

**1) What is a natural environment?**

In early intervention the “natural environment” is where typically developing children would normally spend time. Natural environments are the everyday routines activities, and places that promote children’s learning. Common natural environments for young children include the child’s home, childcare settings including centers, family-home providers and care provided in the homes of relatives. Public parks, recreation areas, churches or other places of worship are also examples of natural environments for some families. Many young children spend a fair amount of time “going along” with their families on outings such as shopping or other errands, school, and sporting events of older brothers and sisters. When deciding how to best provide supports and services in the family’s everyday routines, activities, and places, in addition to considering *where* the support or service is provided, it is important to consider *why* the support or service is being provided, *what* support or service is needed, *how* it is provided, and *who* is providing it. When we look in this broader way at what it means to provide supports and services in “natural environments”, we are more likely to offer meaningful input to the child and family.

**2) What are some examples of activities, and places that would not be considered a natural environment?**

Children with and without disabilities receive medical and health services (including audiology) in hospitals, clinics, and therapy offices. These places however are not natural environments for other early intervention services. Also centers for children with developmental delays are not considered to be natural environments as typically developing children do not participate in these settings. Providing early intervention supports and services in everyday routines, activities, and places is less disruptive to the natural flow of family life where learning occurs most effectively. Children under three years old do not easily take a skill that they learn in one setting and transfer it to other settings or activities. For example, there is nothing in the literature to indicate that a child who practices using her trunk muscles to keep herself upright on a therapy ball while receiving PT in a clinic setting, will then be able to sit better on the floor watching television in her living room at home. Learning occurs in daily, ongoing activities. The less disruption to those activities, the more opportunities the child has to develop and use her skills in the activities and places where she typically spends her time.

**3) Why the focus on natural environments?**

This is how children learn! Opportunities to acquire new skills and practice skills that are being developed are greatly increased when learning is facilitated during routines and activities throughout the day. Research helps us understand that everyday experiences provide children with continuous interest-based learning opportunities that promote and enhance their development. Learning is more meaningful, and can be reinforced through practical and developmentally appropriate activities that reflect each family’s culture, traditions, and daily routines

**4) What Does Inclusion have to do with Natural Environment?****Intro to Sophie and Special Quest****Part C Changes on Inclusion**

As a partner in Special Quest, Part C will be making some changes to our system to incorporate Inclusion Practice in specific areas of Early Intervention including:

- **Early Childhood Coordinator’s- a brief overview of Inclusive Practices at the Annual Meeting, with follow-up at the local level to include Regional meetings and provider one on one with direct staff.**

- **Service Coordination Modules**
- **Developing The Dream- IFSP**
- **It's Only Natural (Natural Environments)-Everyday Routines**
- **Insure that all providers have access to Special Quest training materials.**
- **Include language about Inclusive practices in all contracts with weighted points during the RFP years, and add to the scope of work.**
- **Incorporate Inclusive Practices in Monitoring for EI provider**
- **Including Inclusion in IDPD Competencies.**

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