

# Environmental Risk Assessment Instrument: A Tool to Gather Information

Presented by:  
Verna Trujillo and Michelle Staley at the  
Family Infant Toddler Program  
Annual Meeting June 16th-17th 2010

1

**Presentation Details:**

**Slides: 27**

# Environmental Risk Assessment Instrument: A Tool to Gather Information

Presented by:  
Verna Trujillo and Michelle Staley at the  
Family Infant Toddler Program  
Annual Meeting June 16th-17th 2010

## Notes:

## Objectives

- Describe the origins and purpose of the ERA process
- Identify how to incorporate the ERA process into what your program is already doing
- Practice using the tool
- Discuss questions, concerns and ideas about the ERA process

## Notes:

How many know what ERA is?  
How many have used it already?  
What have your experiences been?

## Core Values of the Fit Program



- Family-Centered Practices
- Focus on Relationships
- Strengths-Based Approach
- Reflective Practices
- Ecological Framework

## Notes:

**Family-Centered Practices** Because families make all-important decisions concerning their child and family, they need data and information from experts in the field to help them make informed choices and decisions.

**Focus on Relationships** All early learning takes place in the context of relationships with primary caregivers. FIT providers work in partnership with parents. Their methods support — they don't replace — the care-giving role of the family.

**Strengths-Based Approach** FIT providers identify child and family strengths and use satisfying and fun activities to promote healthy growth and development.

**Reflective Practices** FIT providers reflect on what they see and hear from families so they can provide more responsive services.

**Ecological Framework** Services are delivered where the child lives, learns and plays within the context of the family's everyday routines, activities and places.

FIT eligibility for children at environmental risk, as defined by state regulations:

- “the presence of physical, social and/or economic factors in the environment which pose a substantial threat to development; with supporting information from one or more agencies having knowledge of the child and family.”

**Notes:**

This definition is not changing, there still needs to be a multi-agency team. The Multi-agency team must include at least one outside agency in addition to the early intervention agency. However, what has changed is the Environmental Risk Assessment Tool will be used by the early intervention agency to determine if the presence of physical, social and or economic factors is at a level which does in fact pose a substantial threat to development.

**What you already know...**

“ . . . Every aspect of early human development, from the brain’s evolving circuitry to the child’s capacity for empathy, is affected by the environments and experiences that are encountered in a cumulative fashion . . . ”

*Neurons to Neighborhoods*

Risks Multiply in their effects: 1 risk = 1% increase in disorder  
2 risks = 5% increase in disorder  
4 or more risks = 21% increase in disorder

**Notes:**

We have seen over the last several years an explosion of research in the neuro-biological, behavioral, and social sciences which has led to major advances in understanding the conditions that influence whether children get off to a promising or a worrisome start.

**The Influence of Adverse Childhood Experiences Throughout Life**



**Notes:**

Introduce slide to support what the participants already know. Explain to participants that in the electronic handouts available on the FIT web-site will include the Fact-Sheet Vulnerable Children by Evelyn Shaw and Sue Goode. The intent of providing this Fact-Sheet is to support them in helping their staff understand stressors and the impact of these stressors on young children and families.



**How do you assess those risks?**

7

**Notes:**

**Is the ERA tool currently required?**

❖ Effective July 1, the ERA tool will be used to determine eligibility under the category of environmental risk.

❖ The ERA tool continues to be recommended for use with all families when risk factors are present, even if the child is eligible under another category – as the information gathered can be used to develop family outcomes in the IFSP.

8

**Notes:**

**An Overview**



9

**Notes:**

Ask participants to look at the ERA Guide.

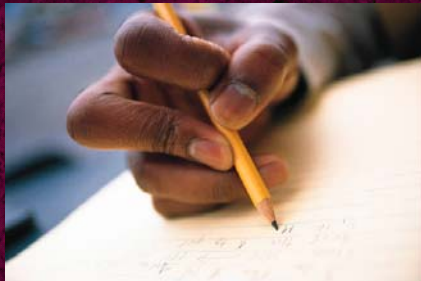
## The Guide

- Provides History and Background
- Nature and Purpose of the Tool
- Tool Overview
- Administration of the Tool
- Administration Instructions
- Scoring and Eligibility Determination
- Case Studies
- ERA Tool

### Notes:

Present this with the suggestion of how participants will use this to support their staff in being able to administer the tool appropriately.

