

**АРНАЙЫ ЖӘНЕ ИНКЛЮЗИВТІ БІЛІМ БЕРУДІҢ ӨЗЕКТІ МӘСЕЛЕЛЕРІ
АКТУАЛЬНЫЕ ВОПРОСЫ
СПЕЦИАЛЬНОГО И ИНКЛЮЗИВНОГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ**

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**FAMILY-CENTERED APPROACH TO PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL
SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

Abstract

The effectiveness of psychological and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs largely depends on the quality of partnership between families and specialists. The study aims to identify differences in parents' and specialists' perceptions of family-centered collaboration. The study involved 25 participants: 10 parents and 15 specialists. Data were collected through an anonymous online survey using a five-point Likert scale. The results showed that specialists rated all nine components of collaboration higher than parents. The most pronounced differences concerned the consideration of parents' knowledge and experience and their perception as equal partners. Both groups emphasized the need for regular communication, feedback, parent education, and joint decision-making. The findings highlight the importance of a family-centered approach in supporting children with SEN.

Keywords: family-centered approach; psychological and pedagogical support; special educational needs; parental participation; family-professional collaboration.

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**СЕМЕЙНО-ОРИЕНТИРОВАННЫЙ ПОДХОД К ПСИХОЛОГО-
ПЕДАГОГИЧЕСКОМУ СОПРОВОЖДЕНИЮ ДЕТЕЙ С ОСОБЫМИ
ОБРАЗОВАТЕЛЬНЫМИ ПОТРЕБНОСТЯМИ**

Аннотация

Эффективность психолого-педагогического сопровождения детей с особыми образовательными потребностями во многом определяется качеством партнерства между семьей и специалистами. Исследование направлено на выявление различий в восприятии семейно-центрированного взаимодействия родителями и специалистами. В исследовании приняли участие 25 человек: 10 родителей и 15 специалистов. Данные получены посредством анонимного онлайн-опроса с использованием пятибалльной шкалы Лайкерта. Результаты показали, что специалисты оценивали все девять компонентов взаимодействия выше, чем родители. Наиболее выраженные различия выявлены в оценке учета знаний и опыта родителей и их восприятии как равноправных партнеров. Обе группы отметили необходимость регулярной коммуникации, обратной связи, родительского обучения и совместного принятия решений. Полученные результаты подчеркивают значимость семейно-центрированного подхода в сопровождении детей с ООП.

Ключевые слова: семейно-центрированный подход; психолого-педагогическое сопровождение; особые образовательные потребности; родительское участие; взаимодействие семьи и специалистов.

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ЕРЕКШЕ БІЛІМ БЕРУ ҚАЖЕТТІЛІКТЕРІ БАР БАЛАЛАРҒА ПСИХОЛОГИЯЛЫҚ-ПЕДАГОГИКАЛЫҚ ҚОЛДАУ КӨРСЕТУДЕГІ ОТБАСЫНА БАҒДАРЛАНҒАН ТӘСІЛ

Аңдатпа

Білім алуда ерекше қажеттіліктері бар балаларды психологиялық-педагогикалық қолдаудың тиімділігі отбасы мен мамандар арасындағы серіктестіктің сапасына байланысты. Зерттеу ата-аналар мен мамандардың отбасына бағдарланған өзара әрекеттесуді қабылдауындағы айырмашылықтарды анықтауға бағытталған. Зерттеуге 25 адам: 10 ата-ана және 15 маман қатысты. Деректер бес балдық Лайкерт шкаласы қолданылған анонимді онлайн сауалнама арқылы алынды. Нәтижелер мамандардың өзара әрекеттесудің барлық тоғыз компонентін ата-аналарға қарағанда жоғары бағалағанын көрсетті. Ең айқын айырмашылық ата-аналардың білімі мен тәжірибесін ескеру және оларды тең құқылы серіктестер ретінде қабылдау көрсеткіштерінде анықталды. Екі топ та тұрақты коммуникация, кері байланыс, ата-аналарды оқыту және бірлескен шешім қабылдау қажеттілігін атап өтті. Алынған нәтижелер БЕҚ бар балаларды қолдауда отбасына бағдарланған тәсілдің маңыздылығын көрсетеді.

