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SPED 854

Case Study Reflection

**Case Study 1**:

You are having your first IEP meeting with a new family. The records you have indicate that they are primarily Spanish-speaking, so you have arranged for a language interpreter. The father states that he understands some English. During the visit, he chooses to serve as the interpreter and relays the information, as he understands it, to his wife. As a result, you find yourself being misunderstood, misinterpreted, and misquoted by the father, and you are, therefore, unable to ensure that both the father and the mother are receiving accurate information. Holding the conversation in English seems to hold a special purpose to the father (adapted from Chen, Chan, Brekken, Lynch, & Valverde, 1993).

1. What do you see as the problems in this case?

There is one overarching issue in this case study and that is how the father steps in and serves as the interpreter. In doing so, this provides opportunity for misunderstandings and miscommunications since he may not understand some English as well as not understand the technical terms used during the IEP meetings. Further, an issue is that I do not have any experience in Spanish. I need to keep in mind any bias I may unknowingly have and ensure I respect the family and their culture.

1. What are some possible ideas for addressing or resolving the problems?

Here are some possible ideas for addressing or resolving this issue. The person in the meeting (teacher) can use simple sentences and basic vocabulary, pause often, check for understanding, create an agenda prior, and allow time for the parents to ask questions. Prior to the meeting, the teacher can create an agenda to guide the conversation as well as teach the technical terms that may arise. Additionally, I can ask the parents ways they would like me to support them and the language differences we hold. It’s important for me to realize that we are a team.

1. What potential solution would you try and why?

In this situation, I would attempt to use all of the suggestions for solutions so that I am doing all I can to assist comprehension and understanding. If I see these solutions are not helpful, I may even recommend an outside interpreter to ensure the communication success of our meeting. Since having the meeting in English is important to the family, I want to respect their needs and wants by doing my part fully to build a strong relationship between me and the parents.

**Case Study 2:**

You are going to have your first IEP meeting with a Russian family. The family members speak some English but are not fluent. You want the meeting to go well and to be a positive beginning to your partnership with the family.

1. How will you plan and structure the meeting to accomplish your goals?

In order to plan and structure the meeting to accomplish my goals, I would first research and determine an interpreter for the Russian language. This is to be proactive and hopefully prevent any communication errors. Second, I would also do background research on Russian language so as to try and understand any that is spoken during the meeting. I may even get a translation book to keep on hand! Further, so that the family understands my expectations, I’ll send a letter home introducing myself, explaining the purpose of the meeting, and an agenda. This will allow the family to prepare any questions and bring concerns/excitement to the meeting. The letter I send home will have two versions: Russian and English.

1. What things *should*and*should not* take place during the meeting to accomplish your goals?

There are a few things that should and should not take place during this meeting. Of the things that should take place, there should be a guideline or agenda to facilitate the meeting and help throughout with participation and questions. This visual will allow pauses for questions and checks for understanding as well as opportunities for the family to participate and feel included. This guideline or agenda should be clear and concise, easy to follow along, and in simple words or phrases. Any technical or educational terms should be listed as well as easily understood definitions. I also will provide space for note taking as many topics can and may be discussed about the student. Of things that should not take place are relying on the student for interpretation and communicating crucial information. This is why a certified, outside interpreter will be provided. Also, we should not rely on the family to interpret the information alone as they are not fluent in English. Further, I should make sure to listen and clarify any questions I am asked since they may not be using words or jargon I am accustomed to. Restating and phrasing what is spoken can help prevent misquoting or misinterpreting information. It is important to prepare for and find solutions for the family’s concerns, questions, goals, and wishes for their student and articulate how I have their child in mind and want them to be successful as well.