



PRACTITIONER AND PARENT RESPONSIVE STRATEGY GUIDES

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This CASEtool describes the development and use of three *Practitioner and Parent Guides to Responsive Strategies* as tools for promoting and engaging parents in responsive development-enhancing, parent-child interactions. The *Responsive Guides* are based on a natural learning model of parent responsive interaction strategies. The **Responsive Guides** are used by parents planning to support child interest-based learning during everyday activities. Practitioners and parents may also use the *Responsive Guides* as observational teaching tools to reflect on and evaluate successful sequences of parent-child interactions that support participation in child learning.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this CASEtool is to describe the development and use of the *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies*, the *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants* and the *My Child Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies (Responsive Guides)*. The *Responsive Guides* are based on a natural learning model of responsive strategies described in the *CASEinPoint Promoting Responsive Parent/Caregiver-Child Interactions During Natural Learning Activities* (Davis, 2014). The *Responsive Guides* provide an opportunity for parents and practitioners to employ specific sequenced strategies related to child learning and to evaluate the use of a natural learning model of responsive parenting strategies during interventions to promote child learning and development, (Dunst, 2006; Raab, 2005).

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATION

Responsive parent-child strategies used across various parent-child intervention models share three common functions of creating

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inviting opportunities for learning, engaging children in learning activities, and strengthening or elaborating children's skill development. These three functions are the basis of a parent-mediated child natural learning model of intervention that promotes parents' and other primary caregivers' use of responsive strategies to promote children's learning in naturally occurring everyday family and community activities (Dunst, 2006; Dunst, Bruder, et al., 2001; Dunst & Swanson, 2006).

The natural learning model of three functionally different types of responsive strategies and their interactive relationships is captured in Figure 1. *Emotional direction* strategies invite children to become involved in natural learning activities by setting and maintaining the emotional context of the activity. *Responsive parenting* strategies include contingent parent responses that engage children's participation or validate their current participation in natural learning activities once the inviting context has been established. As children and parents are engaged in a shared activity, *responsive teaching* strategies facilitate children's learning by extending, elaborating upon, and enriching the ongoing experience (Davis, 2014).

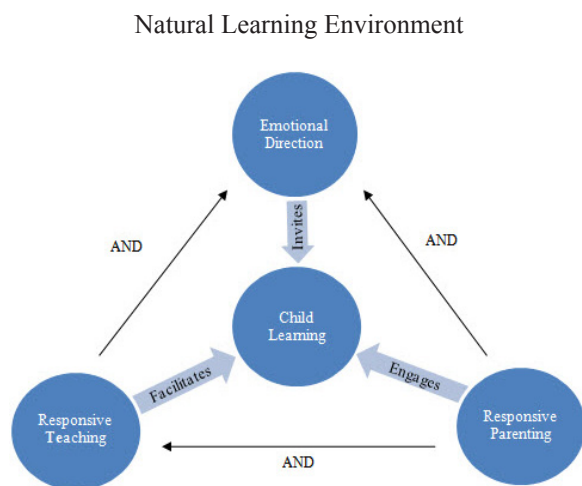


Figure 1. Three Component Natural Learning

Model of Responsive Strategies that Promotes Interest-based Learning

Development of the *Responsive Guides*

The *Responsive Guides* are based on the three functional roles identified in the natural learning model of responsive strategies: emotional direction, responsive parenting, and responsive teaching. The *Responsive Guides* were developed from a review of 11 parent-child intervention programs and the 173 different terms used to describe responsive strategies those programs employ. The 173 responsive strategies were organized according to their similarity and function and reduced to 18 strategies (Davis, 2014). Table 1 specifies how the emotional direction, responsive parenting, and responsive teaching components of the natural learning model incorporate those 18 strategies. In the upper section of the table, the strategies listed are functionally exclusive to the component. In the lower section, the strategies are functionally effective across more than one component. For example, modeling is a strategy to support children observing alternate appropriate emotional expressions from caregivers without the intent of the caregiver to teach the alternative method versus caregivers intentionally providing a model of a behavior for a child to observe and practicing a new skill or competency under responsive teaching. Although the strategies in the guides reflect the 18 strategies identified in Table 1, parents were asked to review the strategies and provide feedback on the content, wording, and ease of use to accommodate parents representing multiple levels of education and reading competency.

