



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**



**POLICY STATEMENT ON FAMILY ENGAGEMENT  
FROM THE EARLY YEARS TO THE EARLY GRADES**

**PURPOSE**

This policy statement from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education (ED) provides recommendations<sup>1</sup> to early childhood systems and programs on family engagement. Family engagement refers to the systematic inclusion of families in activities and programs that promote children’s development, learning, and wellness, including in the planning, development, and evaluation of such activities, programs, and systems. For family engagement to be integrated throughout early childhood systems and programs, providers and schools must engage families as essential partners when providing services that promote children’s learning and development, nurture positive relationships between families and staff, and support families. The term “family” as used in this statement is inclusive of all adults who interact with early childhood systems in support of their child, to include biological, adoptive, and foster parents; grandparents; legal and informal guardians; and adult siblings. Early childhood systems include child care options, Head Start and Early Head Start, early intervention programs, preschool programs, and elementary school from kindergarten through third grade. Providers include teachers and paraprofessionals in schools, preschools, and Head Start and Early Head Start classrooms; child-care providers, early intervention service providers; related service personnel; comprehensive services staff; and other professionals that work directly with children in early childhood systems.

*Family engagement promotes children’s learning and healthy development*

The lives and experiences of young children are intertwined with those of their families. Families are children’s first and most important teachers, advocates, and nurturers. Strong family engagement in early childhood systems and programs is central—not supplemental—to promoting children’s healthy intellectual, physical, and social-emotional development; preparing children for school; and supporting academic achievement in elementary school and beyond. Research indicates that families’ involvement in children’s learning and development impacts lifelong health, developmental, and academic outcomes. Family engagement in early childhood systems and programs supports families as they teach, nurture, and advocate for their children, and in turn, family engagement supports and improves the early childhood systems that care for and teach children. When families and the programs where children learn work together and support each other in their respective roles, children have a more positive attitude toward school, stay in school longer, have better attendance, and experience more school success.<sup>2</sup>

The Departments recognize the critical role of family engagement in promoting children’s success in early childhood systems and programs. As such, both agencies have developed research-based

<sup>1</sup> The information in this document is intended to assist State and local agencies to carry out their obligations under the applicable statutes and regulations and does not impose any new requirements.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson, A.T. & Mapp, K.L. (2002). A new wave of evidence: The impact of school, family and community connections on student achievement. Austin: SEDL.

family engagement frameworks to guide the development of effective family engagement policies and practices: HHS's Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework and ED's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships (see Appendix). This policy statement identifies common principles from these frameworks that drive effective family engagement across early childhood systems and programs.

It is the goal of the Departments that all early childhood systems recognize and support families as essential partners in providing services that improve children's development, learning and wellness. This joint HHS-ED statement aims to advance this goal by:

1. **Reviewing the research base and best practices** that support effective family engagement in children's learning, development, and wellness;
2. **Identifying core principles** of effective family engagement practices from HHS' and ED's family engagement frameworks to drive successful policy and program development, implementation, and evaluation;
3. **Providing recommendations** to States, State educational agencies (SEAs), lead agencies for early intervention services and child care , local educational agencies (LEAs), schools, and community-based early childhood systems and programs to implement effective family engagement; and
4. **Highlighting resources** to build programmatic and family capacity to be effective partners.

## OVERVIEW

### Highlights from Related Research and Best Practices

Families have strong and sustained effects on children's development, learning, and wellness. Studies indicate that nurturing, responsive, and sensitive parenting promotes social-emotional competence and academic success.<sup>3</sup> Fathers' involvement in their children's learning has been found to have positive effects on children's cognition, language, and social-emotional development.<sup>4</sup> Other studies find that activities such as reading and talking to young children leads to positive outcomes. For example, infants and toddlers who are read to more often have better language and cognition skills than their peers who are read to less often.<sup>5</sup> High-quality verbal interactions between young children and their caregivers predict vocabulary size and school readiness later in life.<sup>6</sup> Children of families who engage in these early learning activities at home, and have materials available to enrich these experiences, show more advanced vocabulary and

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<sup>3</sup> Thompson, R. (2008). Early attachment and later development: Familiar questions, new answers. In J. Cassidy, & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Handbook of attachment* (2nd ed., pp. 348-365). New York: Guilford.

<sup>4</sup> Cabrera, N., Shannon, J., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. (2007). Fathers' influence on their children's cognitive and emotional development: From toddlers to pre-k. *Applied Developmental Science*, 11(4), 208-213.

<sup>5</sup> Raikes, H., Green, B. L., Atwater, J., Kisker, E., Constantine, J., & Chazan-Cohen, R. (2006). Involvement in Early Head Start home visiting services: Demographic predictors and relations to child and parent outcomes. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 21, 2-24.

<sup>6</sup> Hart, B., & Risley, T. R. (1995). *Meaningful differences in the everyday experiences of young American children*. Baltimore, MD: Brookes.

literacy skills.<sup>7</sup> Promoting enriching learning activities in the classroom and in the home, facilitated by all of the adults in children's lives, contributes to children's learning and developmental outcomes and is a central component of effective family engagement.

Family well-being is also a strong predictor of children's school readiness. Financial stability during the early childhood years has been found to improve children's academic achievement, promote positive behavior, and foster mental health.<sup>8</sup> Parents', in particular mothers', educational attainment is predictive of children's future economic mobility.<sup>9</sup> Families' with secure housing, health care, and access to nutritious food have positive effects on children's development and lack of access to these basic resources can have adverse effects.<sup>10</sup> Parental health and mental health can impact parenting and children's outcomes. For example, parental depression may contribute to less responsive parenting and is associated with anxiety and depression in children.<sup>11, 12</sup> Other parental mental health difficulties, such as anxiety, trauma, and substance abuse, can also contribute to children's behavioral and academic challenges.<sup>13, 14</sup> While many families are strong and resilient in the face of adversity, this research points toward an important fact: the programs where children learn and develop should not ignore family wellness if they want to meaningfully engage families and fulfill their mission to prepare children for school and academic success.

Supports that build on family strengths and promote family wellness may be provided in schools and early childhood programs through onsite comprehensive services. Supports can also be provided through partnerships with organizations and specialists in the community. One promising approach that combines an integrated set of family education, employment, workforce training, and related social service supports for adults and their children is referred to as a two-generation approach.<sup>15</sup> The goal of two-generation approaches is to lift families out of poverty and to support children's long-term outcomes.

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<sup>7</sup> Rodriguez, E., & Tamis-LeMonda, C. S. (2011). Trajectories of the home learning environment across the first five years: Associations with children's language and literacy skills at pre-kindergarten. *Child Development*, 82(4), 1058-1075.

<sup>8</sup> Duncan, G. J., & Magnuson, K. (2011). The long reach of early childhood poverty. *Pathways*, 22-27. Publication of the Stanford Center for the study of Poverty and Inequality.

<sup>9</sup> Aspen Institute. (2012). *Two Generations, One Future: Moving Parents and Children beyond Poverty Together*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute

<sup>10</sup> Understanding Family Engagement Outcomes: Family Wellbeing. (2014). National Center for Parent, Family and Community Engagement. Retrieved at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/family-well-being.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> Meadows, S. O., McLanahan, S. S., & Brooks-Gunn, J. (2007). Parental depression and anxiety and early childhood behavior problems across family types. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 69(5), 1162-1177.

