

**Stages of Response**

**Shock** - The initial response to the birth of an infant with a disability is shock.

**Realization** - During the stage of realization, parents come to understand the actual demands and constraints that will come with raising their child with a disability.

**Defensive Retreat** - Defensive retreat is the stage in which parents attempt to avoid dealing with the anxiety producing realities of their child’s condition.

**Acknowledgment** - Acknowledgment is the stage in which parents are able to mobilize their strengths to confront the conditions created by having a child who is exceptional.

- Parents of children with disabilities appear to experience common feelings and reactions but they often differ in terms of intensity, relationship to specific stages, and the eventual adjustment made individually and as a family.
- Some parents may go through distinct periods of adjustment while others may adjust without passing through any identifiable sequence of stages.
- The process of adjustment is continuous and distinctively individual.
Family Support Services

Policymakers and program providers are beginning to realize the important role that family plays in the development and care of a child with a disability. Public Law 99–457 now requires an individual family service plan (IFSP) describing the roles of parents, siblings, and other extended family members as well as the provision of support services. Family support services are directed at several goals:

a. Enhancing the caregiving capacity of the family

b. Giving parents and other family members respites from the often tedious and unrelenting demands of caring for a child with a disability

c. Assisting the family with persistent financial demands related to the child’s disability

d. Providing valuable training to families, extended family members, neighbors, and friends

e. Improving the quality of life for all family members