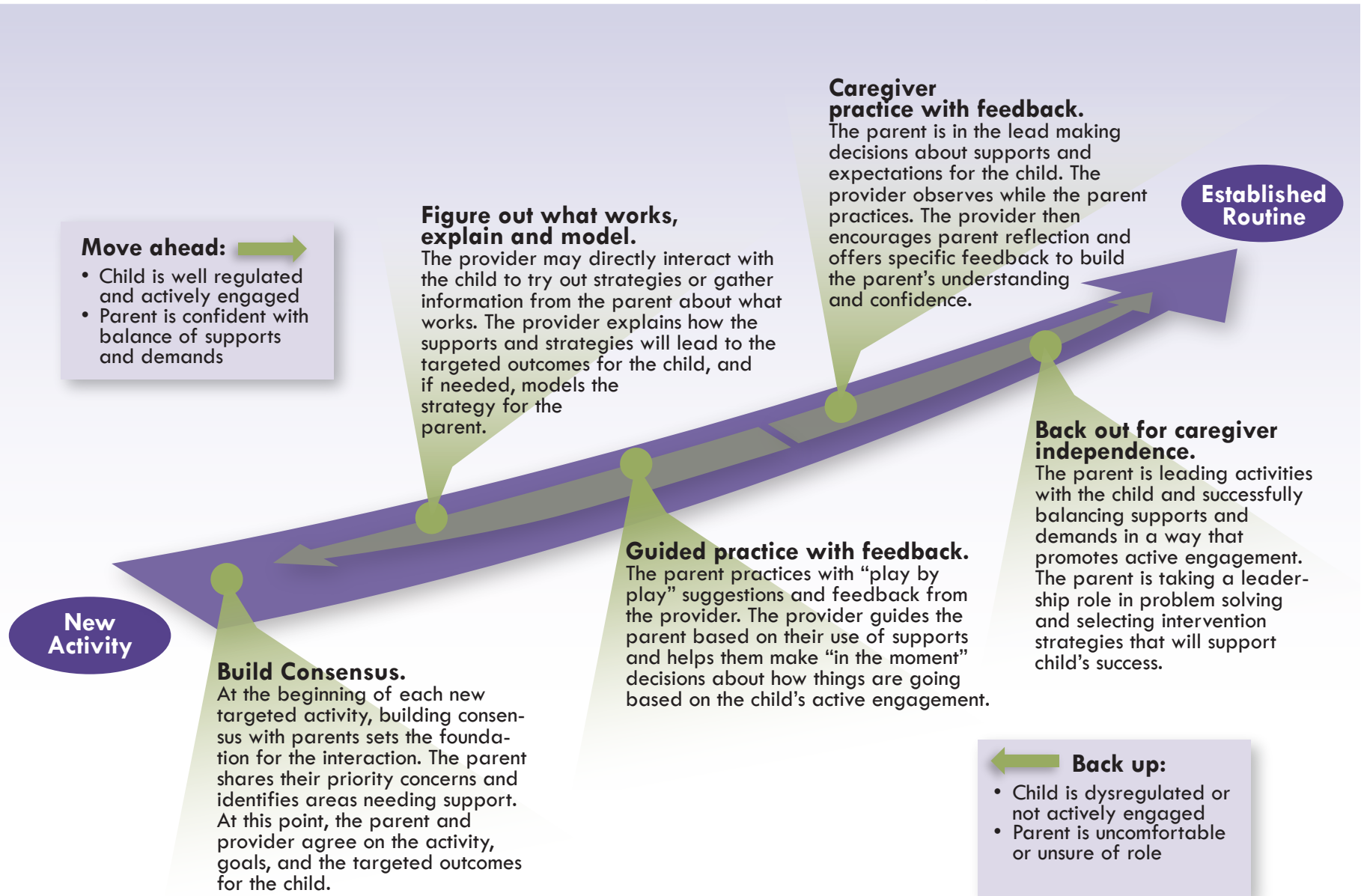




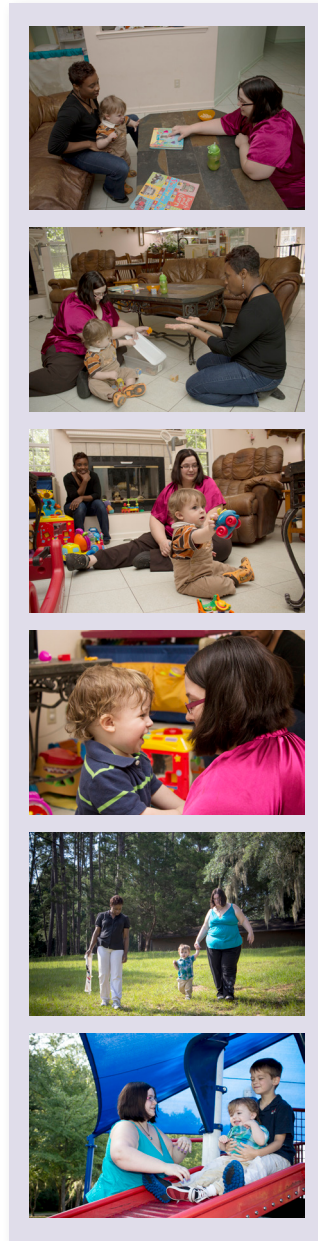
Autism NAVIGATOR[®] Continuum of Collaborative Coaching Model



