

2018



Ongoing Support for Coaching & Natural Learning Environment Practices

Guidance for Facilitating Reflection with Individuals and Groups

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Table of Contents

Overview	1
Individual Reflection: WHOA Reflective Practice Feedback Form	5
WHOA Reflective Practice Feedback Form	6
Group Reflection Option A: Reflection and Group Problem-Solving	7
Group Reflection Option B: Topic Discussions with Reflection on Practices	8
• SESSION 1: Five Characteristics of Coaching	9
• SESSION 2: Joint Planning	11
• SESSION 3: Observation	13
• SESSION 4: Action/Practice	15
• SESSION 5: Feedback and Reflection	17
Additional Resources	19

Overview

In Virginia, practitioners are expected to implement the *early childhood coaching* approach described by Rush and Shelden (2011), which focuses on building the caregiver’s capacity to enhance the child’s development using everyday interactions and activities. Practitioners support caregivers during EI visits by joining family activities and coaching caregivers as they practice using intervention strategies with their children. Practitioners also facilitate reflection with the caregiver, provide feedback on the caregiver’s efforts, and plan with families for what to do to encourage development between visits. EI practitioners are also required to use *natural learning environment practices* (NLEPs), which overlap with early childhood coaching. NLEPs focus on supporting the child’s development in the context of naturally occurring activities, daily routines, and settings that are meaningful to the family. These practices are widely accepted in the EI field and are described in resource documents such as the [Agreed Upon Mission and Key Principles for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments](#). There are a number of resources available to assist Virginia’s EI practitioners in building a knowledge base about these practices and monitoring their fidelity of implementation, such as:

[Orientation to Coaching and Natural Learning Practices](#)

This document describes a 4-session mentoring process for new practitioners or those who need support in the use of these practices.

[Virginia’s Coaching Facilitation Guide](#)

This guide can be used to facilitate an interactive book study using *The Early Intervention Coaching Handbook* (Rush & Shelden, 2011). Information is provided to help group leaders facilitate meetings using planned activities for each section of the handbook.

[Online Module: Coaching Families \(Texas ECI\)](#)

This module was developed by Texas Early Childhood Intervention and offers an overview of coaching in early intervention. The module includes videos and is an important part of Virginia’s fidelity assessment process.

[Coaching in Action – Fidelity Checklist](#)

This checklist is used by practitioners as a self-assessment and an observation tool to support EI practitioners in maintaining fidelity when implementing coaching practices. For more information about Virginia’s fidelity assessment process, read [Fidelity Assessment: Frequently Asked Questions](#).

[VA Early Intervention Professional Development Center \(VEIPD\)](#)

Practitioners can find additional information about [coaching in early intervention](#) and [implementing supports and services](#) using recommended practices on the VEIPD site.

This guidance document builds on these resources by offering a mechanism for systematic, ongoing support for practitioners to reach and then sustain fidelity of coaching and natural learning environment practices. This document was designed to help supervisors, local system managers, and other leaders in the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia early intervention (EI) system facilitate reflection activities to support the ongoing use of these practices. Reflection is an essential part of professional development. In order for EI practitioners to expand or deepen their practices, time must be dedicated to reflecting on how those practices are used with children and families. Through reflection, practitioners can explore what they do, why they do it, and how they can improve and ensure what they do is aligned with the EI field’s recommended and evidence-based practices. Options for both individual and group reflection activities are provided.

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Special thanks to Ellen Egerton and Kimberly Griffith who shared information about how they facilitated reflection groups in their local early intervention systems. Their information was invaluable in providing the foundation for the group reflection options you will find in this guidance document.

Individual Reflection

WHOA Reflective Practice Feedback Form

This reflective practice feedback form is designed to be used during a one-on-one reflection session with a practitioner following an observation of an intervention visit. The form will help the practitioner reflect on the following:

- *What was observed during the visit*
- *How he/she reacted to what was observed*
- *How he/she felt*
- *What he/she thought about what occurred during the visit*
- *Next steps following the observation*

The form can be used in the following two ways:

Observation of a Peer/Mentor Visit with a Family

The practitioner observes an intervention visit conducted by a peer or mentor (live or on video) and completes this form to reflect on what was observed. The supervisor, mentor, or peer then discusses the observation using the practitioner's answers on the form to facilitate reflection.