Түйін сөздер: отбасына бағдарланған тәсіл; психологиялық-педагогикалық қолдау; білім алуда ерекше қажеттіліктер; ата-аналардың қатысуы; отбасы мен мамандардың өзара әрекеттесуі.

INTRODUCTION

The modern system of support for children with special educational needs (SEN) includes not only the provision of special educational, psychological and pedagogical, and developmental services, but also assumes the active participation of the family in the support process. The family is regarded as an essential part of the child's social and educational environment, while parents are directly involved in decision-making related to the child's development, education, and support. In this context, a family-centered approach is implemented, in which specialists and parents interact as partners. The approach recognizes parents' knowledge and experience, as well as the resources and capacities of the family; support goals are jointly determined, outcomes are discussed, and further actions are planned [3, 4, 6–9].

Family participation and psychological and pedagogical support are particularly important in the early intervention system. UNICEF materials on early intervention emphasize the need to support not only the child but also the parents, consider everyday family experiences, develop parental competencies, and coordinate different types of support [3]. In her methodological recommendations, A. K. Ersarina considers parents active participants in the process, while specialists primarily perform the functions of assistants and consultants. Parents participate in assessing the child's needs, developing and implementing an individual program, and evaluating its effectiveness [5].

The regulatory and legal framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan establishes the need to provide special support for children with disabilities and to develop psychological and pedagogical support. The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan "On Social and Medical-Pedagogical Correctional Support for Children with Disabilities" defines the main areas of such support [1]. The current rules governing the activities of psychological and pedagogical support services in educational organizations provide for comprehensive support for learners based on their special educational needs and interaction among participants in the educational process [2].

The importance of family–professional partnership is also supported by international research. Meta-analytic studies indicate that family-centered practices are associated with positive outcomes for parents and children and involve partnership-based interaction between professionals and families [4, 6]. Systematic reviews also emphasize the importance of family-centered support for children with special needs and the need to consider the processes of interaction between parents and professionals [7, 8]. Recent research additionally highlights collaboration between parents and professionals as a distinct component of the quality of early intervention [9].

For Kazakhstan, this issue is particularly relevant due to the need to develop parental competence and move toward more partnership-based forms of psychological and pedagogical support. A study by A. S. Moilbekova and E. K. Kalymbetova demonstrated the need to develop the psychological and pedagogical competence of parents of children with special educational needs and to strengthen interaction between professionals and families [10].

At the same time, the existence of a regulatory and methodological framework for a family-centered approach does not, in itself, make it possible to assess the extent to which partnership principles are implemented in everyday practice. In particular, it is important to consider not only the position of professionals but also the perceptions of parents themselves. The same interaction practice may be perceived differently by professionals and parents. Therefore, comparing the perspectives of both groups makes it possible to identify potential differences in perceptions of parental participation, joint decision-making, consideration of family experience, and the nature of feedback.

The aim of this study is to analyze and identify differences in the perceptions of family–professional interaction in the implementation of a family-centered approach to psychological and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was conducted using a descriptive quantitative approach with elements of comparative analysis and qualitative analysis of open-ended responses. The aim of the study was to identify the characteristics of perceptions of family-centered interaction in the process of psychological and pedagogical support for children with SEN from the perspectives of parents and professionals. Participants were recruited using voluntary response sampling. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The study was conducted in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in September–October 2026. The study focused on nine components of family–professional interaction: consideration of parents’ opinions, knowledge, and experience; joint determination of support goals; provision of information about the child’s development and learning; opportunities to ask questions and suggest ideas; information about the child’s progress and difficulties; provision of recommendations applicable at home; consideration of family characteristics and capacities; and recognition of parents as equal partners. In addition, participants’ responses to an open-ended question concerning changes needed to improve the effectiveness of family–professional collaboration were analyzed.

The main characteristics of the study design and participants are presented in Table 1.

