



### TITLE

“Coaching approaches in early intervention and paediatric rehabilitation”.  
A Review Published in 2020 in Developmental Medicine and Child Neurology.

### ***What you need to know (background):***

Systematic reviews have indicated that parental involvement in early intervention is associated with better outcome for the infant and family. A strategy to foster family involvement is coaching. Schirin Akhbari Ziegler and Mijna Hadders-Algra identified that there is ambiguity in the way coaching is defined in the literature. This hampers the implementation of this approach in Early Childhood.

### ***What is this research about?***

This paper aims to;

- (1) discuss inconsistencies in definitions and terminology of coaching used
- (2) highlight the impact of these inconsistencies on the implementation of coaching and
- (3) suggest possibilities available to promote successful implementation of coaching in early childhood interventions

### ***What did the researchers do?***

The authors reviewed current literature relating to coaching in ECI, specifically looking at how coaching is defined and the challenges faced in implementation.

### ***What did the researchers find?***

#### • **Inconsistencies in the definition of Coaching**

- Training vs coaching
- Training – professionals instruct/ demonstrate pre-determined intervention strategies. Studies show improvements in child development but no focus on family outcomes (quality of life, self-efficacy, empowerment, reduced stress).
- Coaching – professionals use FC principles. Strategies include joint planning, observation, action/practice, reflection and reciprocal feedback.  
Aims - increase family participation in intervention  
- families to make informed decisions.

Studies show improved child and family outcomes.

- Goal, Activity, Motor Enrichment (GAME) and Small Steps programmes are a blend of 2 approaches. Both have been shown to improve child outcomes but do not show any effect on maternal wellbeing.
- The authors maintain that the term 'coaching' should be reserved for relationship-directed family centred intervention.

- **Challenges in the implementation of coaching**

- Insufficient implementation of coaching in Relationship-Directed FCI
- Behaviour change to shift from advice giver to facilitator which is challenging for health professionals
- Lack of knowledge – coaching strategies need to be explicitly learnt and practised. Requires knowledge of adult learning principles.
- Translation of knowledge into practice – requires ample opportunities for active listening, flexible provision of information and reflection.
- Summary of attitudes/beliefs, knowledge and skills required for successful implementation of coaching.

- **Possibilities for Improving implementation**

- Opportunities for health professionals to reflect on their own attitudes and beliefs
- Ample opportunity to practice skills and “unlearn” strong habits.
- Guidance, supervision and support.
- Substantial professional education time (> 4 days) - reflects the complexity of the knowledge and skills.
- Most successful methods of education - lectures on theoretical knowledge, video clips, role play and articulation of attitudes/ beliefs but **must include** opportunity for supervised practice in everyday work setting for effective translation into practice.

### ***How can you use this research?***

Researchers - clarity of “coaching” will lead to more homogenous body of knowledge. Authors looked at 3 reviews on coaching and highlighted missing information such as clear definition of the term, theoretical underpinnings, analysis of the components and link to success and the lack of outcome measures.

Practitioners - increases knowledge of coaching practice and the link to Relationship-Directed Family Centred Intervention (RD-FCI). Alleviates confusion surrounding coaching and highlights what it is not (ie difference between parent training and parent coaching).

Educators - provides clear information on the attitudes/beliefs, knowledge and skills required and the best methods for educating professionals/ensuring knowledge translation.

***Where to from here:***

- Systematic reviews
  - Schwellnus H, King G, Thompson L. Client-centred coaching in the paediatric health professions: a critical scoping review. *Disabil Rehabil* 2015; 37: 1305-15.
  - Ward R, Reynolds JE, Pieterse B, Elliot C, Boyd R, Miller L. Utilisation of coaching practices in early interventions in children at risk of developmental disability/delay: a systematic review. *Disabil Rehabil* 2019 Apr 25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09638288.2019.158146>
  - Kemp P, Turnbull AP. Coaching with parents in early intervention: an interdisciplinary research synthesis. *Infant Young Child* 2014; 27: 305-24.
- [The Early Childhood Coaching Handbook](#) (Rush, Shelden & Dunn, 2001)
- Other related topics – Family Centred Practice, Relationship-Directed ECI, Adult learning.
- [Summary table](#)

***About the researchers:***

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**This Research Snapshot was prepared by Paula Buttigieg, PRECI committee member and Occupational Therapist April 2022**

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***'In the spirit of reconciliation PRECI acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today. '***