Table 1

Eighteen Natural Learning Model of Responsive Component Strategies

Emotional Direction	Responsive Parenting	Responsive Teaching
<i>Strategies that are exclusive to one component</i>		
Animated, excited affect	Engagement	Direct information/ instruction
Warm, comforting affect	Acceptance, validation, acknowledgement Contingent responses Follow child's lead Expectant waiting	Elaborating play Extending play, frequency and duration
<i>Strategies that fit in more than one component</i>		
Developmental level Emotional regulation/ Behavioral Joint action Reciprocal communication Facilitation/ guided without intention to teach Face-to-face interactions Modeling Turn Taking	Developmental level Emotional regulation/ Behavioral Joint action Reciprocal communication Facilitation/ guided without intention to teach Face-to-face interactions	Developmental level Reciprocal communication Facilitation/guided with intention to teach Modeling Turn Taking

The *Responsive Guides* are intended to be used to enhance parent competence and confidence as parents intentionally plan to promote child learning in everyday activities. The guides are used by practitioners in partnership with parents as a functional assessment of current responsive strategies and as a source of information regarding the use of new responsive strategies within natural learning activities. The introduction and instructions for use of the guides are based on an evidence-based model

of parent capacity-building (Wilson, Holbert, & Sexton, 2006) and adult learning coaching practices (Rush & Shelden, 2011).

The parent capacity-building model employed by the guides is an evidence-based approach to parent education and family-centered helping derived from Bandura's model of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Three major characteristics define the capacity-building process that assists parents in making informed choices and deciding what actions to take to

achieve desired outcomes during practitioner and parent interactions: (a) participatory learning opportunities, (b) practitioner participatory helping, and (c) active learner participation (Wilson et al., 2006). When practitioners engage in evidence-based coaching practices they provide opportunities for parents to acknowledge their current understanding regarding the use of responsive strategies with their child, explore the use of new strategies through observation and active practice, and reflect on how their use of current and new responsive strategies affects their child's development and learning (Rush & Shelden, 2011). Engaging parents in planning, intervening, and reflecting regarding the success of their responsive strategies increases their use of successful strategies and strengthens self-efficacy beliefs, which in turn increases ongoing parent participation in supporting child learning (Coleman & Karraker, 2003; Coleman et al., 2002; Teti & Candelaria, 2002; Teti & Gelfand, 1991).

Using the Responsive Guides

To support responsive parent-child interactions during everyday learning activities the *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies*, the *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants*, and the *My Child Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies (Responsive Guides)* were developed based on the model of parent participation in interest-based child learning (Dunst, 2006). The *Responsive Guides* were specifically developed for parents and practitioners to use when planning to support child learning during everyday activities and in conjunction with the child interest-based learning checklists and planning tools such as *Early, Middle, and Later Preschool Interest-Based Everyday Activity Checklists* (Swanson, Raab, Roper,

& Dunst, 2006), or the *Recipe for Supporting Interest-Based Child Learning* (Sexton, 2009). While the guides have the same organization to promote child interest-based learning, each is tailored for three developmentally different groups of children. The *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies* was developed to be used by any parent to promote learning with children between the age of 6 months and 5 years of age and is also used with the *Between Us: HUGS* promotional behavioral support tool (Davis, 2011, November). The *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants* was developed to be used with infants from birth to age 6 months. The *My Child Practitioner and Parent Responsive Strategies Guide* was developed to be used with children with multiple motor, sensory, and cognitive challenges and who often have unique behaviors that signal their interests and needs.

The introduction section of all three *Responsive Guides* acknowledges the wealth of knowledge parents possess about how their child expresses his/her interests and emotions. Following this, the introduction section describes the role parent knowledge and responsiveness play in child learning and describes the reciprocal communicative process of parent-child interaction as:

1. Parent identifies what the child wants or does not want to do in any given activity.
2. Parent lets the child know that he/she understood the child's intention.
3. Parent responds to the child regarding his/her interests in the activity.
4. The child lets the parent know he/she understood the parent's response concerning the activity.