<sup>12</sup> Waylen, A., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2010). Factors influencing parenting in early childhood: A prospective longitudinal study focusing on change. *Child: Care, Health and Development*, 36(2), 198-207.

<sup>13</sup> Mensah, F. K., & Kiernan, K. E. (2010). Parents' mental health and children's cognitive and social development. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*, 45(11), 1023-1035.

<sup>14</sup> Costello, E. J., Compton, S. N., Keeler, G., & Angold, A. (2003). Relationships between poverty and psychopathology: A natural experiment. *JAMA*, 290(15), 2023-2029.

<sup>15</sup> Aspen Institute. (2012). *Two Generations, One Future: Moving Parents and Children beyond Poverty Together*. Washington, DC: The Aspen Institute

In addition to family well-being, strong relationships between families and providers contribute to strong family engagement. Positive relationships between families and providers reinforce learning at home and in the community.<sup>16</sup> They enable two-way communication and the development of mutually beneficial partnerships, focused on promoting learning and development across home and early childhood settings. Research also indicates that families' positive attitudes about schools are associated with children's successful performance at school.<sup>17</sup>

Positive relationships with other families and community members also support family well-being. Parents who have more supportive and extensive social networks and feel greater connection to their communities create warmer, more responsive, and more stimulating home environments for their children; communicate better with their children; and feel more confident in their role as parents.<sup>18</sup>

Positive relationships require that providers are culturally and linguistically responsive to the families they serve. Culture refers to integrated patterns of human behavior that include the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, values, and institutions of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups.<sup>19</sup> Culturally and linguistically responsive family engagement refers to practices that honor the role of families' culture, language, and experience in supporting their children's learning and development. When families are invited to share information about their children and their experiences, providers gain a better understanding of children's cultural and linguistic backgrounds and learning preferences. Such sharing also leads to early identification of family concerns about a child's progress; improved strategies for supporting the child's learning at home; and overall program improvement in cultural and linguistic responsiveness.<sup>20, 21</sup> Cultural and linguistic responsiveness also requires that systems, programs, and personnel recognize their own cultures and biases, and work to value differing cultures and languages.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Porter, T., Guzman, L., Kuhfeld, M., Caal, S., Rodrigues, K., Moodie, S., Chrisler, A. & Ramos, M. (2012). Family-provider relationship quality: Review of existing measures of family-provider relationships. OPRE Report #2012-47, Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<sup>17</sup> Morrison, E., Rimm-Kauffman, S., & Pianta, R. C. (2003). A longitudinal study of mother-child interactions at school entry and social and academic outcomes in middle school. *Journal of School Psychology*, 41(3), 185–200.

<sup>18</sup> Understanding Family Engagement Outcomes: Family Connections to Peers and Community. (2014). National Center for Parent, Family and Community Engagement. Retrieved at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/ta-system/family/docs/rtp-family-connections.pdf>.

<sup>19</sup> Cross, T., Bazron, B., Dennis, K., & Isaacs, M., (1989). *Towards A Culturally Competent System of Care*, Volume I. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Child Development Center, CASSP Technical Assistance Center.

<sup>20</sup> Bruns, D. A., & Corso, R. M. (2001, August). *Working with culturally and linguistically diverse families*. ERIC Digest. Champaign, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary and Early Childhood Education. Retrieved from ERIC website: <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED455972.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> Kalyanpur, M., & Harry, B. (1997). A posture of reciprocity: A practical approach to collaboration between professionals and parents of culturally diverse backgrounds. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 6(4), 487–509.

<sup>22</sup> Hepburn, K. S. (2004). *Building culturally and linguistically competent services to support young children, their families, and school readiness*. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/hs3622h325.pdf>

## **Related Statutes and Policies**

Many of the Federal laws that govern the early childhood and elementary education systems reference the importance of family engagement. For example:

***The Head Start Act*** has consistently emphasized the role of families in children's learning and development since 1965 when the program was founded. Since that time, families have participated in the governance of Head Start programs. Head Start programs welcome families to participate in classroom activities and parent-teacher home visits; prioritize family members as potential employees; and offer families opportunities to participate in adult development and parent education activities. In Head Start and Early Head Start programs, families receive supports related to critical needs, family aspirations, and community resources.

***The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG)*** lists *promoting parent and family involvement in children's development in child care settings* as one of its purposes. The law further indicates that States must provide consumer education to parents and families on a variety of issues, including research and best practices concerning meaningful parent and family engagement. In addition, the law outlines a set of activities to improve the quality of child care. Among those allowable activities is providing professional development opportunities that address engaging parents and families in culturally and linguistically responsive ways, to expand their knowledge, skills, and capacity to become partners in supporting their children's positive development.

***The Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program*** (Home Visiting Program) supports voluntary, evidence-based home visiting services for at-risk pregnant women and parents with young children up to kindergarten entry. States, territories, and tribal entities receive funding through the Home Visiting Program, and have the flexibility to tailor the program to serve the specific needs of their communities. The Home Visiting Program builds upon decades of scientific research showing that home visits by a nurse, social worker, early childhood educator, or other trained professional during pregnancy and in the first years of life improve the lives of children and families by preventing child abuse and neglect, supporting positive parenting, improving maternal and child health, and promoting child development and school readiness.<sup>23</sup>

***Public Health Services Act, Title V, Part E, Section 561, Public Law 102-321, 42 U.S.C. - Comprehensive Community Mental Health Services for Children with Serious Emotional Disturbances (SED)*** This legislation and program was established to provide community-based systems of care for children and adolescents with a serious emotional disturbance and their families. Through grants to government entities, and political subdivisions (states, counties, towns, tribes, territories), this act requires that services are provided collaboratively across child-serving systems,

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVEE). Available at : <http://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/>.

including education systems; that each child or adolescent served receives an individualized service plan developed with the engagement and meaningful participation of the family and the child or youth, as applicable; that each individualized plan designates a care coordinator to assist the child and family; and that services and supports are provided across child serving systems to meet the mental, emotional and behavioral health needs of youth in these systems.

***The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*** emphasizes the need to enhance families' capacity to meet their children's needs and participate in their children's education. Part C of IDEA provides grants to assist states to implement a statewide system that provides early intervention services for eligible children with disabilities from birth to three years, and requires the development of an Individualized Family Service Plan in order to provide services to infants, toddlers, and their families. Part C emphasizes in its structure and requirements that infants and toddlers with disabilities are best served in the context of their families, and services provided through Part C enhance the capacity of families to meet their children's developmental and learning needs. Part B of IDEA, for preschool and school-aged children, provides grants to assist states to make a free appropriate public education available to eligible children with disabilities residing in the State and contains requirements to include parents as part of their child's Individualized Education Program team. Both Parts C and B of IDEA have provisions in place to protect children's and families' rights under the statute. Both Parts C and B also report on family engagement data under the required Annual Performance Reports, and the data is publicly available. In addition, IDEA funds discretionary grants to improve educational and developmental outcomes for children with disabilities, including a system of Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers to help families learn about services for their children and their children's disabilities, and how they can support their children's development and education.

