Tips for Including Therapists in Child Care Programs

1st step: meeting between therapist, childcare director or administrator, classroom teacher, and parents

Topics to discuss at the meeting include:
  - IFSP goals AND classroom goals
  - Classroom schedule and activities / timing of visits
  - Frequency of visits
  - Classroom rules and expectations
  - Roles
  - How ongoing communication between parties will occur (suggested options: notes sent home to parents and copied to teachers, and administrator if desired, or emails copied to all parties)

A check-in meeting between teacher, therapist and parent outside of the classroom once every 1-2 months is recommended, in order to review progress and problem-solve any issues that come up.

Tips for Therapists

- Talk with teachers prior to initial visit to establish what their classroom goals are for the child
- For the first 1-2 visits, plan to do fewer PT/OT/SLP things: observe, ask questions and help out
- Encourage the teachers/admin staff to attend IFSP/IEP meetings if the family is open to it
- Communicate frequently with the family via email, notes/notebook sent home, or phone (family’s choice) and/or home visits
- Teachers are busy! Establish the best way and times to communicate with them before you start therapy.
- Involve other children in activities when working with the child (don’t sit in the corner and work with one child)
- If you have insights or strategy suggestions for the classroom to support the child, make sure that the teacher/administration is able to carry these out. Ask first if the strategy is doable.
Tips for Classroom Teachers

- Work with your director/administrators to create times to check in with therapists and family outside of the classroom.
- Be sure to let therapist know what times you are available to touch base with them while they are there, and what times you really need to focus on the classroom.
- Remember that your role is to run a quality early learning classroom where a child can strengthen their skills, NOT to provide therapy services.
- Run your classroom as usual; no need to change plans because a therapist is there!
- Don't be afraid to express your opinion or ask questions. If you are nervous about something a therapist/professional is doing, find out more about their approach.
- Don't ignore the child receiving services – even if a therapist is there to work directly with that child, include them in the general classroom activities.
- Ask what you can do to support the therapist's work during and between sessions.
- Share your successes! When children make progress or try new things, be sure to share what happened and what's working well.

Tips for Parents

- Let the therapist know your preferences on methods of communication (e.g., notes, email).
- If you have preferences for what you want to hear about the visit (e.g., activities done, progress toward goals, suggestions for home carryover), let the therapist know.
- Monthly home visits, if possible, can be helpful to encourage generalization of skills from childcare to home.
- Make sure you know what days and times the therapist is scheduled to come, and please contact the therapist directly if your child is sick or not attending school on a scheduled visit day!
- Invite your child's teacher and/or administrator to IFSP/IEP meetings if you are open to it.
- Share your successes! When children make progress or try new things, be sure to share what happened and what's working well.