## It might look like a checklist...



### Notes:

Remind participants to be aware staff may see the ERA as a checklist and begin with item one and continuing. It will be important to remind their staff there is a process in determining if the stressor is present or not.

Information needed to answer the "Questions" from ERA should be part of other intake processes, not separate from them.

## What methods are used to complete the tool?

- ❖ Review of records
- ❖ Observation
- ❖ Caregiver interview



### Notes:

Ask participants when else do they use review of records, observation and caregiver interview. How and when do these methods get completed currently?

Information needed to answer the "Questions" from ERA should be part of other intake processes, not separate from them.

## What you are already doing...

- You already have a process of gathering current information, beginning with referral. How does your current process support gathering the information for the ERA tool?
- What are some things you might want to consider to assure the tool is being used as it was intended?



13

### Notes:

This slide connects to participants understanding they already have opportunity through their current process to gather the information needed to complete the ERA.

What do participants want to gain from using the ERA?

Ask participants what adaptations might you need: visits, forms, policies, procedures, etc.?

## Relationships....



14

### Notes:

Discuss how we ask questions can help families feel safe.

Remind participants that there are three electronic handouts available to support staff in asking questions and expanding conversations.

## Importance of Strengths-Based Interviewing



### Notes:

This slide supports the participants to remind their staff of identifying the strengths and bright spots all families have.

Ask if anyone has experienced what it felt like when they identified a strength or bright spot in a family that is extremely challenging.

## Relationship-Based Practice Includes



### Notes:



### Notes:

Discuss how some of knowing, learning and witnessing some of the stressors families have can really impact staff. Support them in understanding their need to provide time for and support for their staff to process and reflect.

Resources/Tools for how to ask questions in a supportive manner, refer back to handouts but electronic and hardcopy.

## Who can administer the assessment?

- Service Coordinator
- Developmental Specialist II
- Developmental Specialist III

### Notes:

Quick review

## SCORING GUIDELINES

- ❖ Items 1, 2, 3: Basic protective factors necessary for adequate growth and development
- ❖ Items 4 – 16: Organized on a continuum of “no,” “medium,” or “high” stressors and reflect the lifetime experience of the child
  - ❖ Items 4- 12 relate to specific risk factors
  - ❖ Items 13-16 relate to the disposition of the primary caregiver toward the child
- ❖ Item 17: Is open-ended to provide for other stressors that place a child at risk

19

### **Notes:**

Participants continue to review guideline and tool

Take your time and don't rush!!



20

### **Notes:**

Just as with any part of an assessment process we don't observe or learn everything in one visit, risk factors may change, new stressors may arise, consider what on-going assessment might look like with the ERA. Consider how you will want your staff to use the tool prior to the annual IFSP.



21

### **Notes:**

The ERA should not be considered more “paper work” but more information that supports the work we do with families.

## Eligibility Determination

A “High” score in one, some, or all of items numbered 6,7,8,9

*or*

A “High” score in 2 or more areas;

*or*

A “Medium” score in 4 areas

22

**Notes:**

## Case Study - Group

- Read information
- Individually score tool using information provided
- Large group discussion

23

**Notes:**

## Case Study - Teams

- Divide into 2 teams and complete assessment tool using information provided; Teams report
- Discuss how your program would have gathered the information provided in this case study
- Identify what changes, if any, your agency may need to make to obtain similar information; teams report
- Use information obtained to support families in identifying their outcomes for services; group
- Identify strategies that would support family generated outcomes; group

24

**Notes:**

Remind participants that family specific outcomes can be addressed on the IFSP. Use example from case study 2



You've completed the assessment . . .

Now what?

25

**Notes:**

Refer back to multi-agency, re-enforce the ERA does not mean the decision can come from only the early intervention program.

They may identify who that second agency is by the referral source or through their intake process.

**IFSP Eligibility Statement**

“(name of child) meets the New Mexico Part C definition of a child who is eligible to receive early intervention services under the environmental risk category, according to the NM Family Infant Toddler Program Environmental Risk Assessment Tool.”

26

**Notes:**

Remind participants of the eligibility hierarchy, but identify the statement above would be used as the Eligibility Statement for children not eligible under any other category.

**Next Steps**



- IFSP team develops outcomes and strategies
- IFSP team identifies needed services and supports
- Service providers engage in reflective practice with supervisors and team members as needed

27

**Notes:**

As with any child the IFSP team including the parent use information to develop outcomes and strategies and identify what services and supports are needed to meet the outcomes the IFSP team develops.