Self-Reflection after the Practitioner's Visit with a Family

The practitioner completes the form after his/her visit with a family as a self-reflection tool, then discusses it with the supervisor during a one-on-one reflection session. The supervisor may or may not be present during the visit.

W.H.O.A

WHOA Reflective Practice Feedback Form

WHAT did you observe or what occurred on the visit (20 words or less)?

HOW did you react to what you observed/what occurred?

OKAY, time to reflect on the situation. How did you feel about what you observed/what occurred? What did you think and why did you think it?

AH-HA moment: Now what? What are your next steps/thoughts?
What would your “do-over” look like? What resources do you have to support you?

Group Reflection Option A

Reflection and Group Problem-Solving

This type of reflection group focuses on providing a regular time for practitioners to come together to problem-solve, reflect, and share/receive feedback from peers about their coaching practices. Meetings for this group do not focus on a specific topic; instead, discussion is facilitated based on the needs of group members at each meeting.

Type: Group or Individual

Time: 60 min (will vary depending on group size, depth of discussion, etc.)

Recommendation for Group Facilitators: Before initiating a reflection group, it is strongly recommended that the facilitator read the manual, [Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators](#) (Reed & Koliba, 2003). This manual will inform the facilitator about recommended practices for facilitating reflection activities.

SAMPLE AGENDA



- **Welcome** - Facilitator welcomes everyone and new participants are introduced.

Brief Updates on Action Plans from Previous Session

Depending on group size, the facilitator may invite each participant to share an update. Or, if the group is large or time is limited, the facilitator may ask for volunteers to share their updates. Participants are invited to share celebrations related to their plans.



- **Collaborative Problem-Solving, Reflection, and Feedback on Practice**

The facilitator will open up the discussion for participants to share specific situations that they would like to process with the group for brainstorming, problem-solving, and feedback. Participants need to be prepared to share: 1) an overview of the situation, and 2) one question for group reflection.



- **Action Planning**

The last 10 minutes of the group should be reserved for action planning, during which each participant shares a plan for improving his/her practices, based on the discussion. This can be shared verbally by having participants take turns sharing their plans with the group. Action planning can also be captured visually by having each participant write his/her action plan on a sticky note (after verbally sharing it) then attach it to a large sheet of paper. This large group action plan can then be used as a visual reminder during updates at the beginning of the next meeting.

Group Reflection Option B

Topic Discussions with Reflection on Practices MULTI-SESSION PLAN

This type of reflection group is facilitated using a combination approach. Each session focuses on discussion and reflection on a specific, pre-determined topic. There is also time during each session for practitioners to problem-solve, reflect, and share/receive feedback from peers about their coaching practices.

Type: Group or Individual

Time: 60 min (will vary depending on group size, depth of discussion, etc.)

Recommendation for Group Facilitators: Before initiating a reflection group, it is strongly recommended that the facilitator read the manual, [Facilitating Reflection: A Manual for Leaders and Educators](#) (Reed & Koliba, 2003). This manual will inform the facilitator about recommended practices for facilitating reflection activities.

Reflection and Group Problem-Solving: **Five Characteristics of Coaching**

This multi-session plan provides guidance for how to facilitate a 5-session reflection group about the five characteristics of coaching. This plan includes an agenda for each session to help the facilitator focus the group's reflection around a specific topic. Facilitators will also find instructions, resources to engage the group in discussion, and sample reflection questions designed to facilitate deeper understanding of the topic and the implementation of relevant practices.

