

# Erikson Institute

## FAN APPROACH Facilitating Attuned Interactions

### Overview

- FAN (Facilitating Attuned Interactions) is a conceptual model and practical tool for building relationships and reflective practice. Developed in 2005 as an approach to working with parents of fussy babies, FAN is a meta-framework that is not model specific and is generalizable to the helping relationship in many settings.
- The FAN is used in programs and systems in 19 states and internationally to promote parent engagement and provider/parent collaboration. Last year, over 1,600 professionals working in home visiting, primary care, early intervention, child welfare, early childhood education, early childhood mental health, and youth mentoring were trained in the FAN.

### Theory of Change and Implementation

- FAN is based on the concept of attunement; that is, feeling connected and understood creates the space to learn and to try new ways of relating.
- FAN is a tool for attunement. FAN address parents' concerns by matching the provider's communication to the cues that the parent is showing in the moment and allowing the provider to move flexibly during the parent contact based on the parent's responses.
- FAN identifies five areas for communication: Calming, Feeling, Thinking, Doing, and Reflecting. A unique part of FAN is the first process, Calming or Mindful Self-Regulation, which focuses on the provider's self-awareness by developing the ability to track, regulate and understand his/her own reactions during the contact in order to stay calm and present for the family.
- The four remaining areas require reading the parent's cues and moving flexibly on the FAN as needed. Feeling or Empathic Inquiry is providing emotional support when parents are expressing feelings; Thinking or Collaborative Exploration is used when feelings are contained, and parents want to think together to understand the concern or make a plan; Doing or Capacity Building is used when parents are able to focus and are ready to take in new information or build skills. Reflecting or Integration highlights parent's insights about their child, their parenting or the concerns addressed.
- FAN training prepares providers to identify matches, mismatches, and make repairs in the interaction. A match is when the parent and provider are in the same place on the FAN; the parent is expressing feelings and the provider offers emotional support. A mismatch is when the parent and provider are in different places. The most common mismatch is the parent is in Feelings and the provider has moved too quickly to Doing, giving information that the parent cannot take in or remember given their emotional state. A repair might look like this: "I think I jumped too fast with my ideas about what you could do to help Chris with potty training. You look not so sure. I'd really like to hear how you are feeling about it."

## Impact of FAN Training

- Researchers at Chapin Hall at University of Chicago found that:  
FAN trained home visitors:
  - were more able to read parent's cues
  - focused more on the parent's agenda
  - spent more time in their visits on parenting
  - shifted the focus from "Doing to" to "Doing with" families
  - were calmer in distressing situations.
  - demonstrated increased reflective capacity on the Practitioner Reflective Practice Assessment Scales including increased:
    - Self-regulation: (emotional breathing space, ability to hold uncomfortable emotions, awareness of emotional climate);
    - Collaboration: (inquiry and exploration, resists pressure to fix, attuned to impact of words/actions);
    - Process: (recognizes relationships influence change, attends to process);
    - Authentic Attitude: (openness to information from client/supervisor, curiosity, acceptance of client)
  - reported decreased burnout (Maslach Burnout Inventory)

### FAN Trained Home Visiting Supervisors

- Support home visitors around matching their interactions based on parents' cues
  - Help home visitors recognize and regulate their own feelings during visits
  - Manage their own emotions during supervision
  - Talk less and use more open-ended questions
- Researchers at Erikson and University of Illinois-Chicago found that  
Pediatric residents trained in the FAN
    - Were more empathic with families
    - More aware of their own reactions
    - More able to get to the "real problem" quicker and collaborate to find solutions
    - More satisfied with their communication with parents

## FAN Training

- Erikson Institute offers FAN Training and a FAN Train-the-Trainer Program. FAN Training typically includes on-site Level 1 Core Training (2 days); Level II Reflective Practice (6 months of mentored support); on-site Integration Day; and Community of Practice (quarterly consultation including follow-up activities for one year after training).
- FAN Train-the-Trainer program is typically offered to systems of care; FAN Training is provided in selected states through the Train-the-Trainer Program.
- Training is available on the Practitioner FAN, Supervisor FAN, Consultation FAN, Physician FAN, Group FAN, Child Welfare FAN, and Mentoring FAN
- For a list of references and more information about training, please contact Tori Graham ([tgraham@erikson.edu](mailto:tgraham@erikson.edu)).
- For information on the model and research, contact Linda Gilkerson ([lgilkerson@erikson.edu](mailto:lgilkerson@erikson.edu)).