Each of the *Responsive Guides* contain three sections that correspond to the natural learning model of responsive strategies;

emotional direction, responsive parenting, and responsive teaching. Each of these sections includes a brief description of the type of responsive strategy and includes information about the functional role the strategy plays during child learning activities. Parents and/or practitioners are asked to observe and record what strategies parents are currently using, identify new strategies parents want to try, and select a daily activity in which to practice strategies. Practitioners and parents are instructed in a three-step sequence or process of using responsive strategies that corresponds to a natural learning model of responsive strategies and is most likely to enhance and promote child learning and parenting efficacy.

Emotional Direction Strategies Section

For the *Parent and Practitioner Guide to Responsive Strategies*, the Emotional Direction Strategies section first asks parents to describe how their emotions affect their child. Parents can check that they typically use a calm, quiet voice when helping their child to calm down or an exciting voice when they want to encourage their child to do something. Secondly, this section asks parents to observe their child's emotional competencies when they communicate. Parents can check that their child can use simple words or gestures or even crying to express interests and/or frustrations. For the *Parent and Practitioner Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants* and the *My Child Parent and Practitioner Guide to Responsive Strategies* this section provides information to support parent recognition of child emotional and behavioral states, and then asks parents to observe how their responses affect child states and engagement with other people, objects, or during daily activities.

Responsive Parenting Strategies Section

On all three *Responsive Guides*, the Re-

sponsive Parenting Strategies section asks parents to observe and check those strategies they use to let their child know that the parent understands and supports what the child is interested in during any given activity. For example, a parent might check that she looks directly at the child and says, "you like to eat cereal," when the child is eating cereal. Another parent might check that he does the same thing the child is doing to let the child know he recognizes the child's interest.

Responsive Teaching Strategies Section

On all three *Responsive Guides*, the Responsive Teaching Strategies section asks parents to observe and check those strategies they use to support and/or enhance their child's learning during any given activity. For example, a parent might check that she lets the child decide to use fingers to eat cereal. Whereas, another parent might check that the child is offered a spoon to use in addition to letting the child use fingers to eat cereal.

Specific instructions in each section of the *Responsive Guides* support parents to choose strategies they want to practice or try within specific activities. All strategy selection and use is tied to naturally occurring everyday activities for the purpose of supporting parents' practice, learning, and reflection (according to adult learning). The *Responsive Guides* are meant to be used repeatedly in order to provide opportunities for parents to review the strategies they use successfully, new strategies they have learned, and which strategies have been successful for promoting child learning.

Parent and Practitioner Use of the Responsive Guides

The *Responsive Guides* can also be used to support a variety of parent and practitioner learning interactions. The *Responsive Guides*

can be used to reflect and evaluate successful sequences of parent-child interactions described under the natural learning model of responsive parenting strategies (Davis, 2014) that promote interest-based child learning. Specifically, parents and practitioners can use all three sections to plan sequences of responsive parent-child interactions that invite, engage, and promote child learning within everyday activities. Emotional Direction includes strategies such as *Using an excited voice* and *Using one or two word phrases* that help the parent set up a context for child learning during everyday activities. The Responsive Parenting and the Responsive Teaching sections include strategies such as *Listen to and look at your child when he/she looks at you and until you know what he/she wants or is interested in* and *Start play with your child by doing the same thing that he/she is doing*, that require identifying child interests. Identifying opportunities for child learning during natural activities is supported by Responsive Parenting Strategies such as *Let your child know that you see he/she is ready to play or do things with you* and Responsive Teaching Strategies such as *Use your child's interests to help him/her plan activities and/or figure things out*.