***The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*** as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) requires that states and school districts engage parents and families in the work of ensuring positive outcomes for all students. School districts that receive Title I funds are required to have written parent and family engagement policies with expectations and objectives for implementing meaningful parent and family involvement strategies. They are required to involve parents and family members in jointly developing district plans and to provide technical assistance to schools on planning and implementing effective parent and family involvement activities to improve student academic achievement and school performance. There is also a new provision added by ESSA requiring that all school districts that receive Title I funds implement an effective means of outreach to parents of English learners, including holding regular meetings for those parents. Other references to the inclusion of parents and families in their children's education can be found throughout the ESEA.

In addition, HHS and ED have released family engagement frameworks that serve as tools for action. HHS' framework was developed for Head Start programs as a road map for implementing related Head Start Performance Standards (HSPS) and best practices. The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework uses a research-based,

organizational development approach to high performance family engagement. It specifies the structures and functions in early childhood organizations that can be integrated to bring about continuous learning and improvement, and to institutionalize and sustain effective family engagement practices. There is a strong emphasis on engagement that is systemic, embedded and integrated across organizations. The PFCE Framework was developed with input from researchers, training and technical assistance providers and parents, and it defines optimal family engagement outcomes for Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The PFCE Framework can be adapted for use in other early childhood programs, such as child care or pre-k programs, and some States are using it to guide statewide family engagement goals and outcomes.

ED's Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships offers guidance to States, districts and schools for providing opportunities to build both staff and family capacity to work as partners to improve student outcomes. The framework outlines both process and organizational conditions that support implementation of effective family engagement practices. The framework serves as a compass for guiding effective family engagement practices that are systemic, embedded and integrated across an organization; that build relationships between families and school staff; that are linked to student learning; and that create collaborative partnerships to support positive student outcomes. It is currently being used by States, districts and schools to guide their family engagement efforts.

### **Challenges**

Despite the demonstrated importance of family engagement and the emphasis placed on it across statutes and policies, family engagement is not equally valued or implemented across early childhood systems and programs for a variety of reasons, including:

- There may be a perception that family engagement practices are supplemental, rather than necessary, to successfully promote children's learning and development. Systems and programs that serve young children may place low priority on family engagement because they perceive their mission as focused on directly supporting children's intellectual, social-emotional, and physical development exclusively.
- Many State, program, district, and school policies make ambiguous reference to "family engagement" but provide few requirements and limited official guidance at the State and local levels to support implementation of family engagement policies and practices. Early childhood systems and programs may not have sufficient resources or appropriately allocate available resources to adequately support systemic approaches to family engagement.
- Early childhood systems and programs may foster family engagement without sufficient attention to hiring diverse staff, training staff to be culturally and linguistically responsive, and strategically analyzing the effects of implicit biases within systems and programs. This results in ineffective engagement with diverse families of young children.
- Early childhood systems and programs may not adequately invest in partnerships with diverse family leaders and family organizations.
- Teacher and provider workforce preparation and professional development programs do not typically include professional learning to support the implementation of effective family

engagement practices.

### **Opportunities**

Many early childhood systems and programs realize that they cannot optimally meet children's needs without engaging families. In order to realize the potential benefits of family engagement, early childhood programs should systematically include specific, measurable, and evidence-based family engagement strategies that are attuned to the needs and interests of a diverse array of primary caregivers, including but not limited to fathers and other male caregivers, mothers and other female caregivers, young parents, grandparents, and foster parents, among others.

In addition, States, SEAs, lead agencies for early intervention services and child care, LEAs, schools, and community-based early childhood programs can each play a critical role in developing effective family engagement policies and practices that enable providers and families to work together to improve child outcomes. Each system and program must see family engagement as a systemic investment and shared responsibility. As such, family engagement requires prioritization, investments of time and resources, and a willingness to change attitudes, practices, and policies. Each and every staff member, from administration to providers to support staff, plays a role in creating a culture that values families. Put another way, family engagement is everyone's business.

Other opportunities to strengthen families and improve outcomes for children occur through partnerships with a broad base of family leaders; family organizations that support families of children with and without disabilities, special health care and mental health needs; parent to parent programs; parent teacher associations; parent advisory councils; and community-based organizations that serve diverse families, including families of dual language learners.

## **PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE FAMILY ENGAGEMENT**

The first step in systemically embedding effective family engagement in early childhood systems and programs is to establish a culture in which families are seen as essential partners in the systems and programs that serve their children. The Departments consider the following practice principles foundational to establishing a culture that values family engagement. The practice principles are drawn from our respective frameworks, and they are embedded in the recommendations that follow. Adopting these practice principles across systems and programs in a strategic and coordinated manner will result in more benefits to children and families.

1. **Create continuity and consistency for children and families.** Promote a vision for family engagement that is consistent across systems and programs, and that can set the stage for families' involvement in their children's development and education at all ages.
2. **Value respectful and trusting relationships between families and professionals.** Promote shared responsibility for children's healthy development, learning and wellness by valuing families' experiences and strengths, and providing opportunities for shared learning. Encourage two-way communication by welcoming information from families on all aspects of the child's life and development, including their culture, traditions, and home language.

3. **Develop goal-oriented relationships with families that are linked to children's development and learning.** Develop ongoing relationships centered on children's well-being and success. Jointly work with families to identify specific strategies that support children's development and learning at home and in the classroom and community.
4. **Engage families around children's health, mental health, and social and emotional well-being.** Engage families around children's development, learning, and wellness, including physical health, mental health, and social and emotional needs. Ensure that programs and families know about child development related to these areas and have access to the tools they need, including concrete strategies to promote child well-being at home and in the classroom. Ensure that families and staff are connected with relevant community partners, such as early childhood mental health consultants and children's medical homes, as needed.
5. **Ensure that all family engagement opportunities are culturally and linguistically responsive.** Ensure to the maximum extent possible, that the environment, children's curricula and learning, and all family engagement opportunities respect, reflect, and embrace families' cultures, are devoid of bias, and are linguistically accessible.
6. **Build staff capacity to implement family engagement practice principles.** Prioritize professional development opportunities that support staff to view parents as capable, competent partners. Strengthen staff's ability to form positive, goal-oriented relationships with all families. Develop professional capacity in working with culturally and linguistically diverse communities, including immigrant communities, and in partnering with families who have children with disabilities, special health care needs, or other unique needs.
7. **Support families' connections and capabilities.** Provide opportunities for families to build upon their knowledge and skills to foster children's development, learning and wellness; advocate for their child and family; share experiences and expertise with other families; and take on leadership and advocacy roles in early childhood systems and programs. Connect families to family organizations that support families of children with and without disabilities, special health care and mental health needs; parent to parent programs; child care resource and referral agencies; parent teacher associations; parent advisory councils; and community-based organizations that serve diverse families, including families of dual language learners.
8. **Systemically embed effective family engagement strategies within early childhood systems and programs.** Align, integrate and coordinate family engagement strategies in all aspects of programming, including but not limited to: involving families in governance; establishing positions that focus exclusively on family engagement; identifying specific family engagement responsibilities and professional development opportunities for all roles across systems and programs; providing families with multiple and diverse opportunities for engagement; and creating physical environments that are welcoming and culturally and linguistically responsive.
9. **Develop strong relationships with community partners that support families.** Establish formal partnerships with community partners, such as after-school programs, social service agencies, adult education programs, one stop career centers, medical homes, public housing authorities, and libraries, to promote family wellness and adult learning, and enhance children's learning and family stability. Invite the community to celebrations and other events in the school

and programs.

