Developing Independence in the Home

Independent responses – completing a response (doing something) by oneself without help being provided

Independent skills – typically described as a chain of behaviors comprising one whole response

What are NOT independent skills - directed activities, where every step and/or most steps are instructed to do or prompted

Teaching Independent Skills

WHY: Teaching independent skills develops increased independence; improves quality of life; teaches constructive use of free time, develops age appropriate interests; establishes means for interacting socially with peers; increases ability to access community activities; improves self-confidence.

WHAT: Various types of independent skills that may be taught include self-help, routines, leisure, play, and academic.

HOW:

• Step One: Select a skill to teach. Some considerations to keep in mind: what has the most relevant impact on a child's life and family’s life; the child’s preferences; the child’s present level of performance; age appropriateness; peer appropriateness).

• Step Two: Determine what will cue this behavior(s) to happen. Will it be direct instruction (e.g., “Wash your hands”) or a natural occurrence (e.g., flushes toilet cues washing hands)?

• Step Three: Determine what behavior(s) you would like your child to engage. What behaviors are necessary for this skill to be complete? You may perform the task or watch someone else perform the task to determine the necessary behaviors.

• Step Four: Determine how you will prompt to ensure success. What type of prompt is required for the behavior (i.e., physical, gestural, model, proximity, visual, verbal)? Some considerations to keep in mind: learning style of the child; fading prompts

• Step Five: Determine how you will respond to the behavior(s). If the child is correct, provide reinforcement (increases the likelihood of the behavior occurring in the future). If the child is incorrect, provide corrective feedback (provides the student an opportunity to know they are wrong and potentially change their behavior next time).

• Step Six: Teach the skill. Determine a time, location and materials to be used. Give the cue for the behavior chain to start occurring. This might be a direct instruction or a contrived moment. Prompt as necessary. Deliver feedback.