All three strategy sections can be used as an observational teaching tool by the parent or the practitioner to note: 1) successful responsive parent-child interactions, 2) how a child responds to particular strategies, and 3) how responsive interactions occur during everyday activities. Additionally, successful and development-enhancing interactions that occur during specialized early intervention to support children with autism, developmental delay, speech and language delays, and behavioral concerns include the

use of responsive strategies (Koegel, Koegel, Harrower, & Carter, 1999; Warren et al., 2006; Webster-Stratton, Reid, & Hammond, 2004). The *Responsive Guides* can further parent engagement and learning when used jointly by parents and practitioners during bi-directional observation of specialized interventions as they occur in everyday activities (Campbell & Sawyer, 2007; Dunst, Trivette, Humphries, Raab, & Roper, 2001; McWilliam, 2000; Pilkington & Malinowski, 2002). When the practitioner chooses to demonstrate as a part of specialized intervention, the parent can focus on how responsive strategies are used to support the child's learning. Practitioners will also observe the parent's use of responsive strategies when they are practicing specialized interventions they have learned from practitioners. Following bi-directional observation, parents and practitioners can discuss and reflect on the effectiveness of the responsive adult-child interactions to determine jointly what responsive strategies best promote child learning when specialized instruction occurs during natural learning activities (Rush & Shelden, 2011).

CONCLUSION

This CASEtool describes the development and use of the *Responsive Guides* based upon functional roles of different responsive strategies identified in the natural learning model of responsive strategies and are consistent with evidence-based coaching interactions and capacity-building intervention practices (Rush & Shelden, 2011; Wilson et al., 2006). This CASEtool provides further information regarding how parents and practitioners can use the *Responsive Guides* as planning and observational learning tools during natural learning interventions.

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Appendix

Practitioner and Parent Responsive Strategy Guides

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Practitioner and Parent Responsive Strategy Guides Description

The *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies*, the *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants* and the *My Child Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies (Responsive Guides)* include an introduction and three sections that correspond to the emotional direction, responsive parenting, and responsive teaching components of a natural learning model of responsive strategies. While each guide has the same organization to promote child interest-based learning, each is tailored for three developmentally different groups of children. The *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies* was developed to be used by any parent with children between the age of 6 months and 5 years of age. The *Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants* was developed to be used with infants from birth to age 6 months. The *My Child Practitioner and Parent Responsive Strategies Guide* was developed to be used with children with multiple motor, sensory, and cognitive challenges and that often have unique behaviors that signal their interests and needs.

Use of the Practitioner and Parent Responsive Strategy Guides

Each *Responsive Guide* is a self-contained booklet that can be used on more than one occasion. The introduction section of all three *Responsive Guides* acknowledges the wealth of knowledge parents possess about how their child expresses his/her learning interests and emotions and describes the role parent knowledge and responsiveness play in child learning. Additionally each section describes the role each type of strategy plays during responsive parent-child interactions.

Emotional Direction Strategies Section

This section in the *Parent and Practitioner Guide to Responsive Strategies* asks parents to identify the successful emotional responses and communications they use with their child and that their child typically uses to express interests and/or frustrations. For the *Parent and Practitioner Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants* and the *My Child Parent and Practitioner Guide to Responsive Strategies*, this section provides information to support parent recognition of child emotional and behavioral states and then asks parents to observe how their responses affect child states and engagement.

Responsive Parenting Strategies Section

On all three *Responsive Guides*, this section asks parents to observe and check those strategies they use to let their child know that the parent understands and supports what the child is interested in during any given activity.

Responsive Teaching Strategies Section

On all three *Responsive Guides*, this section asks parents to observe and check those strategies they use to support and/or enhance their child's learning during any given activity.

Responsive Teaching Strategies

Responsive teaching strategies are parent responses that support your child’s current development and skills or help him/her learn and use new skills. In the sequence of parent and child interactions, responsive teaching strategies are used when the child is in an awake and calm state and after the parent engages the child’s attention and interests. Review these strategies with your practitioner and choose daily activities to identify what you are currently using or identify new strategies you wish to try to support your child’s learning.