10. **Continuously learn and improve.** Improve integrated and systemic family engagement practices by regularly collecting and analyzing data on the effectiveness of the practices, in order to guide decision-making and policy change and to inform technical assistance and professional development.

Implementing effective family engagement practices to promote positive child outcomes will require bold leadership and dedication from all institutions where children learn. The practice principles identified above are the foundation of the following recommendations at the State and local level. The recommendations are not an exhaustive list; rather, they are a selection of actions that can be taken to promote effective family engagement.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES ACROSS SYSTEMS AND WITHIN PROGRAMS**

States play a critical role in promoting family engagement. State policies and investments directly influence program and district investments, policies, and practices. In turn, program and school policies drive the professional practices that enable strong family engagement and, ultimately, positively influence young children's outcomes. Together, State and local policies and investments create the conditions for effective family engagement.

Systematic family engagement at the local, programmatic, and school levels begins with an organizational culture that welcomes all families, values family expertise and partnership, and recognizes families' central role in preparing children for success in school and beyond. This culture undergirds the strong policies, clear communication, and research-based practices that promote effective family engagement. The following recommendations build on the *Principles of Effective Family Engagement* and provide concrete action items across systems, including States, SEAs, lead agencies for early intervention services and child care, LEAs, schools, child care networks, and early childhood programs.

### **Plan for and prioritize family engagement**

Family engagement should be emphasized as a critical component in promoting children's learning and development across settings and services. As such, States should develop statewide early childhood and early elementary school policies on family engagement. State plans for early childhood systems and programs should include specific family engagement goals and strategies for implementation and evaluation. State policy makers should develop outreach strategies and partner with trusted State and community-based organizations that have existing connections and relationships with families in order to ensure that families have input in the plan development.

Consistent with the requirements for each program, specific and concrete family engagement and related well-being efforts should be incorporated into:

- State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care State plans

- Child Care and Development Fund State plans;
- IDEA Part C and Part B policies and procedures;
- Head Start State Collaboration Office strategic plans;
- ESEA Title I district parent and family engagement policies;
- State preschool expansion plans, including Preschool Development Grant plans;
- TANF (Temporary Assistance for Family Assistance) State plans;
- Maternal and Child Health Title V State Action plans; and
- Other State plans as appropriate.

LEAs, schools, child care networks, and early childhood programs should send a strong message that family engagement is a priority and that all families are valued as essential partners with systems and programs in supporting children’s development, learning, and wellness. LEAs, schools, and early childhood programs can do this by aligning their goals and outcomes with their respective State or Federal family engagement frameworks, such as the Head Start Framework for Parent, Family and Community Engagement; the Strengthening Families framework; ED’s Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships; or frameworks otherwise adopted in Child Care State plans or SEA plans.

Plans should clearly articulate the family engagement principles, goals for family engagement activities, specific actions and timelines to meet those goals, and evaluation activities to measure the attainment of the goals. They should be relevant and culturally responsive to communities, and a diverse array of families, administrators, teachers, community members, and other experts should guide the development of local, program-specific family engagement plans. In order to evaluate progress and make any changes needed to ensure continuous improvement, plans and data should be reviewed regularly, with input from families and community partners.

**Communicate consistent messages that support strong family engagement**

Early childhood systems’ public messages should emphasize the strengths and resilience of families and communities. Consistent and positive communication helps establish a culture of partnership between families and early childhood systems and programs. State agencies should provide clear messages to their staff, and to local schools and early childhood programs, emphasizing the importance of family engagement, and reinforcing that all families must be treated with respect and valued as experts and essential partners in their child’s learning and development.

States should align messages across the agencies, departments, and non-profits that house child-serving programs, like Head Start, public and private school systems, child care programs, early intervention, Women Infants and Children (WIC), after-school programs, and other social service providers. Many State Advisory Councils (SACs) on Early Childhood Education and Care, State Interagency Coordinating Councils (ICCs) for early intervention, and State Advisory Panels (SAPs) on special education can support consistent messaging across systems to signal that family engagement and family well-being are valued and critical for children’s success. SACs, ICCs, and SAPs can also serve as a model for local early childhood councils or networks to provide consistent messaging across their systems.

State systems should model how cultural and linguistic responsiveness is a cornerstone of effective family engagement by ensuring that all communication and outreach efforts are accessible to all families including those adults who are limited in their English proficiency or

have disabilities. . Informational written materials, such as enrollment announcements, parent handbooks or newsletters, for example, and other forms of outreach should be responsive to all caregivers including fathers and male caregivers; non-traditional primary caregivers like grandparents and foster parents; extended family members; and LGBT-headed families in recognition of the variety of ways that families are formed and evolve. State systems can also ensure that diverse families are aware of the opportunities to provide public comment at various forums and how they can request interpretation and other supports to provide public comment.

In addition, State and local systems should highlight how families can support their children's growth and learning through daily routines in their consumer education efforts by using national, State, or local public information campaigns or through partnerships with the many national and local non-profit organizations engaged in increasing awareness of how to support children's growth and learning. State and local systems can also reinforce the importance of family engagement by publically recognizing and rewarding LEAs, programs, and school exemplars for their effective family engagement practices.

### **Invest and allocate**

Adequate resource allocation and support facilitate implementing family engagement practices. State and local budgets should include uses of federal and other funds for family engagement. States should allocate investments dedicated to research-based family engagement practices through public-private partnerships, State initiatives, and Federal funds such as State-level ESEA formula grant funds (e.g., Title I State administrative funds), IDEA funds, or Child Care and Development Fund quality funds, as allowed by each program. Specific investments will vary based on State and community needs, and program requirements, but may include:

- ***Establishing or enhancing statewide technical assistance*** on family engagement in early childhood systems and programs. Technical assistance on family engagement may focus on expanding parent leadership and advocacy, enhancing existing professional development opportunities and coaching, or increasing consultation for local early childhood staff, e.g., embedding family engagement in expanded early childhood mental health consultation efforts.
- ***Hiring a family engagement specialist*** or designating an existing staff member to be responsible for ensuring that family engagement plans are well managed, executed, and improved across the system. These actions alone should not replace a commitment to implement systemic family engagement and investing in family engagement-specific professional development opportunities for all staff based on their role in systems and programs.
- ***Providing adequate workforce compensation and child-care reimbursement rates for time spent planning and implementing family engagement practices.*** Such support should be based on local needs, priorities, and goals determined at the program and school levels, in partnership with families.
- ***Supporting local administrators and providers*** to participate in sequenced, credit bearing, professional development opportunities centered on effective family engagement practices.

