



As a new consultant, you have been paired with a more seasoned consultant to shadow as they go about their day in the role of a consultant and as they provide consultation. Shadowing is an informal way to learn not only the functions of the work of consultant (the what) but also how they go about this work; how they interact with and form relationships with different consultees, how they observe and consider the interactions and relationships between adults and between adults and children, and how they use their preparation and training in adult and child mental health to inform their perspective about the environment and relationships in the early childhood setting.

A critical component of shadowing is debriefing afterwards. Make sure that you and the person that you are shadowing have sufficient time to meet after the shadowing experience to discuss and deconstruct what you observed, why the consultant made the choices s/he did when interacting, what you felt when you were with the consultant. All of these reflections are in the service of you deepening your understanding of the role, of the way of being in the early childhood setting, and as a means of increasing your capacity to reflect on your own experience to inform the work.

HERE IS SOME GUIDANCE TO HELP YOU GET THE MOST OUT OF THIS EXPERIENCE.

PREPARATION

- Have a pre-meeting with the consultant to get a sense of what to expect.
- Read notes or program assessments.
- Review CoE information on the role of a consultant and child and family consultant
- Anticipate what you will do if consultees don't want you to listen in to a consultation, and other moments like this.
- How much of the consultation day will you spend?

SHADOWING

- Be as unobtrusive as possible
- Stay attentive
- Notice/note interactions you want to review—a small notebook may work just fine, a phone for notes may communicate you are not engaged even if you are
- Pay special attention to moments you wonder about or are curious about why the consultant selected a particular thing to say or do.
- Pay attention to how you feel during the consultation.

ARRIVE AT THE SETTING

- Consider your presence in this setting; how will having a notebook and taking notes feel to consultees that don't know you?
- How will you introduce yourself?

DEBRIEFING

- Find a quiet, private place to connect with the consultant.
- Allow sufficient time together to consider multiple layers of the experience you just had
- Be ready to take notes to retain reflections/considerations.
- Start by exploring whether this was a typical day for the consultant—why or why not?