SESSION GUIDE

Session 1: Overview of the Five Characteristics of Coaching

Session 2: Joint Planning

Session 3: Observation

Session 4: Action/Practice

Session 5: Feedback and Reflection

MATERIALS

- Copy of *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook* as a resource
- Computer and Projector (if watching the videos during sessions)

Session 1

Overview of the Five Characteristics of Coaching



- **Welcome** - *The facilitator welcomes everyone and new participants are introduced.*

Brief Updates on Action Plans from Previous Session

Depending on group size, the facilitator may invite each participant to share an update. Or, if the group is large or time is limited, the facilitator may ask for volunteers to share their updates. Participants are invited to share celebrations related to their plans.



- **Introduce Topic: Overview of the Five Characteristics of Coaching**

The facilitator will introduce the topic with an overview, engaging participants in a brief discussion about the topic and its relevance to the ongoing implementation of these practices. The facilitator may also choose to share/review a resource to enhance this discussion.

Ideas and Resources to Introduce the Five Characteristics of Coaching and Facilitate Discussion:

- Before the session, instruct participants to watch the video: [Evidence-based Practices](#) (MAH Coaching Support, runtime 9:28).
- Before or during the session, have participants read and review the article, [Coaching Quick Reference Guide](#) (Rush & Shelden, 2008). Facilitate a discussion about what the characteristics look like and do not look like in practice.
- Before or during the session, watch the video: [5 Characteristics of Coaching](#) (MAH Coaching Support, runtime 11:10).
- Review the [Coaching in Action Checklist](#) (fidelity tool) and break it down by discussing what each characteristic looks like and does not look like.

- **Reflection and Feedback**

The facilitator will use open-ended questions to engage participants in reflective conversations about their implementation of the five characteristics in their work with families. The facilitator is NOT teaching; instead, the facilitator helps the conversation flow and encourages participants to think more deeply about their observations, perceptions, and practices. The facilitator may also provide feedback to others.

Reflection Questions:

- *How would you summarize the evidence behind this coaching approach?*
- *Which of the five characteristics do you feel most comfortable implementing?*
- *Which of these characteristics do you feel least comfortable implementing? Why?*
- *What does it look like when we use [coaching characteristic]?*
- *When have you used [coaching characteristic] successfully? When was it challenging?*
- *What is your take-away from reading the article/watching the video/reviewing the checklist?*
- *What questions do you still have about the five characteristics of coaching?*



- **Collaborative Problem-Solving, Reflection, and Feedback on Practice**

The facilitator will open up the discussion for participants to share specific situations that they would like to process with the group for brainstorming, problem-solving, and feedback. Participants need to be prepared to share: 1) an overview of the situation and 2) one question for group reflection.



- **Action Planning**

The facilitator will invite participants to share what each person plans to do differently during the time between meetings, based on what was learned/discussed during the meeting. This can be shared verbally by having participants take turns sharing their plans with the group. Action planning can also be captured visually by having each participant write his/her action plan on a sticky note (after verbally sharing it) then attach it to a large sheet of paper. This large group action plan can then be used as a visual reminder during updates at the beginning of the next meeting.

Session 2

Joint Planning



- **Welcome** - *The facilitator welcomes everyone and new participants are introduced.*

Brief Updates on Action Plans from Previous Session

Depending on group size, the facilitator may invite each participant to share an update. Or, if the group is large or time is limited, the facilitator may ask for volunteers to share their updates. Participants are invited to share celebrations related to their plans.



- **Introduce Topic: Joint Planning**

The facilitator will introduce the topic of joint planning with an overview, engaging participants in a brief discussion about joint planning and its relevance to the ongoing implementation of these practices. The facilitator may also choose to share/review a resource to enhance this discussion.

Ideas and Resources to Introduce Joint Planning and Facilitate Discussion:

- Explain what a joint plan is and how it is a key part of building a caregiver's capacity to implement intervention strategies with his/her child between visits. See the definition of "joint planning" on page 21 in *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook*. See pages 73-75 for more detailed information to guide the discussion.
 - Before or during the session, watch the video: [Building Capacity](#) (MAH Coaching Support, runtime 17:25).
 - Discuss the video, using the following reflection questions:
 - *What do you think about what was shared in the video?*
 - *How does this match with what you know about recommended practices in early intervention?*
 - *How would you explain the concept of "building capacity" to a family? To a referral source? To a new colleague?*
 - *How does capacity building relate to the use of a joint plan with families?*
- **Reflection and Feedback**
The facilitator will use open-ended questions to engage participants in reflective conversations about implementing joint planning when working with families. The facilitator is NOT teaching; instead, the facilitator helps the conversation flow and encourages participants to think more deeply about their observations, perceptions, and practices. The facilitator may also provide feedback to others.

