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# System of Early Intervention Natural Environments ...where children spend their time

Nebraska Departments of Education and Health and Human Services

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## The Law Says...

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Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act says that to the maximum extent appropriate, early intervention services must be provided in natural environments, including home and community settings in which children without disabilities participate. Services can only be provided in a setting other than a natural environment when early intervention cannot be achieved satisfactorily in a natural environment.

[SEC. 632 (4) (G) and SEC. 635 (a) (16) (B)]

303.18 As used in this part, natural environment means settings that are natural or normal for the child's age peers who have no disabilities

## What We've Learned

- ◆ Families participate in many, many teaching opportunities throughout the day. Young children learn best when they are taught skills like eating, playing, moving, and communicating during the times and in the places most natural for children to play, eat, walk, or talk.
- ◆ Some young children have difficulty transferring skills learned in a clinical setting or a special classroom to places like the park, their living room or childcare.
- ◆ Family members and other care providers need support to provide children with learning opportunities. Early intervention can assist them in helping their child acquire the skills he/she needs. New skills are best learned from the adults and children involved in the child's daily life. The early intervention system is about helping children develop and practice skills in settings where they live, learn, and play throughout the day.
- ◆ In addition to a child's family, friends, neighbors, childcare providers, play groups, congregations, library, reading groups and other community organizations enhance the quality of every family's life. Services provided in natural environments support and encourage families to find and strengthen supports in their communities.

## Natural Environments

### Questions?

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### Website

<http://www.nde.state.ne.us/ECH/EARLY/echp.htm>

Thanks to the workgroup who have dedicated their time to aid in the discussion of Natural Environments. Special thanks goes to Georgia's Babies Can't Wait early intervention program for sharing their materials.

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## Providing Services in Natural Environments Means...

- ◆ Assisting families to provide teaching and learning opportunities for their child within the activities, routines, and events of their everyday life.
- ◆ Supporting learning opportunities where and when the child uses the skills such as during meals, travel, getting dressed, etc.
- ◆ Increasing the opportunities for ALL children to learn, play, and interact together.
- ◆ Helping families to build positive relationships and lifelong friendships within and among their community networks.
- ◆ Increasing a sense of community by connecting families to natural sources of support, such as friends, neighbors, or congregations.
- ◆ Providing consultation and training for care providers in all settings.

"The Early Intervention System is about helping families help their children develop"

## Providing Services in Natural Environments Does Not Mean...

- ◆ Placing children in a class setting or grouping that consists of a disproportionate number of children with disabilities.
- ◆ Providing only class or group setting or home-based services.
- ◆ Placing children in settings with other children without appropriate supports and services.
- ◆ Expecting the family to provide all the services.
- ◆ Decreasing opportunities for team members to work together. (Opportunities for the team to work and consult with all care providers are essential to the success of providing services in natural environments.)
- ◆ Preventing families from networking with and receiving support from other parents of children with disabilities.