- ***Evaluating and continuously improving*** family engagement strategies and activities to identify and scale up best practices..
- ***Offering evidence-based parenting supports*** across early childhood systems and programs. Parenting support opportunities should be community-based and should center on families' roles as children's first and most important teachers, advocates, and nurturers (see Appendix).
- ***Establishing community parenting and family engagement hubs*** that can serve as platforms and welcoming environments that bring educators and families together to access information and engage in shared learning. These hubs should be located where families feel most welcome, such as the neighborhood school or a community center. Local early childhood councils, Child Care Resource and Referral agencies, Parent Training and Information Centers, and Community Parent Resource Centers could be key conveners for these centralized activities, for example.

### **Establish policies, procedures, and practices that support family engagement**

At the systems level, states and districts should conduct a policy review and prioritize policies that will most effectively support family engagement practices across systems and programs. State and system level policies should drive local and program procedures and practices, where possible.

Examples of policies, procedures, and practices that States could support include:

- Using Federal funds such as State-level ESEA formula grant funds (e.g., Title I State administrative funds) to support the implementation of more robust, research-based parent and family engagement practices in school districts;
- Promoting the use of recommended practices and early childhood quality rating and improvement systems that include tiers of measurable and research-informed family engagement indicators;
- Creating new staff positions, or reassigning current staff, to improve the implementation of statewide family engagement strategies and activities;
- Providing models of how to define roles and responsibilities for all staff (including administrators, providers, and administrative support and custodial staff) in implementing effective family engagement practices;
- Providing professional development and/or peer learning opportunities to improve staff capacity to implement effective family engagement practices;
- Providing valid assessment tools to measure family engagement, and providing training on using results to gauge progress and make needed modifications at the organizational or provider level;
- Identifying supports that can be offered to parents such as evidence-based parenting interventions and leadership development opportunities;

- Providing support in identifying community partners that can provide comprehensive services, such as health, mental health, or housing assistance to meet families' basic needs;
- Providing examples of how to create diverse opportunities for families to be involved in their child's development, learning, and wellness, including opportunities for peer learning and peer networking, and opportunities specifically for fathers, grandparents, young parents, and families with irregular work schedules; and
- Establishing policies that require local special education and bilingual education parent advisory groups to partner with district and school administrators and staff to evaluate current family engagement policies and practices.

At the local level, LEAs, schools, and early childhood programs should establish similar policies and procedures, and in addition prioritize practices and activities that include the following broad areas:

***Provide Access to Families and Invite Them to Participate in Learning Activities:*** Early childhood programs should establish family friendly policies and procedures that give families access to their children when the children are in the program or school. In addition to being generally welcome in the program or school environment, families should be invited to participate in their children's planned learning activities. For example, families can be invited to share their culture, traditions, and language. If the program serves children who are dual language learners, families of dual language learners can serve as language models and read, talk, or sing to children in their home language. This can be especially helpful if the provider does not speak the home language of the dual language learners in the program..

***Create Family Friendly Environments:***

Staff should welcome and be responsive to families when they visit their child's program, school, or classroom.

Communication with families should be in language that is easy to understand, and visual and written materials (e.g., bulletin boards, posters, newsletters, invitations to events, among others) should show the diversity of families, including male and

female parents and caregivers, same sex parents, and non-traditional caregivers. Learning materials, such as curricula, books and toys, should be as representative of the cultural, ethnic and linguistic makeup of the families in the program or school as possible.

***Create Opportunities for Engagement***

- ✓ Offer activities at times that meet families' schedules
- ✓ Provide information in clear language
- ✓ Provide information in a family's home language
- ✓ Create regular opportunities to mutually share information about a child's learning and development

***Support Family Connections:*** Connecting families to each other is an important component of family engagement. Local programs should promote family networks and social support by providing facility space and opportunities for parents to get together. They should offer opportunities at different times of the day and on weekends to ensure all families can participate. Some gatherings should be tailored to specific groups, such as fathers, young parents, or parents of children with developmental or health needs. Local programs should also make families aware of established peer networks as appropriate, such as Parent Training Information Centers or family-to-family health information centers (see Appendix).

**Develop Family and Professional Relationships Linked to Learning, Development, and Wellness:** Families and providers should track children’s progress together, and share activities that can be done at home and in the classroom. Health and developmental screenings should include parental input to better ensure the accuracy of screening results. Teachers can model reading, talking, and singing to young children for families that ask for support. Professionals can encourage families to engage with their children in their home language by providing enriching activities in the program that draw on families’ culture and traditions. Many providers take advantage of family involvement in social media and various technologies to support information about child development, children’s progress and family engagement around children’s learning.

**Provide Two-Way Communication:** Program policies and practices should facilitate two-way communication about children’s development—including cognitive, social-emotional, and physical development, learning, and wellness. Providers should invite families to share their expertise in conversations about their children, and draw on families’ experiences to suggest how families can best support their children’s progress at home and in the program. Providers should be able to communicate as directly as possible with all families, including families that speak languages other than English, finding interpreting services to facilitate communication between the provider and family as needed. Providers should be familiar with families’ cultures and home languages and work to ensure to the greatest extent possible that all information shared with families is in their home language, and in the delivery mechanism they prefer (e.g. phone, in person, text). Continuous and proactive communication will help avoid situations in which programs communicate with families only about concerns or problems.<sup>24</sup>

**Support Families as Decision Makers:** Schools and programs should establish policies that ensure all interested families are prepared to participate in planning, decision-making and oversight groups such as boards, councils, committees or working groups. Families, including adults with limited English proficiency or accessibility needs, should have opportunities to build upon their knowledge as leaders and advocates and engage in a dialogue with programs about the services the programs provide. For example, schools and programs could offer opportunities for families to receive leadership training, coaching or mentoring to enhance their leadership and advocacy skills.

**Establish Supportive Transitions to New Learning**

**Settings:** Programs should implement transition strategies that help ensure that transitions are as smooth as possible, for all families, especially families who have unique needs, such as those who are limited in their English proficiency, or those who have children with disabilities.<sup>25</sup> While transitions are generally challenging for most children and families, they are often particularly so for children with developmental or health concerns or for families that have limited English proficiency. Programs should ensure that these families, and families with other unique needs, have the supports they need to transition smoothly into their next setting.

*Transitions provide families opportunities to*

- ✓ Set high expectations
- ✓ Build advocacy skills
- ✓ Build leadership skills

<sup>24</sup> Ross, T. (2016). The differential effects of parental involvement on high school completion and postsecondary attendance. Education Policy Analysis Archives, 24(30). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14507/epaa.v24.2030>

<sup>25</sup> IDEA Parts C and B include specific requirements that must be met when a child is transitioning from receiving early intervention services under Part C to participating in a preschool program under Part B section 619.

Schools or programs should consider establishing transition teams to oversee policies and procedures for transitions. Individual transition team members could take the lead on facilitating transition meetings with families across settings. These meetings would provide opportunities for conversations between families, current providers, and prospective providers about child strengths, challenges, and needs. Transitions are also a great time to engage parents in setting high expectations for their child, family and school and to offer families opportunities to build on their leadership and advocacy skills in their child's next learning environment.