Parameter	Parents (n=10)	Specialists (n=15)
Study location	Almaty, Kazakhstan	Almaty, Kazakhstan
Data collection period	September–October 2026	September–October 2026
Data collection method	Anonymous online survey	Anonymous online survey
Sampling method	Voluntary response sampling	Voluntary response sampling
Survey scale	5-point Likert scale	5-point Likert scale
Main assessment areas	Family–professional interaction, parental participation, communication, joint decision-making, and home support	Family–professional interaction, parental participation, communication, joint decision-making, and home support
Additional questions	Demographic questions and one open-ended question	Demographic questions and one open-ended question
Participation	Voluntary; informed consent obtained	Voluntary; informed consent obtained

Table 1 – Study Design and Participant Characteristics

The questionnaire included demographic questions, nine Likert-scale items assessing family–professional interaction, and one open-ended question. The same core indicators were used for both groups, which allowed the perceptions of parents and specialists to be compared.

A total of 25 people participated in the survey, including 10 parents of children with SEN and 15 professionals. The parent group included 7 mothers (70%) and 3 fathers (30%). The children’s ages ranged from under 3 to 10 years. According to the parents, 4 children attended preschool organizations, 5 children attended mainstream schools, and 1 participant indicated another educational setting. The duration of psychological and pedagogical support ranged from less than one year to five years.

The group of professionals included 10 speech therapists (66.7%) and 5 special education teachers (33.3%). All professionals had experience working with children with SEN and interacting with their parents. Participants represented various types of organizations, including preschool and mainstream educational organizations, special education organizations, psychological and pedagogical support centers, private organizations, and educational centers.

Two structurally parallel online questionnaires were developed for data collection: one for parents and one for professionals. The parallel structure of the questions made it possible to compare perceptions of family-centered interaction between the two groups.

The main part of each questionnaire included nine identical statements reflecting the key components of family–professional interaction:

1. attentive listening to parents' opinions;
2. consideration of parents' knowledge and experience;
3. joint determination of the main support goals;
4. clear explanation of the child's developmental and learning characteristics;
5. opportunity to ask questions and suggest ideas;
6. providing information not only about the child's difficulties but also about the child's progress;
7. provision of recommendations applicable at home;
8. consideration of family characteristics and capacities;
9. perception of parents as equal partners.

The parent questionnaire additionally included questions about the parent's age, relationship to the child, the child's age, educational organization, duration of psychological and pedagogical support, and specialists interacting with the child. The professional questionnaire included questions about age, professional position, work experience, age groups of children, and type of organization. Both questionnaires included the open-ended question: "What, in your opinion, needs to be changed to make collaboration between the family and professionals more effective?"

Data collection was conducted in September–October 2026 using Google Forms. Separate online questionnaires were used for parents and professionals. Before completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation. Participants provided consent to participate before beginning the survey. Parents responded based on their own experience of receiving psychological and pedagogical support for their child. Professionals based their responses on their professional experience of working with children with SEN and interacting with their parents.

Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods. For each of the nine indicators, the arithmetic mean (M) was calculated separately for parents and professionals. In addition, the proportion of responses "often" and "always" (4-5 points) was determined. For comparative analysis, the difference between the mean values of the two groups was calculated for each of the nine indicators. The differences obtained were interpreted descriptively and used to identify indicators with the greatest discrepancy in perceptions of family-centered interaction.

Due to the small sample size, the voluntary nature of participation, and the absence of paired correspondence between parents and professionals, inferential statistical tests were not applied. The results are considered exclusively at the descriptive level and cannot be generalized to the entire population of parents and professionals in Kazakhstan.

Responses to the open-ended question were analyzed using thematic analysis. Responses were grouped according to recurring thematic patterns. The following main themes were identified: communication and feedback, parent education and counseling, joint decision-making, trust and mutual understanding, regularity and systematic interaction, and organizational conditions for support.

Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Participants were informed in advance about the purpose of the study and the conditions of participation and provided consent to the processing of their responses for research purposes. No personal data that could identify participants were used in the presentation of the results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 25 people participated in the study: 10 parents of children with SEN and 15 professionals. The analysis was conducted using nine indicators of family-centered interaction included in both questionnaires. For each indicator, the mean value was determined using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponded to “never” and 5 to “always.”

