



CORE ELEMENT: **ENGAGING NATURAL SUPPORTS & COMMUNITY RESOURCES**

Engaging Natural Supports and Community Resources is the process of discovering and connecting with the enduring supports in a family's environment who celebrate with the family in good times, comfort them through difficult times, contribute to a sense of belonging, and may provide tangible assistance. They may be extended family, friends, faith community, neighbors, mentors at school or work, or acquaintances who play a small but critical, encouraging role in a family's life. Engaging community resources offers opportunities for family members to join in volunteer, play, learning, worship, and social activities that build resiliency. Informal resources are the naturally occurring, healthy forces that carry families beyond the reach of formal services.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE OUTCOME: Natural supports and community resources — or informal supports — focus on building and maintaining family, friends, and community connections. These connections can help to carry out interventions and sustain improved functioning after the IHT service ends. Informal supports that are included in teamwork, treatment planning, and ongoing collaboration strengthen healthy community bonds. Engaging informal supports, guided by the cultural context of each family, demonstrates shared hope in the youth's and family's ability to resolve treatment needs and move toward a positive future.



REMINDER: Review all matrices. See especially: Practicing Cultural Relevance, Engagement, Collaborative Intervention Planning, and Preparing to Exit. Each matrix describes the work of IHT as a practice shared between a clinician and a Therapeutic Training and Support (TT&S) staff member. Unless specifically noted as the province of the clinician only, the practices expect teamwork and refer to either or both staff members, as fits each family situation.

IDEAL PRACTICE	DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE	UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICE
Existing network of natural supports		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores with family members the sources of support in their extended family, friends, and community (includes eco-mapping). • Discusses with family members the meaning of "natural supports" (neighbors, friends, partner/spouse, faith community, support groups, co-workers) and types of support (emotional, practical, social). • Uses creativity in discovering unique social support networks that may be overlooked. • Consistently attends to possibilities for building connections among natural supports and community resources that can continue after IHT intervention ends. • Attends to changing emphasis in youth's preferred supports from family to peer groups and adapts natural supports accordingly. • Respects cultural taboos about sharing personal struggles with kin and others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores at point in time but not ongoing, or not in sufficient depth. • Asks about natural supports without ensuring that family understands meaning. • Explores with subset of family only. • Limits concept of natural supports to one or a few categories or roles, not full range of possibilities. • Limits discussion to local geographic area. Lists supports without exploring status of relationship with family. • Pressures family about informal supports in ways that are out of step with family readiness or cultural norms. • Considers supports for caregivers without exploring youth supports separately. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No evidence of discussion. • No explanation of natural supports. • Makes assumptions about presence of natural supports. • Gives directives about who "should" be a support.
Family preferences about natural supports		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discusses with family members how their natural supports might be included in intervention in a culturally respectful manner. • Explores the type and extent of involvement that these supports could contribute (respite care, phone support, occasional shared activity, good ideas). • Discusses family preferences about what information can/can't be shared with each potential supporting person. • Assesses with family members their readiness to bring natural supports into the intervention and proceeds at family's pace. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lists supports without thinking through and discussing how they might be useful. • Accepts the current level of contribution without exploring other possibilities. • Explores supports without understanding family's readiness to engage with each. • Discusses supports without talking with family about barriers to engaging the supports. • Obtains consents but does not follow up with action. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes assumptions about whether supports are helpful or not. • Directs family in how to use supports. • Overrides family concerns and preferences about using a natural support. • No plan to engage natural supports. • No contact with natural supports. • Contacts without consent.



IDEAL PRACTICE	DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE	UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICE
New and renewed natural supports		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathizes and validates by listening to family concerns about barriers before moving to solutions. Uses creative ways of exploring with family, discovering, and refreshing natural supports when family feels that they have none due to isolation, conflict, or “burnout.” • Discusses with family members possibilities for reciprocal support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathizes about barriers but without any planning for overcoming them. • Expects family to reconnect without IHT’s help. • Unable to develop creative ways to reconnect with “burned out” supports. • Uses cookie cutter approach without any creative, individualized effort. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No conversation about natural supports. • Accepts family hopelessness about supports without further exploration. • Identifies with burned-out supports, blames or shames family.
Including natural supports in intervention		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaboratively creates an action plan to engage natural supports, including who will contact and follow up with each. • Invites participation of natural supports in intervention, according to clear plan with family about extent of participation and communication. • Includes natural supports in face-to-face and/or “virtual” Team meetings and other ongoing communications, as planned with family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan for engagement or participation not fully developed. • Minimal involvement of family in making a plan to engage natural supports. • Engages only a subset of supports. • Inconsistent efforts to invite participation. • Inconsistent communication with natural supports. • Discusses only at one point in time or only with a subset of family. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invites supports without family permission. • Overrides family voices by directing participation, ignoring family ideas, or arguing over their choices. • Engages in conversations with natural supports without family knowledge.
Exploring network of community resources		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explores with family members the community resources (Boys & Girls Club, lessons, parent support groups, food pantries) that might match strengths and needs. • Discusses resources already in use as well as new possibilities. • Joins with family in researching potential additional community resources. • Supports family in following through on contacting resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares generic resources without customizing to family needs. • Limited knowledge of available resources. • Limited effort to learn about and share resources. • Provides superficial information (brochures, phone number) without follow-up. • Insufficient consideration of possible barriers (transportation, cost, language). • Overloads family members with too many resource suggestions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No discussion of community resources. • Signs up youth or family without their permission or knowledge. • Pressures family into using a resource. • Refuses to assist family with community resources (“not my job”) or neglects because it is too hard. • Provides misinformation about resources. • No effort to overcome barriers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assists family members in joining community activities, as needed (helping with enrollment, orienting to new activities, working to overcome barriers). • Follows up with family to see if resource is meeting goal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides information to families but expects them to join without help. • Offers some assistance but not all, or without consultation about what they need. • No follow-up over time to see if resource is matching expectations and goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No follow-up to see if family members accessed resources. • No assessment of need for help with a resource.



IDEAL PRACTICE	DEVELOPMENTAL PRACTICE	UNACCEPTABLE PRACTICE
Adapting community resources to specific youth		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Along with family, discusses in a mutually respectful “two-way” conversation with community resources how to adapt programming to support youth with behavioral health needs (learning style, behaviors). • Practices with family ways of transferring successful interactions from other settings (day care center, after-school program, sports teams) to the home environment. • Engages in similar process with natural supports (extended family, neighbors). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches community resource or natural support as “the expert” in dealing with a youth rather than as a collaborating partner. • Discusses strategies without including family. • Makes suggestions without considering what is possible for the supporting helpers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shares willy-nilly. • No planning ahead with family about how to approach the conversation. • Joins with a program in expelling a child. • Joins with community resource or natural support in blaming youth or family for problems. • Joins with youth or family in blaming resource or support for youth’s misbehavior.

