

ON LISTENING

The following information is based on findings from a national survey of parents with young children (Taaffe Young K et al. 1998). Learners need to be particularly aware of the following issues when listening to families. Based on this survey, child health professionals may need to explore new interdisciplinary partnerships.

Most parents view the pediatric health care system as meeting the physical health needs of their young children; however, child health professionals often fail to discuss nonmedical questions with parents. Parents want more information and support on child-rearing concerns such as:

- Discipline
- Toilet training
- Responding to a crying baby
- Sleep patterns
- Newborn care
- Ways to encourage children to learn

Parents who receive comprehensive pediatric services and information report significantly higher levels of satisfaction with their child's provider. Services include:

- Home visit
- Packet of information on newborn
- Telephone advice line
- Booklet to track health status
- Checkup reminder system
- Developmental assessments

When meeting with families of young children, child health professionals need to be aware of these issues:

- Reading, singing, and showing affection are important influences on a child's cognitive and psychosocial development.
- Parents who speak with their physician or nurse about encouraging their child to learn are more likely to read to their child daily.
- Of the parents surveyed, 9 percent of mothers and 4 percent of fathers experienced three to five depressive symptoms at some time during the week before

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Partnership: Session 2

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the survey; these parents were more likely than parents without depressive symptoms to report frequent frustration with their child's behavior in a typical day ($p < 0.001$).

- Mothers were much more likely to breastfeed if a physician or nurse encouraged them to do so. Of the mothers surveyed, 74 percent who were encouraged to breastfeed actually did so, whereas only 45 percent of those who did not receive encouragement chose to breastfeed ($p < 0.001$).

Interventions by child health professionals have a positive effect on parental behaviors and health promotion in such areas as:

- Encouraging breastfeeding
- Encouraging reading
- Promoting wellness
- Addressing psychosocial concerns
- Individualizing anticipatory guidance
- Addressing parents' concerns on the perceived demands of their child to learn
- Finding creative ways to augment current services with the support of administrative and financial systems
- Recognizing the need for resources committed to preventive services
- Identifying creative solutions, including group well-child visits and a designated telephone line to discuss parental concerns about childhood behaviors

Reference

Taaffe Young K, Davis K, Schoen C, Parker S. 1998. Listening to parents: A national survey of parents with young children. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine* 152:255–262.