

Three Circles Of

EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION-MAKING

In Early Childhood

A collective goal in early childhood is focusing on “what works”—finding and using interventions backed by evidence to achieve desired results for children and their families. Evidence comes from multiple sources of information, which we call the Three Circles of Evidence. This resource presents a step-by-step, evidence-based, decision-making process to collect information for the Three Circles, make decisions based on the information, and then implement the decisions.

Three Circles of Evidence

All three of the following sources of information need to be considered when making evidence-based decisions:

The Best Available Research Evidence

Ideally, strong research evidence exists showing that the intervention being considered resulted in positive meaningful impacts on desired outcomes. This is often called “direct research evidence.” Sometimes there is strong research evidence, but it was done with children and families with different characteristics, for example in terms of age, language, culture, and type of disability, or in different settings, such as a home versus a center. This can be called indirect research evidence. Together, direct and indirect research evidence are considered to be the best available research evidence.

Family Wisdom And Values

Does the intervention being considered align with the experiences, concerns, priorities, and resources of the family? Does it align with information available from parent centers? This is important regardless of the strength of research evidence, and especially important when you cannot find direct research evidence or any research evidence at all that shows the intervention being considered has a positive meaningful impact. It is also important to consider how an intervention can best be embedded in and support a family's routines within their valued relationships and natural environments.

Professional Wisdom And Values

As with family wisdom and values, you will want to determine if a particular intervention aligns with professional preparation, experiences, expertise, and values as they relate to quality delivery of services to the family.