- ☐ Start play with your child by doing the same thing he/she is doing.
- ☐ Take turns making noises or faces or gesturing with your child.
- ☐ Move objects your child is looking at or reaching for closer to his/her hands.
- ☐ Help your child try new things with people and objects.
- ☐ Do what your child is interested in during activities.
- ☐ Wait for your child to smile or do something back to you after you do something to practice taking turns.
- ☐ Find ways to make play activities your child likes to last longer.
- ☐ Use your child’s interests and skills to include him/her in family activities.
- ☐ Introduce new play objects or activities when your child is in an alert, calm state.
- ☐ Increase how often your child plays and/or interacts successfully with others.
- ☐ Consistently follow your child’s activity and communication routines.
- ☐ Show your child new ways to do things.
- ☐ Immediately copy what your child does with people and objects.
- ☐ Other _____



*My Child Practitioner and Parent
Responsive Strategies Guide*

Identifying Information

Childs Name:	Date of Birth:
Parent/Caregiver:	Practitioner:

Parents are more knowledgeable and important than anyone else in their child’s life. Parents know what abilities their child has to interact with people and objects, what times of day he/she likes to play, eat, and sleep, and what calms and comforts him/her. Parents also know the daily activities and routines of their child’s life and the best times to introduce new people, go new places, and practice new skills.

Responsive interactions between you and your child help him/her learn during everyday routines. When parents are responsive they have more successful communications with their child. Successful communication between you and your child includes four steps:

1. You identify what your child wants or does not want to do in any given activity.
2. You let your child know that you understood his/her intentions or needs.
3. You respond to your child regarding his/her interests or needs in an activity.
4. Your child lets you know if your response was successful or helpful for him/her

Using responsive strategies, parents help their child learn successful ways to communicate, learn new things, interact and play with others, and participate in family activities. This guide lists three different kinds of responsive strategies that parents use to invite, engage, and teach children during everyday activities.

Practitioners should use this guide with the *My Child Interest and Activity Plan* to help parents identify the responsive strategies they currently use and/or want to use to invite, engage, and teach their child during everyday activities. Practitioners and parents should plan how parents will practice and evaluate what strategies work best during everyday activities for their child and family

Emotional Direction

All child behaviors express an interest to be part of an activity, to quit an activity, or have a need met. Children with multiple motor, sensory, and cognitive challenges often have unique behaviors that signal their interests and needs that may take different information and/or practice to recognize. Being an Emotional Director for your child helps you recognize his/her cues to use responsive strategies that invite him/her to participate in activities and support his/her ability to play, calm down, and rest during daily activities. Listed below are behaviors related to child states and emotional signals. Review these child emotional and communication actions across a daily activity to identify how your child is signaling interests, readiness to participate, or a need to rest.

"I want to play," calm, alert, and/or focused states

- Facial Movements:
- ☐ Eyes open or widen and/or eyebrows raised looking towards people and objects
- ☐ Maintaining eye contact, mouth opening and closing, smiling and/or grinning
- Physical Movements:
- ☐ Startles, twitches, arms waving, hands opening and closing, legs kicking, lifting and/or turning my head towards people or objects.
- ☐ Relaxed posture and steady breathing rates
- Vocalizations:
- ☐ Pleasant coos, laughter, and /or grunting not indicating distress
- ☐ Humming or pleasant sighing

What keeps me awake and playful?

- ☐ Talking in a calm or playful voice
- ☐ Gentle touching
- ☐ Helping me to sit up or changing positions
- ☐ Holding my caregiver's finger or a toy
- ☐ Sucking on my hand or pacifier
- ☐ Gentle bouncing

"I want to eat or rest or sleep," fussy, agitated, dazed, or tuned out

- Facial Movements:
- ☐ Eyes shut and eyebrows together
- ☐ Frowns, grimaces, and/or mouth closed tightly
- Physical Movements:
- ☐ Agitated or restless movement of hands, legs, unresponsive to touch or sound and turning head or body away people or objects
- ☐ Startles, sneezes, or yawns, or rapid breathing
- Vocalizations:
- ☐ Crying or whining
- ☐ Unpleasant cooing, sighing, or grunting indicating distress

What helps me to calm down or sleep?

- ☐ Talking in a calm or quiet voice
- ☐ Music
- ☐ Holding or cuddling
- ☐ Quiet humming
- ☐ Sucking on my hand or pacifier
- ☐ Rocking

Responsive Parenting Strategies

Responsive parenting strategies are all the positive ways parents engage and respond immediately to their child. Contingent responsive parenting strategies let your child know immediately that you heard and understood what he/she communicated. Responsive parenting strategies also include learning about your child's interests, skills, and what helps him/her be successful. These strategies help your child to listen to you so you can use responsive teaching strategies to help him/her learn about people, objects, activities, and/or emotions. Review these strategies with your practitioner, then choose daily activities to identify strategies you are currently using or new strategies you wish to try.

