

Gerald Mahoney<sup>1</sup>

# Relationship Focused Intervention (RFI): Enhancing the Role of Parents in Children's Developmental Intervention

## Abstract

*This article describes Relationship Focused Intervention (RFI) which attempts to promote the development of young children with developmental delays and disabilities by encouraging parents to engage in highly responsive interactions during daily routines with their children. This approach to intervention is based upon the Parenting Model of child development and was derived from research on parent-child interaction. Evidence is presented that RFI can be effective both at helping parents to learn how to interact more responsively with their children as well as at promoting children's development and social emotional function. The argument is made, that although there is no research comparing the effectiveness of RFI to interventions derived from the Educational model of child development which places less emphasis on parent involvement and stresses direct instructional activities, still the effectiveness of all interventions appears to be related to the degree to which parents are involved in and become more responsive with their children. As such RFI may not simple be an alternative model for early intervention, but may reflect a paradigm shift pointing to the effectiveness of parent involvement and responsive interaction as key elements of early intervention practice.*

*Keywords: Relationship focused intervention, developmental delays and disabilities, parents, young children.*

---

<sup>1</sup> Prof., Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, USA 44106, [gjm14@case.edu](mailto:gjm14@case.edu)