

Parent Involvement and Family Engagement: Supporting Implementation in Early Childhood Settings



NATIONAL CENTER ON
Parent, Family and Community Engagement

For State Administrators and Training and Technical Assistance Staff

State Administrators and Training and Technical Assistance (T/TA) Staff can use the new *Parent Involvement and Family Engagement* resource to build knowledge and strengthen practices of early childhood (EC) professionals.

Resource Description

Parent involvement and family engagement are both important strategies to build relationships with families. Family engagement is highlighted as the most effective way to join with families in the care, learning, and healthy development of children. Successful family engagement efforts contribute to an effective workforce, higher job satisfaction for providers, and better results for children and families.

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Family Engagement Requirements

The CCDF rule outlines family engagement requirements for EC professionals that will:

- Promote informed parental choices and engagement in their children’s development and learning.
- Improve knowledge and skills for caregivers, teachers, and directors that promote family engagement, including culturally and linguistically appropriate practices.
- Build on parents’ and families’ understanding of the early childhood system.

2016 CCDF Fund Final Rule Related Requirements

- 98.1 (a) (2-3), (b) (5) Purposes
- 98.16 (gg) Plan Provisions
- 98.33 (b) (1) (iv) Consumer and Provider Education
- 98.44 (a) (4, 6) Training and Professional Development
- 98.53 (a) (1) (iv), (a) (3) (v) Activities to improve the quality of care

Parent Involvement and Family Engagement: Supporting Implementation in Early Childhood Settings, cont.

For State Administrators: How to Use this Resource

Prioritize a vision of parent involvement and family engagement

- Share the resource at state advisory council meetings.
- Inform learning through professional development (PD) activities, materials, and resources that are consistent with family engagement goals.
- Inform content for web-based resources for partners or professionals such as Early Learning Development Guidelines, School Standards, EC Professional Competencies, QRIS Systems, Child Care Licensing Rules and Regulations guidelines.

Increase knowledge across the early childhood field

- Distribute this resource through newsletters and websites with recommendations for use in programs. Programs may use in multiple ways, such as in staff meetings, professional development, focus groups with families, and review of program offerings.
- Pair with *Consumer Engagement: An Orientation for Early Childhood and School-age Care and Education Professionals* to provide to Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agencies, T/TA regional leads, state agencies responsible for consumer education, and other local implementing partners. Agencies and organizations can share with EC professionals (e.g. ECE, EI, and ECSE) through T/TA and community engagement efforts.
- Generate a common understanding of involvement and engagement related terms and approaches across the PD system in states to ensure that offerings about family engagement are aligned, effective, and consistently grounded in exemplary practices.

For Training and Technical Assistance Staff: How to Use this Resource

Support professional learning

- Discuss with providers to broaden their understanding of family engagement and how they might enhance their efforts over time.
- Strengthen the understanding of the link between family engagement and better outcomes for children and families.

Encourage continuous quality improvement

- Build knowledge and connections with colleagues by exploring this resource in a learning community or sharing on social media.
- Inform conversations with EC professionals such as family child care home providers, classroom teachers, administrators, and leadership.

Parent Involvement and Family Engagement: Supporting Implementation in Early Childhood Settings, cont.

Download the Resource

Available on the Office of Child Care Technical Assistance web site.

Parent Involvement and Family Engagement
For Early Childhood Professionals

Early childhood professionals have opportunities to build relationships that can positively impact children and their families for a lifetime. Strong relationships with families promote family well-being, positive parent-child relationships, and the ongoing learning and development of children and parents.

Parent Involvement and Family Engagement: Why Both Matter
Parent involvement and family engagement both include interactions with families. The difference is that with family engagement these interactions occur in the context of an ongoing and collaborative relationship. Meaningful relationships get us closer to effectively partnering with families. When we understand the differences between parent involvement and family engagement, we can make better choices about practices and activities that are based on the goals of our early childhood programs.

"Parent" and "Family"
We use the words parent and family to honor all adult caregivers who make a difference in a child's life.
Parents refers to biological, adoptive, and step-parents as well as primary caregivers, such as grandparents, other adult family members, and foster parents.
Families can be biological or non-biological, chosen or circumstantial. They are connected through culture, language, traditions, shared experiences, emotional commitment, and mutual support.

Parent Involvement
Parent involvement occurs when parents participate in activities and take advantage of opportunities at their child's early care and learning setting. This usually means that parents attend meetings or special events a program offers.
Parent involvement may also include an exchange of information about the child and what happens at home. Professionals may offer advice or recommend resources to address challenges. We may, for example, give written information to a parent about toilet learning for his toddler. Or, we might invite a parent to share information about what quiet her child at nap time.
Early childhood professionals and programs typically include parent involvement. These activities are important and often beneficial to families.

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Parent Involvement and Family Engagement

What do Parent Involvement and Family Engagement look like?

PARENT INVOLVEMENT	FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents attend meetings or special events a program offers. Parents participate in activities and take advantage of opportunities at their child's early care and learning setting. Professionals offer advice or recommend resources to address challenges. Professionals give written information to a parent about toilet learning for his toddler. Professionals invite a parent to share information about what quiet her child at nap time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Professionals and families engage in an interactive process of relationship-building. The process is mutual, respectful, and responsive to a family's language and culture. Professionals and families share responsibility for the care and learning of children. For example, we work with a parent to plan ways to support the child—a team approach that includes everyone at home and in the program. We make a point to check in, to revisit a plan, and meet when we need new ideas. Professionals and families engage in an ongoing, collaborative relationship. Professionals and families understand the differences between parent involvement and family engagement. Professionals and families make better choices about practices and activities that are based on the goals of our early childhood programs.

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

Family Engagement
Family engagement happens when early childhood professionals and families engage in an interactive process of relationship-building. The process is mutual, respectful, and responsive to a family's language and culture. Meaningful relationship-building is ongoing, and requires time and attention.
In this approach, we partner with families to share responsibility for the care and learning of children. For example, we work with a parent to plan ways to support the child—a team approach that includes everyone at home and in the program. We make a point to check in, to revisit a plan, and meet when we need new ideas.
Engagement in the early years prepares families to be engaged throughout their child's school years. Most importantly, family engagement efforts support the parent-child relationships that lay the way to a child's healthy development, school readiness, and well-being now, and in the future.

For more information about this resource, please contact us:
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Related References

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- Weiss, H., Caspe, M., & Lopez, M.E. (2006). Family involvement in early childhood education. *Family Involvement Makes a Difference 1* (Spring). Online at <http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/family-involvement-makes-a-difference/family-involvement-in-early-childhood-education>

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