The results of the parent survey demonstrate differences in the assessment of individual components of family-centered interaction. The highest values were obtained for indicators related to informing parents and providing practical assistance. The highest rating was given to the indicator “professionals provide information not only about the child’s difficulties but also about the child’s progress,” with a mean score of 3.9. At the same time, 70% of parents selected the responses “often” or “always.” The indicators “professionals clearly explain the child’s developmental and learning characteristics” and “provide recommendations that can be used at home” both received a mean score of 3.8. The proportion of “often” and “always” responses was 70% and 80%, respectively. The opportunity for parents to ask questions and suggest their own ideas received a mean score of 3.6, with 60% of participants assessing this aspect as occurring “often” or “always.” Lower ratings were obtained for indicators directly related to parents’ participation in decision-making. Attentive listening to parents’ opinions and consideration of family characteristics and capacities both received a mean score of 3.5, while the perception of parents as equal partners received a score of 3.4. The lowest values were observed for consideration of parents’ knowledge and experience (3.2) and joint determination of the main support goals (3.1).

The findings indicate that parents rate the informational and consultative components of interaction relatively higher, whereas lower ratings concern the direct participation of the family in support planning, consideration of parental experience, and joint determination of goals.

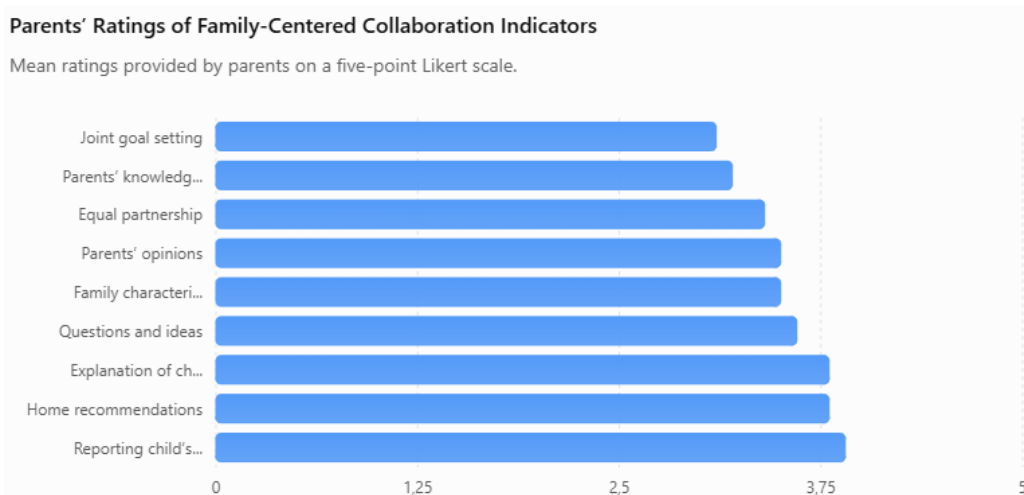


Figure 1 — Parents’ assessment of family-centered interaction (n=10).

In contrast to the parents, professionals gave relatively high ratings to all nine indicators. Mean values ranged from 4.33 to 4.80. Professionals gave the highest rating to providing parents with information not only about the child’s difficulties but also about the child’s progress, with a mean score of 4.8. All specialists (100%) have chosen the responses “often” or “always.” The indicators concerning attentive listening to parents’ opinions, consideration of family characteristics and capacities, and perception of parents as equal partners each received a mean score of 4.73; for each of these indicators, 100% of professionals provided a positive assessment. Professionals rated the provision of recommendations for use at home at 4.67 and consideration of parents’ knowledge and experience at 4.53. The clarity of explanations and parents’ opportunity to ask questions and suggest ideas both received a mean score of 4.47. The proportion of “often” and “always” responses for these two indicators was 93.3%. The lowest mean score among professionals was observed for joint determination of the goals of support for the child — 4.33. Nevertheless, 93.3% of

professionals assessed this component as occurring “often” or “always.” It should be noted that professionals assessed the implementation of family-centered practices as relatively high across all the components examined.

Figure 2 — Specialists’ Ratings

Specialists’ Ratings of Family-Centered Collaboration Indicators

Mean ratings provided by specialists on a five-point Likert scale.

