

Table 2 – Working Definitions of Key Elements of High Quality Family-Provider Relationships

A. Attitudes:

1. Respect
 - Valuing the child; being non-judgmental; courteous; non-discriminatory; respect for families' cultural and linguistic preferences, divergent opinions of parents (e.g., on managing children's behavior/how to socialize children), parents' pace with regard to making changes
2. Commitment and Caring
 - Willingness to be flexible to needs of families, work as "more than a job", encouraging, accessible, consistent, sensitive to children/families
3. Empowerment
 - Equity and perception of competence: having expectations for child's progress, meeting individual's special needs; identification of families' strengths, competencies, and resources; including family members as equal partners
4. Openness to Change
 - Willingness to alter one's normal practices and flexibility to make these changes
5. Contextual
 - Appreciation for the broader context in which children's development and family's situations are situated; viewing the family as a unit, rather than focusing on an individual child

B. Knowledge:

1. Theoretical/Substantive Knowledge
 - a) Family functioning
 - Understanding the dynamics of the family
 - Understanding the factors that affect how a family interacts
 - b) Child development
 - Provider understands the different domains of child development
 - Understanding what can be done to facilitate development across various child development domains
 - c) Effective parenting skills
 - Understand what are effective parenting skills, such as anger management, engaging children in play, and setting boundaries
2. Family/Child-Specific Knowledge
 - Whether information about the child is on file
 - Whether the provider understands, knows, and/or is aware of the specific needs of the child
 - Whether the provider knows community resources that are available to the parents that meet the needs of the child
 - Ongoing reciprocal information gathering among providers, programs, and families
 - Families' culture/context/situations influencing the family; children's specific abilities and needs; family members' specific abilities, needs, and goals

C. Practices:

1. Relational Skills
 - Positive, two-way communication that is responsive to families' preferences and provider's personal boundaries
 - Opportunities for communication with parents about children, family, and self
 - Sensitivity, flexibility, and responsiveness to support families' identified needs and goals
 - Equitable, culturally-responsive relationship between provider/program and family
 - Inclusion of diverse languages
2. Goal-Oriented Skills
 - a) Advocate for and connect families

- Advocate for and connect families to peer and community supports/resources
 - b) Engage in joint goal setting
 - Collaborate with and engage families in the program through joint goal setting and decision-making
 - c) Empower families to advocate for themselves
 - Particularly in the transition to other ECE arrangements, school, or when trying to obtain social services
 - d) Provide child-specific information
 - Sharing information related to the individual child related to the child's development or family supports
- D. Environmental features:
 1. Invitational and welcoming environment
 - Open door policy, inviting parents to participate, encouraging parent input into educational programming, including parents on advisory boards
 2. Systems or media for communication with families
 - Bulletin boards/newsletters, texting, Facebook
 3. Materials reflective of families
 - Culturally and linguistically reflective, inclusive of fathers, children with disabilities)
 4. Resources for families: Providing information
 - Resources offered by the ECE setting and the community
 5. Resources for families: Chances for peer-to-peer networking (formal or informal)