EC-K3: Awareness of health care providers, social services and other resources available in the community to assist families

EC-K4: Understanding of the paraprofessional’s role in enhancing interactions between parent(s) and child by using and demonstrating effective techniques and materials to stimulate cognitive, physical, social and speech/language development under the direction of a licensed professional.

EC-S4: Ability to communicate and work effectively with parents, primary caregivers, and education team (IFSP, IIP, and IEP) members to meet the needs of the child and family.

Family Systems Theory

(Lesson 2)

In this lesson, you learned that it is impossible to separate children from the context of the family, the community, and society as a whole. Family systems theory helps us understand how different family members function within a family, and how the family interacts with outside agencies and individuals. To help you better understand family systems theory, this activity will guide you to reflect on your own family system. Think about your family and the many outside influences on your life when you were a child, and answer the following questions:

1. Describe the makeup of your family when you were a child. What roles did different family members take on within the family?

2. How did family members relate to one another, and what patterns of interactions do you remember?
3. Describe the set of beliefs and values that was held by your family. How do you think this belief system may have affected child-rearing practices or child behavior in your family?

4. It is important to remember that families are part of a larger ecology. Identify influences of culture and society, places, people, and events that had a large impact on your family system. For example, this might include a daycare center, a church, the public health system, or a piece of legislation. Think of at least three outside influences that impacted your family system and your development, and list them below.

5. Why do you think it is important for early childhood educators to consider children within the context of the family, the community, and society as a whole? What might happen if educators do not consider family and outside influences on young children?