

Bridging the NICU to Home:
A Team-Based Approach to Infant Discharge and Follow-Up Care

Activity 3

The Parent Experience in the NICU





Introduction & Background

01

Family-Centered Care

The foundational philosophy of partnership with families in care.

02

Family-Integrated Care

A defined model of structured parent caregiving roles.

03

The Parent Experience

What these models look like from the family's side.





Family-Centered Care (FCC)

A philosophy of care built on partnership with the family, formalized by the AAP in 2012

● Dignity & Respect

Clinicians honor family perspectives, values, and cultural background in every interaction.

● Information Sharing

Families receive complete, unbiased information in a timely, useful, and affirming manner.

● Participation

Families are supported and encouraged to engage in care and decision-making at their chosen level.

● Collaboration

Families partner with institutions on program development, policy, and professional education.





Family-Integrated Care (FICare)

FCC

Parents are informed partners: consulted, included, and supported in a general participatory role.

FICare

Parents take on structured, defined responsibilities (feeding, cares, charting, rounds) as functioning members of the care team.

Clinical trial evidence comparing family-integrated versus standard family-centered care models has shown:

- Reduced parent stress and anxiety and improved discharge readiness
- Beneficial infant outcomes for weight gain and nosocomial infection
- Higher rates of breastfeeding, shorter hospital length of stay, and less use of emergency services after discharge





The Parent Experience

Key principles that should guide clinician/family interactions in the NICU:

1

Acute stress shapes early learning

In the first days of admission, stress limits how much clinical information a parent can absorb and act on.

2

Readiness governs retention

Education is effective only when it is sequenced to a family's emotional state, not simply to the clinical timeline.

3

Advocacy is a skill, not a trait

With structured support, parents move from *observer* to *informed, confident advocate* over the course of the stay.