Reflection Questions:

- *How comfortable do you feel with joint planning?*
- *If you are uncomfortable with joint planning, why?*
- *What does it look like when you implement joint planning at the end of a visit?*
- *What does it look like when you revisit the joint plan from the previous visit?*
- *When have you used joint planning successfully? When was it challenging?*
- *How do you envision using joint planning with child care providers?*
- *What would you do if the family did not follow through on the joint plan?*

- *What is your take-away from this discussion?*
- *What questions do you still have about joint planning?*



- **Collaborative Problem-Solving, Reflection, and Feedback on Practice**

The facilitator will open up the discussion for participants to share specific situations that they would like to process with the group for brainstorming, problem-solving, and feedback. Participants need to be prepared to share: 1) an overview of the situation and 2) one question for group reflection.



- **Action Planning**

The facilitator will invite participants to share what each person plans to do differently during the time between meetings, based on what was learned/discussed during the meeting. This can be shared verbally by having participants take turns sharing their plans with the group. Action planning can also be captured visually by having each participant write his/her action plan on a sticky note (after verbally sharing it) then attach it to a large sheet of paper. This large group action plan can then be used as a visual reminder during updates at the beginning of the next meeting.

Session 3

Observation



- **Welcome** - *The facilitator welcomes everyone and new participants are introduced.*

Brief Updates on Action Plans from Previous Session

Depending on group size, the facilitator may invite each participant to share an update. Or, if the group is large or time is limited, the facilitator may ask for volunteers to share their updates. Participants are invited to share celebrations related to their plans.



- **Introduce Topic: Observation**

The facilitator will introduce the topic of observation with an overview, engaging participants in a brief discussion about observation and its relevance to the ongoing implementation of these practices. The facilitator may also choose to share/review a resource to enhance this discussion.

Ideas and Resources to Introduce Observation and Facilitate Discussion:

- Explain what observation is when used within the context of coaching. See the definition of “observation” on page 21 in *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook*.
 - Discuss the two different types of observation: 1) observation of the coachee by the coach, and 2) observation of the coach by the coachee, to include intentional modeling. See pages 61–64 for more detailed information to guide the discussion.
 - Before or during the session, watch the video: [Tips for Engaging Coachees](#) (MAH Coaching Support, runtime 13:28).
 - Discuss the video, using the following reflection questions:
 - *What do you think about what was shared in the video?*
 - *How does this match with what you know about recommended practices in early intervention?*
 - *Dr. Shelden said “...ask before I share, watch before I try, or before I demonstrate” (at 5:15 min in the video). Why is this important when working with families? How does taking the time to observe help us build the caregiver’s capacity to facilitate their child’s development during daily activities?*
- **Reflection and Feedback**
The facilitator will use open-ended questions to engage participants in reflective conversations about implementing observation when working with families. The facilitator is NOT teaching; instead, the facilitator helps the conversation flow and encourages participants to think more deeply about their observations, perceptions, and practices. The facilitator may also provide feedback to others.

Reflection Questions:

- *How comfortable do you feel observing families?*
- *If you are uncomfortable with observation, why?*
- *What does it look like when we implement observation?*
- *When have you used observation successfully? When was it challenging?*

- *What would you do if the caregiver seemed uncomfortable with being observed? Or with trying a strategy you modeled for him/her?*
- *What is your take-away from this discussion?*
- *What questions do you still have about observation?*



- **Collaborative Problem-Solving, Reflection, and Feedback on Practice**

The facilitator will open up the discussion for participants to share specific situations that they would like to process with the group for brainstorming, problem-solving, and feedback. Participants need to be prepared to share: 1) an overview of the situation and 2) one question for group reflection.



