



## Indicator of Parent-Child Interaction (IPCI) Scoring Definitions

### I. Caregiver Positive Support

- 1. Parent conveys acceptance through positive comments, gentle affectionate touch, and/or smiling.** Simply holding or touching a child in the context of a general routine does not necessarily convey acceptance and therefore would not be an example of this item. Watch for clear signals of acceptance. If a parent gives a verbal and nonverbal message simultaneously, these messages should match and be positive to be an example of this item (e.g., a positive comment with especially flat or negative affect or negative voice tone, or a negative comment in a positive voice tone are NOT examples of conveying acceptance).
- 2. Parent uses descriptive language, imitates child's vocalizations.** For example, the parent describes activities, objects and/or child's behavior or feelings. For young infants, a parent imitates baby's sounds or describes events to a child. This item does Not refer to negative descriptive statements about the child or child's behavior (e.g., "That's mean, Don't be a bad boy, You're going to hurt yourself", etc.). Brief verbal statements to a child that are non-descriptive do not count. When parents are asked to engage in book reading, this item should be rated based on the parent's use of descriptive language and imitation or expanding on child's vocalizations. For the book-showing activity only, simply reading, without any other descriptive comments to the child, is NOT an example of descriptive language.
- 3. Parent follows child lead in shared activities.** Parent may introduce activity and make suggestions, but parent follows child's lead through attending, imitating, joining, turn-taking, and/or commenting appropriately on child's interest. However, the parent does not interrupt the child or redirect child's behavior. Parent may use gestures, words, or actions, consistent with child's focus, which slightly extend child's verbal or nonverbal behavior. Following a child's lead can occur in the context of routines in which a parent may be taking a more active role than in play. For example, a parent who notices and comments on the child's focus and what is happening can be an indicator that the parent is following the child's lead. However, this must be done in a non-intrusive manner to be exemplary of this item.
- 4. Parent introduces voice or materials in novel/interesting ways to maintain or extend child's interest rather than interrupting child's focus or not engaging child.** The parent makes sounds, uses animated voice tone and/or facial expressions, and/or physical demonstration to recruit, maintain, or extend child's interest. The key to identifying the presence of this behavior is that it must be interesting and non-disruptive to the child. Developmental appropriateness of the parent's behavior must be considered when rating this item. In order to rate this item as present, the

behavior described herein must be novel or interesting and it must be developmentally appropriate (i.e., attempts to stimulate development that are far beyond the child's development level are Not included here). Keep in mind for this item that what may be novel or interesting the first time it is introduced, may not continue to be novel/interesting when repeated.

5. If a child shows frustration or distress, does the **parent respond appropriately through the following strategies?**

**(a) If the child shows distress/crying, does the parent use** soothing behaviors that include providing a pacifier, cradling, rocking. With an older child, parent behaviors would include gentle touch, words acknowledging child's feelings, and words of comfort/support. If the child does not exhibit any distress for the parent to respond to, No Opportunity should be checked.

**(b) If the child shows frustration/aversion cues does the parent respond by providing one of the following strategies: slowing pace, using softer voice, providing a brief pause in interaction, or with older infants use appropriate distractions?** Early signs of distress include gaze aversion (turning face or eyes away from when a parent is trying to get child to look at her face or a toy), increased activity level, rapid breathing, and fussy sounds. Watch for parent to respond immediately to these signals by slowing pace, using a softer voice, becoming quiet. With older infants/children, parents may use distraction appropriately (e.g., helping child become interested in another activity). Simply introducing new toys or materials to a young infant (under 6 months) who is showing aversion or distress cues is not an example of appropriate distraction. Similarly, after attempting to introduce a new activity once or twice with an older infant or young child, unless the parent uses another strategy listed herein, repeating this behavior is not an example of appropriate distraction.

**\*\* If the child does not show any aversion/frustration cues or distress, then No Opportunity should be checked. If the child shows aversion/frustration cues but not overt distress such as crying, then rate this item based on the parent's response to aversion/frustration cues. Follow the same principle if the child shows overt distress, but not earlier signals of aversion/frustration. If the child shows both aversion/frustration cues as well as distress and the parent engages in appropriate strategies to one of these (e.g., distress/crying) but not the other (e.g., aversion/frustration cues) and the child provided an opportunity for the parent to respond, this item should be rated less than 4.**

## **II. Caregiver Interruption**

**[\*\*Consider both frequency as well as severity when rating Intrusive/Rejecting Behaviors. If there is a conflict between frequency and severity, use severity to rate the item (e.g., single episodes of a parent calling a child a name, using a derogatory label, or making emotional threats (e.g., I'm going to leave you; I don't want you anymore), or using anything more than the most mild physical force should automatically be coded as severe.**

**1. Parent uses a harsh tone of voice and/or makes critical or rejecting statements.** Remember, for this item, a single critical statement could be scored a 4 if it is severe (e.g., calling the child a name or belittling the child). To score a 1, the statement must be mild.