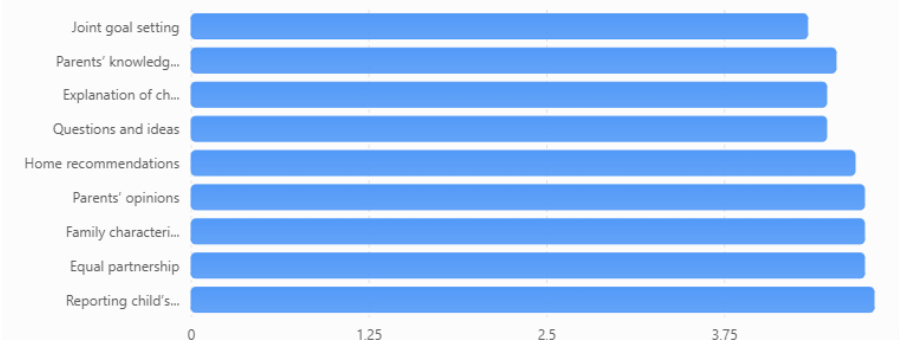


Figure 2 — Professionals’ assessment of family-centered interaction (n=15).

The analysis revealed differences between parents and professionals across all nine indicators. In all cases, the mean values reported by professionals were higher than those reported by parents. The greatest differences were identified for two indicators: consideration of parents’ knowledge and experience and perception of parents as equal partners. In both cases, the difference was 1.33 points. For the first indicator, parents gave a mean rating of 3.2, compared with 4.53 among professionals; for the second, the respective values were 3.4 and 4.73. A difference of 1.23 points was identified for three indicators: attentive listening to parents’ opinions (3.50 versus 4.73), joint determination of support goals (3.10 versus 4.33), and consideration of family characteristics and capacities (3.50 versus 4.73). Smaller differences were observed for providing information about the child’s progress and difficulties (0.90 points), the opportunity to ask questions and suggest ideas (0.87 points), recommendations for use at home (0.87 points), and clarity of explanations (0.67 points).

In summary, the greatest discrepancies are associated primarily not with the provision of information but with those components that imply the active participation of parents as partners.

Comparison of Parents’ and Specialists’ Ratings

Mean ratings of nine indicators of family-centered collaboration on a five-point Likert scale.

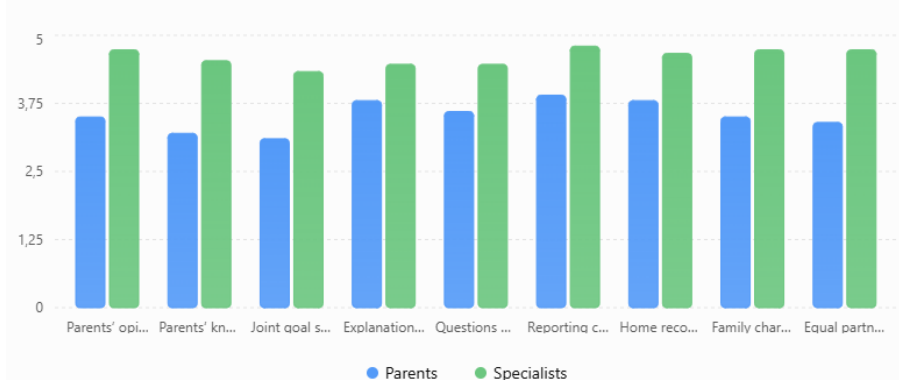


Figure 3 — Comparison of parents’ and professionals’ assessments of family-centered interaction indicators.

The identified differences should be considered in light of the characteristics of the family-centered approach. The higher ratings given by professionals across all nine indicators should not

be interpreted as evidence that one of the positions is more correct. They reflect differences in the perception of the same interaction process. The most substantial discrepancies were identified precisely in those components that involve active parental participation in planning and decision-making. Parents rated consideration of their knowledge and experience at 3.2, while professionals rated it at 4.53. A similar difference was observed in the assessment of equal partnership: 3.4 among parents compared with 4.73 among professionals. This may indicate differences in perceptions of what constitutes a sufficient manifestation of partnership in support practice.