- **Action Planning**

The facilitator will invite participants to share what each person plans to do differently during the time between meetings, based on what was learned/discussed during the meeting. This can be shared verbally by having participants take turns sharing their plans with the group. Action planning can also be captured visually by having each participant write his/her action plan on a sticky note (after verbally sharing it) then attach it to a large sheet of paper. This large group action plan can then be used as a visual reminder during updates at the beginning of the next meeting.

Session 3

Action/Practice



- **Welcome** - *The facilitator welcomes everyone and new participants are introduced.*

Brief Updates on Action Plans from Previous Session

Depending on group size, the facilitator may invite each participant to share an update. Or, if the group is large or time is limited, the facilitator may ask for volunteers to share their updates. Participants are invited to share celebrations related to their plans.



- **Introduce Topic: Action/Practice**

The facilitator will introduce the topic of action/practice with an overview, engaging participants in a brief discussion about action/practice and its relevance to the ongoing implementation of these practices. The facilitator may also choose to share/review a resource to enhance this discussion.

Ideas and Resources to Introduce Action/Practice and Facilitate Discussion:

- Explain what action/practice is when used within the context of coaching. See the definition of “action/practice” on page 21 in *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook*.
 - Discuss the different types of action: 1) practice by the coachee, and 2) active participation by the coachee. See pages 64-65 for more detailed information to guide the discussion.
 - Before or during the session, watch the video: [Action – Practice and Modeling](#) (MAH Coaching Support, runtime 12:19).
 - Review the seven steps of modeling, which are outlined on pages 62-63 and are discussed in the above video.
 - Discuss the video, using the following reflection questions:
 - *What do you think about what was shared in the video?*
 - *How does this match with what you know about recommended practices in early intervention?*
 - *How is observation, which was introduced at the last session, related to modeling?*
 - *What is the difference between intentional modeling and hopeful modeling?*
 - *Which of the 7 steps of modeling are you already using? Which steps do you want to add to your practice?*
- **Reflection and Feedback**
The facilitator will use open-ended questions to engage participants in reflective conversations about implementing action/practice when working with families. The facilitator is NOT teaching; instead, the facilitator helps the conversation flow and encourages participants to think more deeply about their observations, perceptions, and practices. The facilitator may also provide feedback to others.

Reflection Questions:

- *How comfortable do you feel with facilitating the caregiver's action/practice?*
- *How comfortable are you with using intentional modeling?*
- *If you are uncomfortable with action/practice, why?*
- *What does it look like when we implement action/practice? When we intentionally model a new strategy?*
- *When have you facilitated action/practice successfully? When was it challenging?*
- *What would you do if the caregiver seemed uncomfortable with trying a strategy you modeled for him/her?*
- *What is your take-away from this discussion?*
- *What questions do you still have about action/practice?*



- **Collaborative Problem-Solving, Reflection, and Feedback on Practice**

The facilitator will open up the discussion for participants to share specific situations that they would like to process with the group for brainstorming, problem-solving, and feedback. Participants need to be prepared to share: 1) an overview of the situation and 2) one question for group reflection.



- **Action Planning**

The facilitator will invite participants to share what each person plans to do differently during the time between meetings, based on what was learned/discussed during the meeting. This can be shared verbally by having participants take turns sharing their plans with the group. Action planning can also be captured visually by having each participant write his/her action plan on a sticky note (after verbally sharing it) then attach it to a large sheet of paper. This large group action plan can then be used as a visual reminder during updates at the beginning of the next meeting.

Session 5

Feedback and Reflection



- **Welcome** - *The facilitator welcomes everyone and new participants are introduced.*

Brief Updates on Action Plans from Previous Session

Depending on group size, the facilitator may invite each participant to share an update. Or, if the group is large or time is limited, the facilitator may ask for volunteers to share their updates. Participants are invited to share celebrations related to their plans.



