

Vignette 1. Fernando

Fernando is 15 months old and is cared for in the family child care home of Lilia Potter. Fernando's mother, Fatima, and father, Juan, are immigrants from Central America; have little formal education; and speak only minimal English. Lilia, who speaks only English, is pretty sure that both parents understand more English than they can speak, but she is not clear about what they understand. When they drop off and pick up Fernando, they are brought by a social service agency representative and do not stay long. In the morning, when they arrive, Fernando's mother usually does not make eye contact with Lilia as she places Fernando on the carpet in the center of the room. Typically, she does not speak to Fernando and moves quickly out the door as he starts crying. Fernando's father is usually the one to pick him up in the afternoon. He just removes Fernando from whatever he is doing and goes back out the door. Lilia has noticed that if he is fussing when Juan arrives, Fernando stops crying immediately and stays focused as Juan approaches. Lilia usually speaks to both Juan and Fatima, but she has not been able to get them to respond or stop to communicate. The parents do not bring anything, such as a special blanket or toy, for Fernando and take nothing home at the end of the day.

Fernando has been coming to child care less than week but has cried the better part of most of those days. He cries when Lilia puts him down and has done very little other than sleep in her arms. He will eat if she feeds him but does not drink from a cup and does not even take a bottle easily. He looks unhappy most of the time.

Lilia, who takes referrals from a social service program, has agreed to take this toddler on an emergency basis, but is struggling to care for Fernando and the other children in her home. She is wondering how she can build a partnership with the parents to ensure that she will be more able to understand and meet Fernando's needs. She doesn't know how much longer this situation can go on.

Question 1: What questions do you have about this situation?

Question 2: What do you think that Fernando is experiencing?

Question 3: What do you think that Fernando's parents are feeling?

Question 4: What do you think that Lilia is feeling? What do you do when you feel this way?

Question 5: What suggestions do you have for Lilia on how she might find a way to communicate with the parents? What strategies would you use to engage with this family and address Fernando's needs? How might these strategies impact the development of Fernando's social emotional development?