***Provide Family Supports:*** Training or information sessions can be offered on topics that are of interest to families such as promoting child development, learning, and wellness; addressing challenging behaviors; interpreting child assessment and developmental screening data; or navigating the educational system. Programs can also promote evidence-based parenting programs that build on families' strengths, meet families' interests and needs, enhance families' capacity to support their children's development and advocate for their children; and connect families to adult education and training as well as social supports services. While programs may have the capacity to implement many of these trainings, other community agencies that have expertise in specific areas of family interest can partner with programs to provide these services. Programs and schools should also ensure that families of children with disabilities and mental health concerns are connected to appropriate services in their community when requested.

In addition, LEAs, schools and programs can support family well-being by implementing community schools models or approaches, or using school social workers, family support staff, and mental health consultants as needed. LEAs, schools, and programs should establish partnerships with community-based health and social service providers and connect families when children are in vulnerable situations or when they seek help. Qualified community partners can address issues such as child and family hunger, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, parental substance abuse, depression and other mental health difficulties.

***Provide Voluntary Home Visits:*** Academic success is associated with trusting relationships between teachers and families that are established at the beginning of the school year through home visits.<sup>26</sup> To support ongoing relationship-building with families, programs should offer a schedule of voluntary home visits to occur at opportune times within the program year. The purpose of parent-teacher home visits is for families and teachers to get to know each other and communicate about children's goals, strengths, challenges, and progress. If home visits are not possible for all families, or families decline home visits, programs should ensure that providers and families communicate at the beginning of the year, and at regular intervals throughout a program year, to ensure that the relationship is started in a positive way.

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<sup>26</sup> Sheldon, S. and Jung, Sol Bee. (2015). *The Family Engagement Partnership: Student Outcome Evaluation*. Johns Hopkins University, Center on School, Family, and Community Partnerships.

### ***Establish Formal Relationships with Community***

**Partners:** Children learn in a variety of settings, starting at home and in their early learning programs, but also in libraries, museums, community centers, and after-school programs. Programs can establish formal relationships with community partners so that families have access to and are aware of the enriching learning opportunities for children and adults available in their community. Programs should encourage partners to adopt similar principles of family engagement, as appropriate, so that community partners welcome families as essential partners in their children's learning.

### *Establish formal partnerships with community partners such as:*

- ✓ After-school programs
- ✓ Social service agencies
- ✓ Medical homes
- ✓ Homeless shelters
- ✓ Parenting education programs
- ✓ Parent support networks
- ✓ One-stop career centers
- ✓ Adult education programs

In addition, LEAs, schools, and programs should also work with community partners to promote dual generation approaches that support both child and adult learning and development. Depending upon the needs and interests of families, community partnerships could support economic and educational supports for parents such as English language classes, financial education and coaching, sector-based workforce training and employment, or enrollment in adult education, and higher education courses.

***Make Data about Children's Progress Accessible and Understandable to Parents:*** To the extent permissible under applicable privacy laws, make all data easily accessible to families and support them, individually or in peer groups, in interpreting and using their children's assessment and screening data to promote home and school coordination that supports children's optimal learning and development.. Child data should be shared and discussed with families in their preferred language. In addition, programs that are subject to privacy laws should help parents understand their privacy rights in relation to their child's records, such as their rights under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), IDEA, and State privacy laws, where applicable.

### **Establish workforce capacity building that supports family engagement**

Positive relationships between professionals and families are at the heart of effective family engagement. In addition to clearly communicating the principles of effective family engagement, States and programs should support and encourage leaders, providers, and support staff to receive ongoing training and coaching in implementing effective family engagement practices. States should incorporate core competencies specific to family engagement into existing competency frameworks for providers. States and programs can support the development of these competencies through their professional development systems, training and technical assistance, and ongoing coaching and consultation efforts.

States can also partner with institutions of higher education to ensure family engagement is included in early and elementary educator degree programs and practicum experiences. This will help to ensure that graduates have the knowledge, reflective capacity, and concrete skills necessary to form strong relationships with families. Institutions of higher education may also be valuable partners to States and local programs in implementing statewide and local training, technical assistance, coaching, and consultation activities.

LEAs, schools, and programs should also ensure that both pre- and in-service professional

development includes concrete strategies for building positive relationships with families. Program administrators should measure their family engagement efforts to determine whether or not current practices are adequate for building the kinds of positive relationships that best support family engagement and improved child outcomes. Subsequently, the results of those evaluation efforts could be used to carefully select professional development strategies for program staff that will improve the quality of relationships between providers and families. LEAs, schools and programs should allow staff the time and space to plan, implement, and evaluate family engagement activities in partnership with families.

LEAs, schools and programs should consider training for staff on communicating with parents about children's progress. Such training might include strengthening provider skills around collecting, interpreting, and communicating child-level data; building parent capacity for understanding child data; informing parents of their rights in relation to child-level data; giving and receiving parent feedback about their child's learning and developmental needs; and linking child data to activities families can do at home (e.g. read, talk, sing, experiment) to promote children's development, learning, and wellness.

### **Develop and integrate family engagement data for continuous improvement in systems and programs**

States and programs should collect data, to the extent permissible under applicable privacy laws, about the extent to which early childhood systems and programs are engaging families, the strategies that they are using, and the effectiveness of those strategies. States and programs can use this data to better understand current policy and practice, and provide technical assistance as needed to local systems and program staff. Local systems and program staff should use family engagement data to improve their efforts with families, including disaggregated data. Examples of data that may be useful for system and program continuous improvement include:

- Child care licensing or quality rating and improvement system indicators related to family engagement, such as culturally and linguistically responsive practices, and pre-service training and in-service coaching for child care staff and administrators;
- Professional development registries that identify whether and to what extent the workforce has access to or has received family engagement focused training;
- Higher education coursework to determine which family engagement practices are included in teacher and administrator preparation programs;
- Outcomes for underserved groups, including children with disabilities;
- Indicators related to family outcomes and parent involvement in IDEA Parts C and B Annual Performance Reports;
- Family surveys that ask families for input on their experiences including those related to home visiting programs and Academic Parent Teacher Teams' student data sharing related to progress monitoring, administered in formats and languages that encourage participation; and
- Head Start family interests, needs and services data.

Data collection efforts should help State and local systems and programs monitor progress toward their goals, as detailed in their family engagement plans. The specific data collected will be based on the systems' and programs' goals, but may include assessments of aspects of the programs' climate, such as the extent to which programs create family-friendly environments and foster positive staff and family relationships. In collecting qualitative data, it

is important to incorporate input from providers, administrators, family support and family engagement specialists, and families themselves. Incorporating families in systemic and programmatic evaluation is a key strategy for improving family engagement to promote children’s development, learning, and wellness. Systematic input from families—across time, activities, and topics—helps to create a culture of shared responsibility for improving child outcomes.

Data about family engagement strategies and activities could also be analyzed alongside child data for groups of children if permissible under applicable privacy laws. By tracking the extent to which systems and programs engage families alongside measurement of children’s development, learning, and wellness, LEAs, schools and programs can make decisions about which family engagement practices are associated with improved children’s outcomes for groups of children.