- **Introduce Topic: Feedback and Reflection**

The facilitator will introduce the topics of feedback and reflection with an overview, engaging participants in a brief discussion about feedback and reflection and their relevance to the ongoing implementation of these practices. The facilitator may also choose to share/review a resource to enhance this discussion.

Ideas and Resources to Introduce Feedback and Reflection and Facilitate Discussion:

- Explain what feedback and reflection are when used within the context of coaching. See the definitions on pages 21-22 in *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook*.
- Discuss the different types of feedback and different types of reflective questions. See pages 65-72 for more detailed information to guide the discussion.
- Before or during the session, watch the video: [Sharing My Expertise](#) (MAH Coaching Support, runtime 10:31).
- Discuss the video, using the following reflection questions:
 - *What do you think about what was shared in the video?*
 - *How does this match with what you know about recommended practices in early intervention?*
 - *How does this match (or not match) with what you were taught in school/graduate school about your role with “clients” and families?*
- Before or during the session, watch the video: [Reflection and Reflective Questions](#) (MAH Coaching Support, runtime 12:29).
- Discuss the video, using the following reflection questions:
 - *What do you think about what was shared in the video?*
 - *How does the use of reflection match with the mission of early intervention, as described in the document, [Agreed Upon Mission and Key Principles for Providing Early Intervention Services in Natural Environments?](#) (If participants are unfamiliar with this document, provide copies and ask them to read the document before reflecting on it.)*

- **Reflection and Feedback**

The facilitator will use open-ended questions to engage participants in reflective conversations about implementing feedback and reflection when working with families. The facilitator is NOT teaching; instead, the facilitator helps the conversation flow and encourages participants to think more deeply about their observations, perceptions, and practices. The facilitator may also provide feedback to others.

Reflection Questions:

- *How comfortable are you with providing feedback?*
- *How comfortable do you feel with facilitating reflection?*
- *If you are uncomfortable with feedback or reflection, why?*
- *What does it look like when you provide feedback during an EI visit? When you facilitate reflection with a caregiver?*
- *When have you used feedback and reflection successfully? When was it challenging?*
- *Which types of feedback do you already provide to caregivers? Which types do you want to add to your practice?*
- *Which reflection questions have you used before? Under what circumstances have you used them?*
- *What is your take-away from this discussion?*
- *What questions do you still have about feedback and reflection?*



- **Collaborative Problem-Solving, Reflection, and Feedback on Practice**

The facilitator will open up the discussion for participants to share specific situations that they'd like to process with the group for brainstorming, problem-solving, and feedback. Participants need to be prepared to share: 1) an overview of the situation and 2) one question for group reflection.



- **Planning for the Future**

Wrap up the group by inviting participants to share what they plan to do differently after participating in these sessions. Encourage them to consider how they will maintain their new or enhanced practices now that the sessions are finished.

NOTE: If it would benefit the group, the facilitator may break Session 5 into two separate sessions. Session 5 could focus on feedback and Session 6 could focus on reflection.

Additional Resources

[Coaching Support Videos](#)

Making Access Happen

Visit this site for free videos of Dr. Dathan Rush and Dr. M’Lisa Shelden speaking about coaching practices.

[Early Intervention Strategies for Success Blog](#)

Search the blog using the key word “coaching” or access [“Coaching Practices”](#) under Article Categories.

[The Family, Infant and Preschool Program \(FIPP\) – Publications](#)

Visit this site for many free articles on coaching.

[Virginia’s Coaching Facilitation Guide](#)

This guide is designed to help master coaches, supervisors, local system managers, and other coaching leaders facilitate a book study or staff activities to support ongoing use of coaching practices. It is written to align with *The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook* (Rush & Shelden, 2011) and includes instructions, handouts, answer keys, and links for a wide variety of activities.

[Virginia Early Intervention Professional Development Center](#)

Visit the following topic pages for articles, archived webinars, tools, and other resources:

- [Adult Learning & Early Intervention](#)
- [Coaching in Early Intervention](#)
- [Implementing Supports and Services](#)