



Facilitating a Problem-Solving Approach for Families

Utilizing consistent problem-solving strategies can help families become more autonomous and self-reliant. Families can practice basic steps of problem-solving in many intervention activities so that they can effectively deal with future concerns. The basic steps include:

- **Defining the concern/problem- What is the concern/problem?**

Family teams need to learn to be specific, to get to the "root" of the problem or concern. Questions that may help them focus on the specifics include:

- * What's demanding my attention?
- * What demands are really most pressing?
- * What will happen if I don't deal with these?
- * What do I most hope to preserve, achieve, attain or avoid?
- * What would I like to do, do more, or do better?
- * What have I been trying unsuccessfully to avoid?
- * What are my priorities?
- * What kind of risk-taker am I?
- * What risks are worth it? What risks are necessary?
- * What are my "bottom-line" goals or concerns?
- * What must change immediately for our family to move forward?

- **Identifying the data - What are the facts?**

- * What's the real essence of this mess?
- * What concerns or opportunities must be addressed first?
- * What do I really know to be fact about this mess? When does it occur? How often? Where? With whom?
- * What patterns do I see in these data?
- * What's already been tried? With what results?
- * What might I have overlooked? What else?
- * When am I concerned? When is it on my mind? Where?
- * What feelings, hunches, impressions, ideas, questions or observations might be involved?
- * What information do I have? Must I get? Would I like?

- **Generating ideas - What things can I (we) do?**

- * How might this problem be solved?
- * What's my greatest fantasy about how to do this?
- * What would I do if there were no obstacles?
- * Can I visualize or imagine solutions?
- * How might I use some ideas or objects from a totally different context or purpose?
- * Which alternatives are most appealing? Attractive? Least intrusive?
- * What ideas deserve closer examination or consideration?
- * What ideas offer me the best chance to do something?
- * What ideas surprised me or caught my attention?
- * What options suggest new and promising ways to solve this problem?
- * What ideas do I really like best?



- **Choosing solutions - Which is the best?**
 - * What factors or criteria might be considered?
 - * Ease of implementation?
 - * Resources necessary available?
 - * Expense?
 - * Time?
 - * Intrusiveness to other family members?
 - * What standards or "yardsticks" might be applied to these ideas?
 - * How might we determine the strengths or weaknesses of these ideas?
 - * How might interesting ideas be made stronger or better?
 - * What criteria are most important and necessary to use?
 - * What solutions can be combined to improve outcomes?

- **Developing the plan - Who will do what, when?**
 - * How might we take these actions?
 - * What might be sources of assistance or resistance?
 - * What might make action easier to take? More difficult?
 - * What are some possible obstacles, objections or concerns?
 - * Who or what could make your action a "breeze"?
 - * What might go right? So what?
 - * What might go wrong? So what?
 - * Who will help? How will their support be gained?
 - * What specific actions are necessary? What should I do within 24 hours? What sequence of steps should be planned?
 - * How will we monitor and document progress?
 - * What are the most important steps to prevent problems?
 - * What are the most likely contingent steps, if problems arise?

- **Evaluating the plan - What happened?**
 - * How will we know when we get there?
 - * Did it work?
 - * What changes were necessary?