- Examples of Program Quality Indicators*
- ✓ Family satisfaction with program effectiveness
  - ✓ Assessments of quality of relationships
  - ✓ Number of communication efforts
  - ✓ Families completing training
  - ✓ Frequency of reviewing child data
  - ✓ Discussion of screenings and assessments
  - ✓ Number of professional development activities with family engagement focus
  - ✓ Changes in family engagement practices

Some indicators that may contribute to an understanding of the quality and effectiveness of their family engagement strategies include:

- Family satisfaction with program’s effectiveness in promoting their child’s learning and development
- Family satisfaction with family engagement opportunities;
- A valid and reliable assessment of the quality of relationships with families (See Appendix);
- The number of home visits or other communication efforts made by teachers;
- The number of families that complete a parenting intervention or advocacy training and the effects of such interventions on intended outcomes;
- Improvements in child attendance;
- How often teachers and parents review child data together and use it to guide practices;
- How often teachers and providers solicit family input as part of children’s developmental screenings and assessments, discuss the results with families in a timely way, and consistently link those results to activities to enrich children’s learning in the program and at home; and
- The number of professional development opportunities for providers in family engagement, and the result of those opportunities in changing provider practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

Families are their children’s first and most important teachers, advocates, and nurturers. As such, strong family engagement is central—not supplemental—to the success of early childhood systems and programs that promote children’s healthy development, learning, and wellness. Effective family engagement practices are a marker of quality early childhood programming. Together, States, LEAs, and schools and early childhood programs have the responsibility to promote and implement effective family engagement to improve children’s learning, development, and wellness.

## APPENDIX: FAMILY ENGAGEMENT RESOURCES

The resources included here are examples provided as resources for the reader's convenience. The list is not exhaustive. The following resources can be used, adopted or adapted by States, lead agencies for early intervention and child care, LEAs, and schools and community-based early childhood programs to develop and implement family engagement practices. The U.S. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services do not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of outside information provided. Further, the inclusion of information or websites do not reflect their importance, nor is it intended to endorse any views expressed, or products or services offered.

### Family Engagement Frameworks

*The Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships:* The Dual Capacity framework supports families, schools, districts and states in building capacity for student achievement and school improvement. The Framework outlines a process that schools and districts can use to build the type of effective family engagement that will make schools the centers of their communities.

- <http://www2.ed.gov/documents/family-community/partners-education.pdf>

*The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework:* The framework helps providers assess and track progress across key indicators of effective family engagement to support children's learning and development.

- <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/framework/interactive.html>
- *Using the Head Start Parent, Family and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework in Your Program: Markers of Progress*  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/dmop/en-us/>

### Federally Funded Technical Assistance Resources

*Administration for Children and Families (ACF) National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (NCPFCE)* NCPFCE, jointly administered by the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care supports family well-being, effective family and community engagement, and children's school readiness. The Center focuses on training and technical assistance and resource development. The Center promotes staff-family relationship building practices that are culturally and linguistically responsive; integrated and systemic family engagement strategies that are outcomes-based; and consumer education, family leadership, family economic stability, and individualized support for families.

- <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family>
- *Building Partnerships: A Guide to Building Relationships with Families*

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/pgor/>

- *Building Foundations for Economic Mobility*  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/family/economic-mobility-foundations>
- *Compendium of Parenting Interventions*: The Compendium profiles parenting interventions for families of children birth to age five that are research-based.  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/compendium-of-parenting.pdf>
- *Father Engagement*: Father engagement implementation resources.  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/father-engagement>
- *Family Engagement and Ongoing Child Assessment*: Discover how programs can share information with families about children's learning and development. Identify specific strategies that support relationship building with families.  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/family-engagement-and-ongoing-child-assessment-081111-2.pdf>
- *Family Engagement and School Readiness Resources*  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/school-readiness/engage-readiness.html>
- *Family Engagement in Transitions: Transition to Kindergarten*  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/docs/transitions-kindergarten.pdf>
- *Head Start Relationship-Based Competencies: Self-Assessment Tools for Staff and Supervisors*  
This resource outlines skills and strategies for staff and supervisors working with families in line with the Head Start Program Performance Standards.  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/foundations/ohs-rbc.pdf>
- *Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Simulation: Boosting School Readiness through Effective Family Engagement Series*: Explore and practice everyday strategies to develop relationships with families.  
[http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/pfcea\\_simulation](http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/pfcea_simulation)
- *Using Data for Program and Family Progress*: Office of Head Start: Measuring What Matters Series of Resources and exercises in data management for data driven family engagement. <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/assessing/assess.html>

*Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Early Childhood Quality Assurance Center*  
The National Center on Early Childhood Quality Assurance (ECQA Center) supports state and community leaders and their partners in the planning and implementation of rigorous approaches to quality in all early care and education settings for children from birth to school age.

*QRIS Resource Guide*

- <https://grisguide.acf.hhs.gov/>

*Center for Parent Information and Resources (CPIR)* The center, funded by the Office of Special Education Programs in the Department of Education, serves as a central resource of information for parents of children with disabilities, linking families to valuable resources and the Parent Training and Information Centers and the Community Parent Resource Centers throughout the country. Resources on a wide variety of topics, including advocacy, parent involvement, and specific disabilities, among others.

- <http://www.parentcenterhub.org/>

*Centers for Disease Control (CDC)*

- *Learn the Signs, Act Early - The Watch Me! Celebrating Milestones and Sharing Concerns* training in particular speaks to techniques, strategies to encourage families to engage in developmental monitoring, including tips on appropriate ways to communicate with families.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/>

- *Essentials for Parenting Toddlers and Preschoolers* - This website will help parents handle some common parenting challenges to help parents feel more confident and enjoy helping their child grow.

<http://www.cdc.gov/parents/essentials/>

*Department of Health and Human Services Home Visiting Evidence of Effectiveness (HomVee)* provides an assessment of the evidence of effectiveness for home visiting program models that target families with pregnant women and children from birth to kindergarten entry.

- <http://homvee.acf.hhs.gov/>

*Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center* provides information on many early childhood topics for families of children with disabilities and professionals.

- <http://ectacenter.org/>

*Family and Community Engagement, U.S. Department of Education* These webpages provide links to numerous free resources for families and schools.

- <http://www.ed.gov/family-and-community-engagement>

*The Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality (FPTRQ) Measures*

The Family and Provider/Teacher Relationship Quality measures are comprehensive tools that assess the relationships between families and early care and education providers for children birth to five years of age (including family service staff in Head Start). The measures are appropriate for use across different types of early care and education settings and can be embedded for use in QRIS and professional development systems at the state level.

- <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/relationship/measuring-relationship-quality.html>

*The Handbook on Family and Community Engagement* was created by the Center on Innovation

& Improvement with funding and support from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Elementary and Secondary Education.

- <http://www.schoolcommunitynetwork.org/downloads/FACEHandbook.pdf>

*National Center for Cultural Competence* funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Services Administration contributes to the body of knowledge on cultural and linguistic competency within systems and organizations.

- <http://nccc.georgetown.edu/>

*National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness*

- <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic>
- *The Importance of Home Language*  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/home-language.htm>

*National Center for Family/Professional Partnerships*

The center, funded by the Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, provides leadership in helping families of children and youth with special health care needs and disabilities partner with professionals to improve care.