2. **Parent Uses restrictions/intrusions** (e.g., Restrictions include statements such as "No, Don't, Stop, Quit". They also include vague warnings such as "Watch out", "Be careful". Intrusions include taking things away, unnecessarily controlling child's movement, using physical discipline, or pushing objects in front of a child's face. Remember, this item should be scored a 3 if only 1 restriction is observed but it is severe (e.g., slapping a child's hand, yanking a child away from a toy)

3. **Parent shows disapproval/rejection in response to a child's attempts to get parent's attention.** This item also includes words or gestures that the parent uses to **explicitly** convey that the child is not to interrupt parent or seek parent's attention or physical support (e.g., motioning the child away, saying "Not now" or "I don't want to play with you", pulling away from a child who is seeking a hug, or blatantly ignoring a child's request for help or attention). Remember to consider severity not simply frequency. One severe rejection would be scored a 3. If the child does not seek the parent's attention or approval through gaze, vocalization, comment, soft touch, approach, or smile (hence providing No Opportunity for the parent to respond), No Opportunity should be checked.

### III. Child Positive Engagement

1. **Child provides positive feedback to parent** through positive social signals such as appropriate smiling or laughing, eye contact, vocalizing, words, or gentle touch. For infants under 6 months, this can include simply engaging in joint visual attention. This item does not reflect a child passively looking at a parent who is not engaged with the child. In cases where the child has no opportunity to provide positive feedback to the parent because the parent is physically unavailable (out of range), then No Opportunity should be checked.

2. **Child engages in sustained activity.** Consider both social and non-social engagement with toys or materials. For older infants and young children, the child must be actively engaged (e.g., looking at/turning pages of a book, manipulating objects, etc.). This item does not include an older infant or child sitting and passively watching others interact. **However, for very young infants, this item does include sustained visual attention to toys, materials, or face.** Simply looking around a room is not an example of this item. In cases where a very young child has no opportunity to engage in sustained independent activities because a parent is unavailable to the child, No Opportunity should be checked. Do not check No Opportunity for a mobile child.

3. **When and if the parent attempts to engage the child or requests action, the child follows through** by vocalizing, gesturing, attempting task, or for very young infants, focusing on the parent's face and/or object being shown. This item gets at the extent to which the child follows through and responds to a parent's attempt to engage the child. For young infants this may involve vocalizing and/or focusing on the parent's face and/or an object that the parent is attempting to show the child. For a toddler, it may involve following through with a parent's request for engagement and/or compliance.

#### IV. Child Distress/Reactivity

- 1. Child is overwhelmed by negative affect.** Child's signals may shift rapidly to whimpering, fussing or crying with little warning. Brief, mild fussing in response to an observable stressor is NOT an example of this item. However, if the child becomes overwhelmed by emotion, even if it is due to a clear environmental cue, this should be reflected in the scoring. Consider how the child recovers from stressors. Uncontrollable or inconsolable crying are examples of this item. Difficulty calming after a stressor is also an example of this item.
- 2. Child engages in non-compliance, tantrum, or aggressive behavior (hitting, biting, kicking, throwing objects, spitting, head-banging, screaming, verbal or nonverbal social rejection, name-calling, derogatory language, or threats).** For infants, non-compliance is not considered externalizing behavior. Therefore, to rate the presence of externalizing behavior for infants the behavior must be destructive. This item does not include a child who simply, turns eyes and/or head away from interaction or fails to follow parent instruction without other signals.
- 3. Child startles, flinches, pulls away from the parent or engages in frozen, watchful behavior without joining in interaction.** A child who is simply not engaged in an activity or whose attention shifts to another activity other than what the parent may want the child to focus on is not an example of this item. Watch for behaviors such as flinching, pulling away, frozen/watchful gaze. The behavior should give a clear impression of fear, uncertainty, or avoidance. Even 1 instance of such a clear impression would be scored as 3 for severe. Remember this item is scored according to frequency OR severity.