provided a copy of the action plan(s) to the early interventionist.			

For additional information and examples, refer to the Early Intervention implementation checklist, action plan forms, and goal planning forms.

Focused Observation	Yes	No	N/A
1. Coach supported the early interventionist to communicate with families about PBC and their choice to be involved in focused observations using the Practice-based Coaching and the Pyramid Model Family Agreement and the Early Interventionist Checklist for Reviewing Practice-Based Coaching with Families.			
2. Coach supported the early interventionist to identify early intervention visits with consented caregivers to conduct focused observations (live or through the use of video).			
3. Coach scheduled the focused observation and debrief meeting in conjunction with the early interventionist and caregiver (caregiver for focused observation only).			
4. Coach collaborated with the early interventionist to identify the action plan goal to observe, how data would be collected, and the coaching strategies that would be used prior to the focused observation.			
5. Coach reviewed the action plan and observation notes from the previous session and prepared the Early Interventionist Focused Observation Notes for data collection for the focused observation.			
6. Coach conducted the focused observation, used agreed-upon coaching strategies, and collected data relevant to the identified action plan goal.			
7. Coach noted relevant information to previously achieved goals (N/A if goals have not yet been achieved).			
8. At the end of the focused observation, the coach confirmed the upcoming debrief meeting (if viewing a recorded observation, the debrief may be confirmed via email/text).			

For additional information and examples, refer to the Conducting a Focused Observation with Early Interventionists handout and focused observation notes handout.

Reflection and Feedback	Yes	No	N/A
1. Coach confirmed meeting time and place with the early interventionist (If virtual, this step includes sending a virtual meeting link).			
2. Coach reviewed the action plan and focused observation notes, and prepared reflection questions and feedback prior to the debrief meeting. Early Interventionist Focused Observation Notes			
3. Coach oriented the early interventionist to the goal and action plan that was the focus of the observation.			
4. Coach asked questions or made comments to help the early interventionist reflect on the use of the practice relevant to the goal observed.			
5. Coach shared their reflections on the observation.			
6. Coach provided supportive feedback relevant to the early interventionist's use of the goal observed.			
7. Coach provided constructive feedback relevant to the early interventionist's use of the goal observed			
8. Coach offered targeted supports to assist with individual caregivers or children			
9. Coach and the early interventionist discussed the next steps to complete the action plan.			
10. Coach shared materials or resources to support the early interventionist's completion of the action plan			
11. Coach and the early interventionist revised the current action plan or created a new action plan. (This can be marked N/A as it may not occur every debrief)			

For additional information and examples, refer to the Conducting a Reflection and Feedback Meeting with Early Interventionists handout.