

Direct2Caregiver



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This paper discusses how the FIND team at the University of Oregon partnered with the Hemera Foundation to conduct a series of design and testing sprints to improve the product quality of a remote adaptation of FIND. Through these testing sprints, the Direct2Caregiver team gained meaningful insights around how to adapt the core FIND model to better address specific challenges of individual caregivers.

Taking a Caregiver Focused Approach

Imagine you're the parent of a young child and seeking advice around their behavior or development. Where do you turn for support? The Filming Interactions to Nurture Development (FIND) team at the University of Oregon asked parents this very question through a project known as Direct2Caregiver (D2C). Many responded they sought advice from family members, friends, doctors, and most commonly, the internet. While these can all be great resources, the D2C team saw an opportunity to provide this invaluable support to parents in a new way. Drawing on FIND's evidence-informed strategies, a new adaptation of the program was created which is more scalable, can be offered remotely, and is personalized to a caregiver's specific concern or question.

FIND is a video coaching program that aims to strengthen developmentally supportive interactions between caregivers and young children through the use of video. In FIND, a coach shares edited video clips of caregivers engaging in sensitive, responsive caregiving with their child. It is strength-based, focusing on skills and abilities the caregiver is already demonstrating. The central theme of the FIND program is a concept called *Serve and Return*, a metaphor used to describe child-led caregiver interactions. Children **serve** when they do something, say something, or look at something. Caregivers **return the serve** when they respond. In FIND, the concept of *Serve and Return* is broken down into 5 FIND elements of responsive caregiving. Historically, the program has not directly addressed questions around managing challenging behavior or developing a specific skill, though these topics often naturally surfaced. The omission of specifically addressing parents' unique developmental and behavioral questions felt as though a puzzle piece was missing.

Through a 10-week partnership with Hemera, Direct2Caregiver explored how to improve the quality of a virtual and scalable offering of FIND. This collaboration supported and encouraged the Direct2Caregiver team to continually think 'outside the box' which was instrumental to the trajectory of the program and lessons learned.

The Learning Approach

The first significant insight was how the Direct2Caregiver team learned to maximize learnings through engaging in a new and exciting approach: rapid-cycle design and testing sprints.

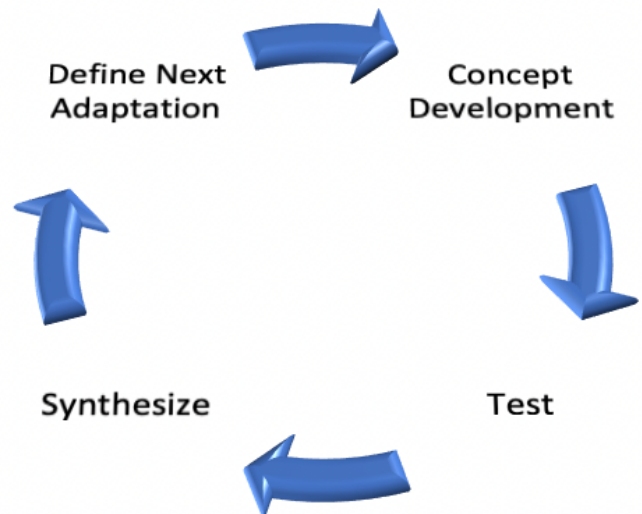
FIND was developed in a university based research setting, where the process for design and adaptation tends to take a considerable amount of time. The team needed to iterate at a much faster pace than this traditional approach. The partnership with Hemera created an opportunity to use a process often utilized within social entrepreneurial contexts, but new to the D2C team, and apply it to FIND.

Testing sprints were designed to maximize learnings by setting a “rhythm of learning” to gain insights and iterate on a regular fast-paced cadence. This rhythm consisted of developing concepts, running tests, synthesizing data, and lastly, defining next adaptations to try. This process was repeated multiple times in order to test various recruitment, introductory, and FIND components. The most notable iterative test focused on understanding how to best modify the FIND coaching model to meet the demand of the caregiver focused approach. Thanks to the rapid pace, immediate feedback from participants, and input from D2C's partnerships, the team could quickly refine components and feel confident they were heading in the right direction.

The idea of tailoring the FIND content to a caregiver’s question or concern surfaced while reflecting on D2C's remote recruitment and introduction. Very few caregivers were signing-up, and those that did, consistently shared they wanted something a little different: a program to help gain parenting skills around *specific* developmental and behavioral issues. With input from the FIND Development team, Hemera, and Promise Venture Studios, a nonprofit accelerator for social entrepreneurs in early childhood, the D2C team made the decision flip the model 180-degrees to take a customized approach. This was equal parts exciting and scary to be charting such new territory.