- ☐ Listen to and look at your child when he/she looks at you and until you know what he/she wants or is interested in.
- ☐ Let your child know that you see he/she is ready to play or do things with you.
- ☐ Look at and name what your child likes to do in an activity.
- ☐ Let your child know you accept and understand what he/she is feeling and telling you.
- ☐ Always respond immediately and positively to your child.
- ☐ Note how your child responds back to you to make sure he/she understands you.
- ☐ Understand how your child tells you he/she likes something or wants to play more.
- ☐ Let your child know when he/she has been successful doing things with you and others.
- ☐ Know how your child tells you he/she needs to eat, sleep or to change something.
- ☐ Comfort your child when he/she is upset.
- ☐ Talk to your child prior to touching or moving him/her.
- ☐ Talk about what you are doing with your child.
- ☐ Know how your child responds to different touches, lights, and/or noises.
- ☐ Identify what your child can do to participate in all family routines.
- ☐ Other _____
- _____
- _____

Responsive Teaching Strategies

Responsive teaching strategies consist of parent responses that support current child skills or help children learn and use new skills. In the sequence of parent and child interactions, responsive teaching strategies are used after the parent recognizes the child’s interests or goals and has his/her attention in a joint activity. Review these strategies with your practitioner and choose a daily activity to identify what you are currently using or identify new strategies you wish to try.



*Practitioner and Parent Guide
to Responsive Strategies*

Identifying Information

Childs Name:	Date of Birth:
Parent/Caregiver:	Practitioner:

- ☐ Start play with your child by doing the same thing he/she is doing.
- ☐ Show your child new ways to do things.
- ☐ Let your child decide what and how he/she want to do activities that interest him/her.
- ☐ Add things to what your child is doing to help him/her understand and learn new things.
- ☐ Help your child to practice being responsible when he/she makes a mistake.
- ☐ Continue your child’s successful activities to make them last longer.
- ☐ Increase how often your child is a part of activities he/she likes to do.
- ☐ Use your child’s interests to help him/her be a part of everyday activities.
- ☐ Wait for your child to respond to practice taking turns.
- ☐ Use your child’s interests to help him/her plan activities and/or figure things out.
- ☐ Create and use the same routines, language, and rules with your child everyday.
- ☐ Other _____

Parents are more knowledgeable and important than anyone else who is with their child. Parents know what capabilities their child has when he/she is exploring and learning about people and objects. Parents know how well their child expresses his/her interests and emotions. Parents know the daily activities and routines of their child’s life and the best times to practice new skills.

Responsive interactions between you and your child help him/her learn during everyday routines. When parents are responsive they have more successful communications with their child. Successful communication between you and your child includes four steps:

1. You identify what your child wants or does not want to do in any given activity.
2. You let your child know that you understood his/her intentions.
3. You respond to your child regarding his/her interests in the activity.
4. Your child lets you know he/she understood your response concerning the activity.

Using responsive strategies, parents help their child learn successful ways to communicate, learn new things, interact and play with others, and participate in family activities. This guide lists three different kinds of responsive strategies that parents use to invite, engage, and teach children during everyday activities.

Practitioners should use this guide with the *Child Interest and Activity Plan* and the *Between Us: HUGS* to help parents identify the responsive strategies they currently use and/or want to use to invite, engage, and teach their child during everyday activities. Practitioners and parents should plan how parents will practice and evaluate what strategies work best during everyday activities for their child and family.

Emotional Direction

Emotional direction strategies invite children to participate in daily activities and interactions with others. Emotional direction strategies include all the ways parents share and teach emotional management and expression to children during daily activities and play. When you take the role as Emotional Director during interactions with your child, you establish when and how emotions are expressed as well as how intensely emotions are expressed. Review these parent and child emotional responses and communication actions and choose a daily activity to identify what you and your child are currently using successfully and/or identify new strategies you wish to try.

