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RELATIONSHIPS COUNT: A QUALITATIVE CASE STUDY OF A
PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SERIES FOR EARLY INTERVENTIONISTS (173 pp.)

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Early intervention practitioners need professional development opportunities to nurture and sustain strong relationships with the families they serve. Reflective consultation is a form of professional development that addresses a relationship-based approach to service delivery. However, there have been few published empirical studies about the construct of group reflective consultation. The purpose of the qualitative case study of the Relationships Count series was to examine core components and perceived benefits for early interventionists.

The series consisted of monthly group sessions that were facilitated by an infant mental health specialist. The participants included 10 early interventionists from a large Midwestern county. Data collection methods included interviewing four early interventionists and observing, recording, and participating in 10 monthly reflective consultation sessions during 2013-2014. Coding, concept mapping, and comparative analysis of data were used to examine what happened during the series as well as to identify and describe perceived benefits for early interventionists.

The findings indicate core components of facilitation and participation contributed to a relationship-based approach to supporting the professional development of early interventionists. Specifically, the findings indicate that discussion, observation, practice, and experience of a relationship-based approach were associated with perceived

development of competencies including gentle inquiry, reflecting on thoughts and feelings, active listening, supporting without problem-solving, and promoting competence. Early interventionists identified that participation strengthened feelings of competence and confidence in their ability to support children and families. The study contributes to the evidence base of group reflective consultation by linking core components with perceived benefits for early intervention practitioners.