To shift in this radical new direction, significant adaptations were made to the core FIND model. To maintain the active ingredients that lead to impact, D2C remained strength-based, used video to highlight naturally occurring responsive caregiving using the FIND elements, and used the FIND terminology. All other aspects of the coaching sessions were on the table to potentially be modified to support this new caregiver focused approach.

Rapid Cycle Rhythm of Learning



Below are the most significant and impactful adaptations and insights made while developing the Direct2Caregiver approach. Each highlights how the coach incorporated the changes with the FIND content to build the skills of both the child and the caregiver. Of all these adaptations, the most notable change was taking a caregiver focused approach as all other coaching aspects were directly impacted by this revolutionary shift.

Taking a Parent Focused Approach

Discovery Process

To gain a clear understanding of the caregiver concern, the coach asks a series of questions. This supports the coach to better reframe the challenge as a child skill and provide tailored support during the coaching session.

Redesigning the Coaching Session Flow and Content

Materials

The content and flow of each session was modified to promote the caregiver and child skill development using the broad concept of Serve and Return as a way the parent could respond to their child to support them in moving to the next level of skill development. Only FIND elements most beneficial to promote skill development for the child were discussed and was a direct reflection of naturally occurring caregiver skills observed on film.

Individualized

Content was personalized according to the present skill of the child and parent.

Length

One and two session versions of the program were tested with caregivers, compared to the ten in the core model. Completing two sessions provided the team an understanding of the impact the strategies had on skill development, if they were utilized, and if additional supports were warranted.

Edited Film

Edited clips of the caregiver engaging in elements of Serve and Return were chosen according to the skills the caregiver exhibited during filming. An opportunity clip was an exciting new addition to the model. This opportunity clip shows the child "serving" and then discussing what positive, meaningful ways the caregiver could return their serve based on the just-learned strategies.

Setting up for Success

Setting up the environment for their child was discussed to help the caregiver understand how physical space, as well as their own body language, tone and proximity, can all impact serves, opportunities to respond, and quality of responses.

Emotional Connections

Bringing awareness to emotional responses helped the caregiver identify the connection and impact it has on their relationship. This occurred while the parents watched themselves interacting with their child on film and in the edited film itself.



Early Results are Extremely Promising.

Not only did this new approach have high engagement and completion rates, the feedback provided by caregivers was incredibly encouraging. Caregivers shared their experiences and thoughts with the coach at the end of each session, via a survey, and through email. The following information was shared about participation in Direct2Caregiver:

- Caregivers enjoyed the strength-based approach.
- Serve and Return was a positive new way of looking at their interactions with their child.
- The program helped them recognize how their child's behavior is a form of communication.
- Caregivers felt they were doing a good job after seeing themselves interact positively with their child.
- Specific positive strategies were gained to promote skill growth or decrease challenging behavior.
- Caregivers really enjoyed engaging with the "opportunity clip" as it created a space to apply the just-learned strategies and receive feedback.

"I wanted to further let you know what a powerful experience it was for me to participate in this coaching program. I applaud the work you are doing. I really took a great deal from the coaching time and think about the way I interact with my daughters as a result of it. This really highlighted for me the value of every single interaction and motivated me to put the effort into making them warm and responsive (even when I'm tired!). Thank you so much."

~D2C Participant



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Reflections and Moving Forward

While many invaluable lessons were learned throughout this process, one thing remains at the top of the team's wish-we-could-have-accomplished list: testing the D2C adaptations with more participants. This most likely would have added to insights gained, as each participant was significant to the synthesizing process, underpinning rich conversations with D2C partners.

The entire process of brainstorming, testing new ideas, and synthesizing what changes would best meet the needs of the caregiver was an eye-opening experience. After learning that a two-session model could create such a positive impact on caregiver concerns, the team felt eager to explore offering a program where the length could adjust to match caregiver needs.

Ultimately, it felt as if a key missing piece of the puzzle was found. This innovative project allowed the D2C team to gain significant new insights into their work and steer projects in new directions. The ongoing collaboration with Hemera brought a unique perspective which helped drive content development and iterate new ideas. One new program D2C already has influenced is the Family Advice and Support Text and Telephone line (FASTT) where a family support coach offers strength-based tips and advice around challenging behaviors and parent stress. And though Direct2Caregiver is still in the development phase, it will likely continue to shape future work aimed to support and improve quality relationships and outcomes of young children. Hopefully someday, when caregivers are asked, "Where do you turn when you have a question or concern with your child?" they will answer with Direct2Caregiver.

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