

Facilitating a Problem Solving Approach for Families

Problem solving (or solution finding) is systematic process that examines an action, behavior, situation or interaction and proposes alternatives or solutions to develop an action plan. Good problem solving skills come in handy for simple as well as complex situations, are beneficial throughout life, and can make a tough spot go much smoother. They also build confidence and competence, encourage participation and facilitate trusting relationships with others. No wonder they are so integral to coaching in early intervention! The following four steps with sample questions encourage a straightforward information gathering process that results in action steps and timelines. Just remember to make sure the problem solving process is a reciprocal conversation that emphasizes the caregiver as active participant and decision-maker.

Step 1: Defining the situation with information (Objective)	Step 2: Generating ideas (Reflective)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the concern, situation, or challenge you would like ideas for? Describe: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ what occurs, ○ when, where, how often, and ○ why • Who is affected? How? • What is the impact or result? • How has this changed over time? • What could happen if it is addressed? • What could happen if it is ignored? • Should others join in the problem solving process? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been tried? What worked? What didn't? Any ideas why? • Which strategies or solutions feel comfortable for your family, beliefs, and resources? • What evidence-based practices, strategies, or guidelines have worked before with other skills and might work here? • What would other methods/models/people suggest? • What could technology offer? Additional resources or people, time, money? • Are the ideas congruent with natural environment principles and practices?
Step 3: Evaluating and choosing ideas and actions (Interpretive)	Step 4: Developing and implementing the plan (Decisional)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What ideas “jump” to the top of the list? • Are there any that can be eliminated as not feasible or contraindicated by the research? • Have any new ideas come up for consideration? • Have any been ignored that should be reviewed? • Can ideas be combined to improve quality or ease? • Are there other factors (e.g., cost, time, resources) to be considered before you decide? • What looks like the best solution/idea to try? • How will others involved like this plan/idea? • What might go wrong? What is the back-up plan? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the best solution/idea. • What should be tried first? • Are resources (e.g., people, materials) available now? If not, when? • Who will do what? When? How? • What are the most important steps to ensure success? • How will we know if it's working? • Who will monitor actions? • When do we review the plan? • What triggers the back-up or alternate plan?