Coaching to Build Caregiver Capacity

Coaching in early intervention uses a collaborative process - not an expert model. At the foundation of the coaching relationship is the Early Intervention (EI) provider's willingness and ability to share their knowledge of evidence-based practice in order to build the capacity of a parent to make decisions and lead the intervention process with confidence. When coaching, the EI provider must go beyond relationship-based strategies and incorporate real life practice and clear explanations that help promote confident action and decision-making. Parents also gain confidence by problem solving and reflecting with EI providers. Using high order learning strategies with a trusted coach enables parents to brainstorm when and how to apply the interventions in other situations and settings, to get feedback on what might work, and what to do if it doesn't. Equipping parents to support their children when the EI providers are not present is the ultimate goal of coaching.

The progression of coaching strategies demonstrated by the arrow provides a framework for teaching and expanding intervention strategies to new activities and routines. The goal is to meet parents where they are in the current moment by providing support for their learning and a scaffold to increase their independence as quickly as possible. The many everyday activities that families are spending time doing with their toddlers provide the context for embedded intervention in natural environments. The EI provider can support parent's confidence and competence as they make every moment an opportunity to practice and learn with increasing independence. This is a viable way to provide the intensity needed to support active engagement for toddlers with ASD. The impact of early intervention can increase exponentially if parents achieve independence and continue to support active engagement and advocate for their child during preschool, the transition to kindergarten, and beyond. This reflects the intention behind the IDEA legislation for services and supports in the natural environment to build the family's capacity to enhance their child's development.



Deciding When to Move Ahead or Back Up along the Arrow

The arrow portrays the continuum of collaborative coaching that is fluid in nature, meaning that the EI provider “moves ahead” by supporting parent independence as things are going well, or “backs up” by offering more direct support when needed. The provider should find the point on the arrow that meets the needs of the family in the moment, but should always keep an eye on the bigger goal of parent independence. The provider's role is to give parents just the right amount of support needed to feel confident getting their child actively engaged—no more and no less.

The decision to move ahead or back up is based on many factors and may even change from minute to minute, activity to activity, or day to day. This will depend on the parent's level of competence and confidence to actively engage the child in a specific activity and specific moment within the activity. The EI provider may need to fluctuate along the arrow based on both the parent and child depending on the newness of the activity and how motivating the activity is. In some situations, the provider's role to offer support will be very clear and solicited by the family. Families may express frustration that the child finds hand washing unpleasant and they need new ideas to make it work, or that a favorite toy has become so enticing that it is getting difficult to motivate the child to participate in other activities. The provider will want to build consensus with the family about the issue at hand and the child's priority outcomes. The provider will need to consider how things are going outside of the intervention sessions, and help to brainstorm and problem solve. The parent may need the provider to model a strategy that the parent is not yet familiar with, and then closely guide the parent's practice to ensure success. But modeling should be used judicious-

ly with an eye toward moving ahead to guided practice as quickly as possible so that the parent's confidence is not undermined. Once it is clear what works to support the child, the provider should move ahead and back out for caregiver independence as soon as possible, so that the parent gets the needed practice with the support of the provider close by.

When the parent is more comfortable and is practicing a familiar activity, the provider still observes with a keen eye on the child's active engagement and parent's use of transactional supports. Often the provider is able to offer a different perspective and may notice an opportunity for better active engagement that the parent may not yet recognize. The provider may simply offer a quick suggestion of an additional role for the child as they observe. In other situations, the parent may first practice an activity, and then have the opportunity to reflect with the provider on the elements of active engagement that are in place. The parent and provider can then identify next steps as the parent moves toward independence.

Effective coaching allows the parent to experience the payoff of meaningful interaction with their child and build a sense of competence and confidence, because what matters most is what the parent can do outside of the intervention session when the provider is not there. Parents who are coached with an eye toward independence also become good advocates for what their child needs beyond the home environment. They are able to teach other family members, caregivers, and teachers how to best support their child's development and learning in the larger context of community and educational settings.