

# Evaluation of a Family Engagement Tool for Early Supports & Services



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## Introduction



This project was developed in collaboration with **New Hampshire Family Voices (NHFV)** and **NH Family-Centered Early Support and Services (FCESS)**. The purpose of this project was to assess whether family engagement goals were being assisted by the use of the “How to Find Your Way” visual through the early supports and services processing including during the intake, evaluation, and developing the individual family support plan (IFSP).

NHFV is part of a national organization, Family Voices, whose mission is to provide free, confidential services to families and professionals caring for children with chronic conditions and/or disabilities.



The Bureau for Family-Centered Services (BFCS) administers FCESS, which is New Hampshire’s Part C Early Intervention program that is delivered through non-profit agencies located throughout the state of NH.

## Previous Year’s Projects

- **2019:** Trainees developed a data collection tool used during observations of evaluation/Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP) meetings conducted by agencies that provide FCESS. The “How to Find Your Way” visual was developed (see below).
- **2020:** A questionnaire was developed to determine if the visual was being used and the usefulness of the visual when it was used. They also gathered information around family engagement and if families were understanding their role as part of the FCESS team.
- **2021:** Trainees interviewed families going through the FCESS process for feedback on the “How to Find Your Way” visual developed in 2019. The trainees adapted questions from the 2020 trainees to gather their data, and the result was a modified list of questions for use during our project.

## How to Find Your Way Visual

The visual is a mountain range with a path leading up to a peak. The path is divided into four stages: Referral, Intake, Eligibility Evaluation, and IFSP Implementation. Each stage has a corresponding icon and a brief description of what happens during that step.

## Methods

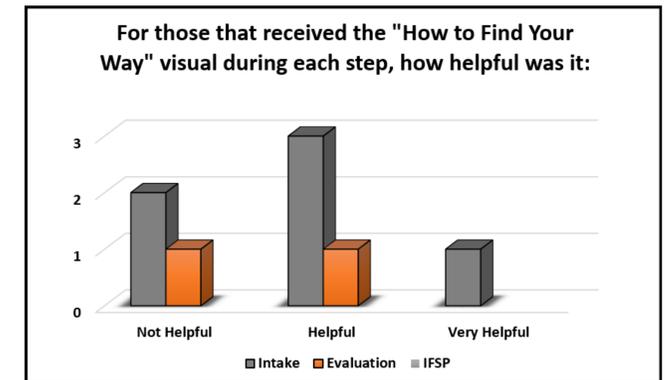
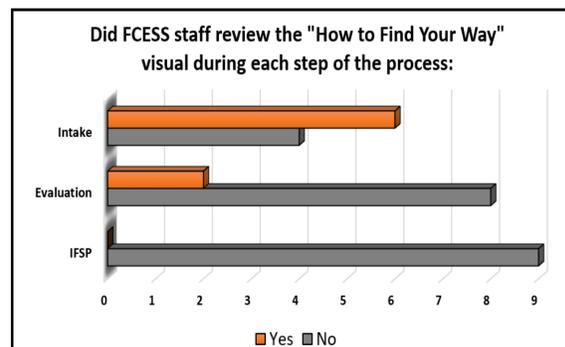
- 11 out of 30 participants were interviewed (i.e., 37% response rate).
  - All were contacted via email, telephone, and text message.
- All interviews were conducted via Zoom and telephone, despite offering in-person options.
- An excel template with questions developed by the 2021 trainees was used to gather quantitative and qualitative data for each interview.

Rating 1. (Not Helpful)	Rating 2. (Helpful)	Rating 3. (Very Helpful)	Question: On a scale of 1-3 how helpful was the visual.	Y	N	Notes/Comments
N/A			Did you receive the "HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY" visual prior to your intake meeting?			
			Did the FCESS intake staff review the "HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY" visual during your intake meeting and explain the three areas (intake, eligibility evaluation, and IFSP) in the process?			
			How helpful was the visual to understand your role during the intake process?			
			Were your questions answered while reviewing the visual during the intake meeting?			
N/A			Did the FCESS evaluators review the "HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY" visual with you prior to your child's Evaluation?			
			While revisiting the visual, did the FCESS evaluators explain your role and participation in your child's evaluation?			
			How helpful was the visual to understand your role during the Evaluation process?			
			Did the visual support and help you engage throughout the evaluation?			
			Were your questions answered while reviewing the visual prior to the evaluation?			
N/A			Did the FCESS evaluators revisit the "HOW TO FIND YOUR WAY" visual with you prior to developing your child's Individual Family Support Plan (IFSP)?			
			While revisiting the visual, did the FCESS evaluators explain your role and participation in developing your child's IFSP?			
			How helpful was the visual to understand your role and the IFSP process?			
			Did the visual support and help you actively engage throughout the process of developing your child's IFSP?			
			Were your questions answered while reviewing the visual prior to the IFSP development?			
N/A			What are your overall thoughts of the visual? Do you have any suggestions for improvements?			

Each interview began with introductions, a brief overview of the LEND program and explaining the purpose of the project and interview. Trainees emphasized that they had no affiliation with the agencies or FCESS.

## Findings

The data collected is reflective of 10 out of the 11 families interviewed. One family had no recollection of if the “How to Find Your Way” visual was used. More than 28 days and 71 different times slots were offered to families to schedule interviews. The data showed that the visual was only reviewed by staff with 6 families during intake and 2 families during evaluation.



There was an overall consensus from those that received the visual that it helped them to understand the process and/or staff were really helpful with answering questions.

## Difficulties Encountered

- **Predetermined Questions** - The questions provided to trainees were organized by each step of the process. If a family didn't remember the visual or if they knew that the visual was not used, it was hard for them to answer.
- **COVID-19** - After two years into the pandemic, families are burnt out, and zoom fatigue may have played a factor. It was difficult to get in contact with participants despite extensive outreach.
- **Coordination of Scheduling** - Coordination of trainee’s schedules to meet families’ schedules proved to be challenging. Zoom was beneficial, and scheduling challenges did not impact the quality and success of interviews.

## Family-Professional Relationship

The family and professional relationship created between the two trainees during this project was beneficial to the outcome. Using perspectives from both family and professional viewpoints allowed for information to be interpreted in a well-rounded way. Integrating both perspectives supported the work toward enhancing the family engagement process.

## Next Steps

- Convert the “How to Find Your Way” visual to the final version.
- Create alternative ways to provide information to families about the FCESS process, such as:
  - A user-friendly website
  - A short video that explains each step of the process
- Consider future projects interviewing families about the transition from an Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) to an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) in the school system.