Parent Emotional Responses and Communication Actions

- ☐ Smiling/laughing
- ☐ Holding hands
- ☐ Using an inviting voice
- ☐ Using sign language
- ☐ Using one or two word phrases
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Using a sad voice
- ☐ Showing calmness
- ☐ Using an excited voice
- ☐ Using multiple word phrases
- ☐ Demonstrating or modeling
- ☐ Gesturing (hugging)
- ☐ Naming simple emotions
- ☐ Using a quiet voice
- ☐ Taking the child by the hand

Child Emotional Responses and Communication Actions

- ☐ Moving to you
- ☐ Frowning
- ☐ Naming simple emotions
- ☐ Using sounds but no words
- ☐ Pointing, reaching for, or looking at an interest
- ☐ Other
- ☐ Smiling/laughing
- ☐ Crying or whining
- ☐ Getting excited
- ☐ Using sign language
- ☐ Using multiple word phrases
- ☐ Hitting, grabbing, or biting
- ☐ Moving away from you
- ☐ Giving you something
- ☐ Using one or two words

Responsive Parenting Strategies

Responsive parenting strategies are all the positive ways parents engage and respond to their child. Contingent responsive parenting strategies let your child know immediately that you heard and understood what he/she communicated. Responsive parenting strategies also include knowing your child’s interests, skills, and what helps him/her be successful. These strategies help your child listen to you so you can use responsive teaching strategies to help him/her learn about people, objects, and play. Review these strategies with your practitioner, then choose daily activities to identify strategies you are currently using or new strategies you wish to try.

- ☐ Always respond immediately and positively to your child.
- ☐ See your child’s interest or concerns the same way he/she does.
- ☐ Let your child know that you see he/she is ready to play or do things with you.
- ☐ Understand how your child is telling you what he/she wants and feels.
- ☐ Let your child know you accept and understand what he/she is feeling and telling you.
- ☐ Note how your child responds back to you and make sure he/she understands you.
- ☐ Let your child know you understand what he/she likes to do in an activity.
- ☐ Recognize, accept, and name your child’s feelings.
- ☐ Listen until your child is finished telling you things.
- ☐ Let your child know when he/she has been successful doing things with you and others.
- ☐ Plan how to help your child be successful in everyday activities.
- ☐ Other

Responsive Teaching Strategies

Responsive teaching strategies are parent responses that support your infant's current development and skills or help him/her learn and use new skills. Responsive teaching strategies are used when infants are in a calm, awake state and the parent has recognized the infant's interests, and has the infant's attention. Review these strategies with your practitioner and choose a daily activity to identify what you are currently using or identify new ideas you wish to try with your infant.

- ☐ Beginning interactions and/or play by doing what your infant is doing.
- ☐ Taking turns making noises or faces or touching a toy with your infant.
- ☐ Moving objects your infant is looking at or reaching for closer to his/her hands.
- ☐ Making new noises or faces when you talk to your infant.
- ☐ Helping your infant try new things with objects.
- ☐ Using your voice to help your infant follow you and/or find you.
- ☐ Waiting for your infant to smile or talk back to you after you smile or talk to him/her.
- ☐ Finding ways to make play activities your infant likes to last longer.
- ☐ Using your infant's interests to help him/her be a part of family activities.
- ☐ Introducing new play objects when your infant is in an alert, calm state.
- ☐ Increasing how often your infant plays and/or interacts with others.
- ☐ Consistently following your infant's eating, sleeping, and care routines.
- ☐ Other _____



Practitioner and Parent Guide to Responsive Strategies for Infants

Identifying Information

Child's Name:

Date of Birth:

Parent/Caregiver:

Practitioner:

During the first four months of your infant's life, you will be learning all about how he/she likes to interact with people and objects, what times of day he/she likes to play, eat, and sleep, and what calms and comforts him/her. Parents also know the daily activities and routines of their infant's life and when are the best times to introduce new people, go new places, and practice new skills.