The findings are consistent with the principles of the family-centered approach, according to which parents' knowledge of the child, family resources, and everyday experience should be regarded as important resources when planning support [3–6]. Meta-analytic studies by Dunst et al. demonstrate the importance of the nature of interaction between professionals and families, rather than solely the content of the assistance provided [4, 6]. The systematic review by McCarthy and Guerin also shows that the practical implementation of a family-centered approach may encounter certain challenges and cannot be reduced to a single universal algorithm [8]. The differences identified in our study between parents' and professionals' assessments add to this conclusion by demonstrating the need to consider the perceptions of both parties involved in the interaction. The study by Klatte et al. emphasizes the importance of continuous attention to interaction with parents, adapting collaboration to the characteristics of each individual family, and expanding parents' opportunities to participate as partners [9]. In our study, these very components consideration of parental experience, joint determination of goals, and equal partnership demonstrated the most pronounced differences in ratings.

The quantitative results are complemented by the findings from the open-ended question. Parents primarily emphasized the need to improve information provision and parental competence, establish more regular communication and feedback, take their opinions into account, and involve them in joint decision-making. Suggestions included conducting training sessions for parents, providing more detailed explanations of the purposes of activities and assessments, regularly discussing the child's progress and difficulties, and establishing more systematic interaction. Professionals also highlighted the importance of regular communication and feedback, planned work with parents, organizing courses and parent schools, joint parent and child activities, developing trust, and ensuring consistency of actions. In addition, professionals mentioned the need to reduce paperwork.

Thus, the qualitative data demonstrate considerable convergence between the two groups regarding directions for improving interaction. Regular communication, feedback, parent education, and trust-based collaboration emerged as common areas identified by both parents and professionals. At the same time, the emphasis differed somewhat. Parents more often focused on the need to be heard, receive clear explanations, and participate in decision-making, whereas professionals emphasized the need for organized work with parents, the development of new forms of interaction, and the creation of conditions for more systematic collaboration.

Overall, the results show that the main elements of family-centered interaction are present in the practice of psychological and pedagogical support; however, the extent to which these elements are implemented is perceived differently by parents and professionals.

The highest ratings among parents were associated with information about the outcomes of support and practical recommendations, whereas the lowest ratings concerned joint determination of goals, consideration of parents' experience, and equal partnership. Among professionals, all indicators received high ratings, although joint determination of support goals also received the lowest rating within this group. The findings make it possible to view the family-centered approach not only as the provision of information and recommendations to the family, but also as a partnership model of interaction that involves jointly determining goals, taking parents' knowledge and experience into account, and involving them in decision-making. This approach is consistent with contemporary understandings of family-centered support and the provisions of national methodological materials [3, 5, 10].

CONCLUSION

The results of the study demonstrate that the family-centered approach is reflected in the practice of psychological and pedagogical support for children with special educational needs. At the same time, differences remain between parents and professionals in their perceptions of certain aspects of interaction. The most pronounced discrepancies concern components that involve direct parental participation in supporting the child: consideration of parents' knowledge and experience, joint determination of goals, consideration of family capacities, and recognition of parents as equal partners. The findings highlight an important distinction between providing support to a family and working collaboratively with the family. Parents relatively highly assessed the provision of information about the child's development and progress and the practical value of professionals' recommendations. However, lower ratings of parental participation in determining goals and making decisions indicate that regular contact does not always imply full partnership.

An important finding is also the convergence of parents' and professionals' views regarding the further development of collaboration. Both groups consider regular communication, feedback, development of parental competence, and strengthening trust to be necessary. This creates a basis for developing a more systematic model of interaction in which professionals not only inform parents about the child's condition and progress, but also involve them in discussing goals, selecting forms of support, and evaluating its outcomes. In practical terms, the findings indicate the need to strengthen parental participation in planning psychological and pedagogical support. This may include regular joint discussion of goals and the child's progress, consideration of family experience and capacities when selecting recommendations, consultations and educational activities for parents, as well as the use of accessible forms of feedback.

Based on the above, the family-centered approach should be regarded not only as a principle for organizing psychological and pedagogical support, but also as a specific model of professional interaction in which the family is considered a full participant in the support process. A shift from simply informing parents toward involving them in discussion, planning, and decision-making may contribute to a more consistent implementation of the family-centered approach.

At the same time, the findings should be considered in light of the study's limitations: the small sample size, voluntary participation, and absence of paired correspondence between parents and professionals. Therefore, the findings are descriptive in nature and cannot be generalized to the entire population of parents and professionals in Kazakhstan. Further research should involve larger samples and consider children's age, the type of educational organization, and the professional profiles of specialists.

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