- <http://www.fv-ncfpp.org>

*National Center for Homeless Education's Resources on Parent Involvement* The center is the technical assistance center for the Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and provides research, resources, and information enabling communities to address the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness.

- [http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/parent\\_inv.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/parent_inv.php)

*The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth (NDTAC)* The center, funded by the Department of Education, serves as a national resource center to provide direct assistance to States, schools, communities, and parents seeking information on the education of children and youth who are considered neglected, delinquent, or at-risk.

- <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/topic-areas/family-and-community-engagement>

*Office of English Language Acquisition's English Learner Toolkit – "Chapter 10: Ensuring Meaningful Communication with Limited English Proficient Parents"* This chapter provides tools such as translation resources for educators to best communicate with limited English proficient parents to improve student outcome. The chapter also includes detailed information and tips on how to establish a dual capacity-building framework for strong school-family partnerships.

- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/english-learner-toolkit/chap10.pdf>

*Read Talk Sing Together Every Day! Toolkit for Families and Early Childhood Development Teachers:* These tip Sheets for Families, Caregivers and Early Learning Educators support talking, reading and singing together every day.

- <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/talk-read-and-sing-together-every-day>

*You for Youth: Online Professional Learning and Technical Assistance for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers* is an online community for afterschool professionals. The website

has a section dedicated to family engagement, providing resources and tools on how to connect with families. These resources can be utilized by anyone looking for free technical assistance resources in a number of areas including literacy and family engagement.

- <https://y4y.ed.gov/>
- Family engagement toolkit: <https://y4y.ed.gov/tools/#family>
- Webinars: <https://y4y.ed.gov/webinars/family-engagement-resource-providers-webinars>

### **Associations and Organizations**

*The Annenberg Institute for School Reform:* A national policy-research and reform support organization at Brown University that promotes quality education for all children, especially in urban communities.

- <http://annenberginstitute.org/>

*Center for the Study of Social Policy*

*Strengthening Families*™ is a protective factors framework based on engaging families, programs and communities in building five protective factors.

- <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengtheningfamilies>

*Coalition for Community Schools:* An alliance of national, State and local organizations in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks.

- <http://www.communityschools.org/>

*Division for Early Childhood (DEC):* A membership organization, it promotes policies and advances evidence-based practices that support families and enhance the optimal development of young children (0-8) who have or are at risk for developmental delays and disabilities. DEC is an international membership organization for those who work with or on behalf of young children (0-8) with disabilities and other special needs and their families.

- <http://www.dec-sped.org/>
- *DEC Recommended Practices* provides guidance to families about the most effective ways to improve the learning outcomes of children in early childhood special education.  
<http://www.dec-sped.org/recommendedpractices>

*Harvard Family Research Project:* The project addresses issues of access and equity in learning, and advances family and community engagement practices that reinforce success for all children

- <http://www.hfrp.org>
- *Breaking New Ground: Data Systems Transform Family Engagement in Education:* Harvard Family Research Project and the National PTA developed this brief that highlights sharing student data as a way to engage families and improve parent–teacher communication.

<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/breaking-new-ground-data-systems-transform-family-engagement-in-education2>

- *Family Engagement Teaching Cases*  
<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/publications-series/family-engagement-teaching-cases>
- *Family Involvement Makes a Difference in School Success* presents findings from HFRP's ongoing, in-depth review of research and evaluated programs that link family involvement in children's education to student outcomes.  
<http://www.hfrp.org/publications-resources/browse-our-publications/family-involvement-makes-a-difference-in-school-success>
- *FINE: Family Involvement Network of Educators*: FINE is a network of community educators committed to strengthening family involvement practices, promoting family involvement evaluation, and advancing professional development in family involvement. FINE produces an email newsletter, which regularly highlights new resources for strengthening family, school, and community partnerships.  
<http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/>

*Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)*: The video features the Institute for Educational Leadership's focus group meeting of school district leaders and IEL planning partners. This is part of their District Leaders Network on Family & Community Engagement project which advocates for the importance of family and community engagement.

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g9-r1MjVxGY&feature=youtu.be>

*The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)* is a professional membership organization that works to promote high-quality early learning for all young children, birth through age 8, by connecting early childhood practice, policy, and research.

- <http://www.naeyc.org/>
- *NAEYC's Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria* are designed to promote the quality of children's daily experiences, and they include standards related to provider relationships with families.  
<http://www.naeyc.org/academy/content/introduction-naeyc-accreditation-standards-and-criteria>
- *NAEYC's Engaging Diverse Families* project, which includes the six principles for effective engagement, as well as profiles of programs demonstrating best practices.  
<http://www.naeyc.org/familyengagement>
- *NAEYC Family Checklist* supplements the Program Self-Assessment Checklist to help track and analyze a program's effectiveness with individual families.  
<http://www.naeyc.org/familyengagement/resources/family-checklist>

- *NAEYC for Families* provides information, updates and ideas for parents and families about their child's learning and development.  
<http://families.naeyc.org/>
- *NAEYC's Standards for Early Childhood Professional Preparation* can be used in professional development systems, state policy development, and in program improvement planning.  
<http://www.naeyc.org/ecada/standards>

*National PLACE*: A coalition of non-profit family-driven organizations.

- <http://parentsatthetable.org/>

*State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network*

- *Village Building and School Readiness: Closing Opportunity Gaps in a Diverse Society*: This publication from the State Early Childhood Policy Technical Assistance Network is based on the belief that we will not succeed in ensuring that children start school healthy and prepared for success without the involvement of their families and communities.  
[www.finebynine.org/uploaded/file/VBSR.pdf](http://www.finebynine.org/uploaded/file/VBSR.pdf)

## **Tools for Families**

*Child Care Aware*: Find quality child care for your child.

- <http://childcareaware.org/>

*Flamboyant Foundation*: These tools can help you find creative ways to make parent/ teacher conferences more successful and meaningful.

- [http://flamboyantfoundation.org/resources\\_and\\_publications/parent-teacher-conferences-resource-tools/](http://flamboyantfoundation.org/resources_and_publications/parent-teacher-conferences-resource-tools/)

*Office of Civil Rights, Schools' Civil Rights Obligations to English Learner Students and Limited English Proficient Parents* provides resources for limited English proficiency parents on their legal rights.

- <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html>

*Office of Head Start (OHS) Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center Head Start Locator*

- <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>

*(OHS) Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center: For Families Resources*

- <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/for-families>

*(OHS) Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center Program Governance*

- <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/operations/mang-sys/program-gov/program-governance.html>

*Parents as Teachers Fatherhood Toolkit*: This website provides resources for fathers to become more successfully involved in parenting and maximize the care they can give their children in their role as a father.

- <http://www.parentsasteachers.org/resources/promoting-responsible-fatherhood/fatherhood-toolkit>

*Serving on Groups That Make Decisions: A Guide for Families* is a guidebook for family members who are serving on decision-making groups.

- [www.servingongroups.org](http://www.servingongroups.org)

*Transitioning to Kindergarten: A Toolkit for Early Childhood Educators*: A toolkit developed by the National Center for Learning Disabilities, it contains materials for families.

- <http://www.getreadytoread.org/transition-kindergarten-toolkit/print-the-toolkit>