Successful responsive communications and interactions between you and your infant help him/her participate in daily routines and learning. Successful communication between you and your infant includes four steps:

1. You identify what your infant wants or does not want to do in any given activity.
2. You let your infant know that you understood his/her intentions or needs.
3. You respond to your infant regarding his/her interests or needs in an activity.
4. Your infant lets you know if your response was successful or helpful for him/her.

Using responsive strategies, parents help their child learn successful ways to learn new things, interact and play with others, participate in family activities, and become independent at taking care of him/herself. This guide lists three different kinds of responsive strategies that parents use to invite, engage, and teach children during everyday activities.

Practitioners should use this guide with the *Newborn Interest and Activity Plan* to help parents identify the responsive strategies they currently use and/or want to use to invite, engage, and teach their infant during everyday activities. Practitioners and parents should plan how parents will practice and evaluate what strategies work best during everyday activities for their infant and family.

Emotional Direction

Emotional direction strategies can be used during all interactions between parents and infants. When you take the role as Emotional Director for your infant you recognize his/her cues for different awake and sleep states and recognize what responses can be used to invite and support his/her ability to participate in play, eat, calm down, and sleep. Review these infant emotional responses and communication actions across a daily activity to identify how your infant is communicating his/her states and emotions.

“I Want to Play” calm, alert, and/or focused states

- Facial Movements:
- ☐ Eyes open or widen and/or eyebrows raised looking towards people and objects
- ☐ Maintaining eye contact, mouth opening and closing, smiling and/or grinning
- Physical Movements:
- ☐ Arms waving, hands opening and closing, legs kicking, lifting and/or turning my head towards people or objects
- ☐ Relaxed posture and steady breathing rates
- Vocalizations:
- ☐ Pleasant coos, laughter, and /or grunting not indicating distress
- ☐ Humming or pleasant sighing

What keeps me awake and playful?

- ☐ Talking in a calm or playful voice
- ☐ Gentle touching
- ☐ Helping me to sit up
- ☐ Holding my parent’s finger or a toy
- ☐ Sucking on my hand or pacifier
- ☐ Gentle bouncing

“I want to Eat or Rest or Sleep” fussy, agitated, dazed, or tuned out

- Facial Movements:
- ☐ Eyes shut and eyebrows together
- ☐ Frowns, grimaces, and/or mouth closed tightly
- Physical Movements:
- ☐ Agitated or restless movement of hands, legs, and turning head or body away from people or objects
- ☐ Startles, sneezes, or yawns, or rapid breathing
- Vocalizations:
- ☐ Crying or whining
- ☐ Unpleasant cooing, sighing, or grunting indicating distress

What helps me to calm down or sleep?

- ☐ Talking in a calm or quiet voice
- ☐ Swaddling
- ☐ Holding or cuddling on parent’s chest
- ☐ Quiet humming
- ☐ Sucking on my hand or pacifier
- ☐ Rocking

Responsive Parenting Strategies

Responsive parenting strategies are all the positive ways parents engage and respond immediately to their infant. These strategies let your infant know that you are close by, paying attention to him/her and /or available to play with him/her. Responsive parenting strategies also include learning about your infant’s interests and developing skills and supporting his/her ability to interact with and successfully learn about people and objects. Review these strategies with your practitioner and identify what you are currently using or ideas you wish to try in your daily activities with your infant.

- ☐ Looking right at your infant’s face when he/she looks at you.
- ☐ Talking back to your infant when he/she makes noises.
- ☐ Looking at and naming what your infant is looking at.
- ☐ Recognizing, accepting, and naming your infant’s emotion.
- ☐ Using a positive baby talk* voice when you talk to him/her.
- ☐ Holding your infant so he/she can watch your face.
- ☐ Smiling and talking at your infant when he/she looks at you.
- ☐ Noticing how your infant tells you he/she likes something or wants to play more.
- ☐ Keeping your infant close when new people are introduced.
- ☐ Knowing how your infant tells you he/she needs to eat, sleep, or to have a diaper change.
- ☐ Comforting your infant when he/she is upset.
- ☐ Other _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

* A baby talk voice uses quiet, sing-song, exaggerated storytelling sounds and has a melody to it but the actual words spoken are typical adult words.