

Vanderbilt Home Visit Script

R. A. McWilliam © 2004

Directions

The purpose of the Home Visit Script is to give home visitors in early intervention a structure for providing support-based home visits, attending to functional needs of families and the children in those families. It supports professionals in using an alternative to a hands-on, activity-based approach (i.e., “the toy bag approach”) that implies that the visitor is directly helping the child’s development. The script instead gives the home visitor a guide for talking to the family about the many dimensions of child and family life that are part of early intervention in natural environments.

The process is applicable for all disciplines—for professionals from all backgrounds who are providing comprehensive home visits. Such home visits are generally conducted by professionals serving in a primary-service-provider, primary coach, or transdisciplinary role. Professionals who make discipline-specific home visits (e.g., a physical therapist providing physical therapy only during home visits) might need to adapt the script. The script is very applicable for service coordinators.

Throughout the home visit, the home visitor should provide the following evidence-based emotional support (McWilliam, Tocci, & Harbin, 1998):

- Positiveness about the child and other family members
- Responsiveness to family’s overt or covert requests
- Orientation to the whole family, especially the well-being of the primary caregiver
- Friendliness: Treat the family as you would treat neighbors
- Sensitivity: Walk in the family’s shoes

At any time in the home visit, it is likely to be appropriate to stop and provide information about how to do something with the child (in the context of discussing regular routines, of course), as prompted in the script.

Script Overview

1. How have things been going?
2. Do you have anything new you want to ask me about?
3. How have things been going with each IFSP outcome, in priority order?
4. Is there a time of day that’s not going well for you?
5. How is [family member] doing?
6. Have you had any appointments in the past week? Any coming up?
7. Do you have enough or too much to do with [your child]?

General Well-Being

How have things been going?

The opening question is open ended to give the family an opportunity to set the agenda for the visit.

Follow-Up Prompts

1. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
2. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
3. *Should we try to solve this?*
4. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

New Questions or Concerns

Do you have anything new you want to ask me about?

This question is a little more specific, giving the family an opportunity to think about new issues, skills, problems, and so on.

Follow-Up Prompts

5. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
6. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
7. *Should we try to solve this?*
8. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

Outcomes in Priority Order

The outcomes should be functional needs the family has identified. This is best accomplished through some form of routines-based assessment, such as the Routines-Based Interview (McWilliam, 1992), instead of or in addition to developmental assessment. This type of assessment tends to result in 6-10 quite specific, functional, child and family outcomes. It is helpful to have families put their outcomes in priority order. Child outcomes are always discussed in the context of routines.

How have things been going with [Priority No. 1]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

9. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage

Notes

10. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
11. *Should we try to solve this?*
12. *Would you like me to show you?*

How have things been going with [Priority No. 2]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

13. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
14. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
15. *Should we try to solve this?*
16. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

How have things been going with [Priority No. 3]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

17. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
18. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
19. *Should we try to solve this?*
20. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

How have things been going with [Priority No. 4]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

21. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
22. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
23. *Should we try to solve this?*
24. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

How have things been going with [Priority No. 5]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 25. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 26. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 27. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 28. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

How have things been going with [Priority No. 6]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 29. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 30. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 31. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 32. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

How have things been going with [Priority No. 7]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 33. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 34. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 35. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 36. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

How have things been going with [Priority No. 8]?

Discuss this in the context of routines.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 37. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 38. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 39. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 40. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

Problematic Routines

Is there a time of day that's not going well for you?

This question provides the family an opportunity to discuss a routine that continues to be or has become unsatisfactory.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 41. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 42. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 43. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 44. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

Other Family Members

How is [family member] doing?

This question reinforces to the family that you understand that the child lives in the context of a whole family.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 45. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 46. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 47. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 48. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

Appointments

Have you had any appointments in the past week? Any coming up?

These questions help the family organize the information they receive from other professionals and questions they might want to ask other professionals.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 49. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 50. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 51. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 52. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes

Work Load Related to Intervention

Do you have enough or too much to do with [your child]?

This question demonstrates your sensitivity and responsiveness.

Follow-Up Prompts

- 53. The 4 Es: Ears (listen), Elicit (ask), Empathize, Encourage
- 54. *Do you need any information to help with this?*
- 55. *Should we try to solve this?*
- 56. *Would you like me to show you?*

Notes