

## **Choice and Voice: Collaborating for Powerful Family Engagement and Leadership Practices**



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TO THE  
FUTURE

# **ENGAGEMENT GUIDE**

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# Session Objectives

Participants will:

- describe the continuum of reciprocal relationships that support family leadership.
- develop a personal action plan for utilizing tools and resources to facilitate advancement on the continuum of reciprocal relationships that support family leadership.
- connect their own personal professional practices with strengths-based attitudes and relationship-based practices that facilitate family partnerships and leadership.
- engage in critical self-reflection to examine their own beliefs and family partnership practices as they relate to families across the range of diversity.
- become more aware of strengths-based attitudes and relationship-based practices for each stage on the continuum of family partnerships.

# Practices That Center and Support Families

Family-centered practices ensure delivery of culturally competent and family responsive early childhood intervention that respects and facilitates a family's active partnership and participation in assessment, planning, implementation, and monitoring of the interventions delivered to their child and themselves.

Practitioners deliver family-centered practices when they:

- Build a relationship and a partnership with each child's caregiving family to support their participation in their child's intervention and learning.
- Support families in their caregiving role of their child.
- Use effective communication (listening, speaking, writing) skills with all families across cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- Include the family in all components of the early childhood intervention service delivery process.
- Provide information, guidance, and education to families about child development and their child's health and safety needs.
- Provide information, guidance, and education to families about regulations, policies, and procedures for eligibility, intervention, and transition under IDEA and other early childhood programs.
- Provide information, guidance, and education to families about early childhood intervention and inclusive service delivery models.
- Collaborate with the family to identify the family's strengths, needs, concerns, and priorities.
- Refer families to resources and services to help them meet the needs of their child, their family, and themselves.
- Provide information to the family about parental rights and safeguards and how to advocate for themselves, their family, and their child. (Early Childhood Personnel Center, n.d.)

## Continuum of Reciprocal Relationships that Facilitate Family Leadership



*"Families are key to ensuring equitable learning pathways for children that include high-quality in-school and out-of-school learning opportunities".*

*-Global Family Research Project, 2018*

## Guiding Principles of Reciprocal Relationships with Families

Principle	Looks Like	Example
<b>Responsive Relationships</b>	Families experience responsive relationships with the people who work with them, in which the family story and partnership is valued.	
<b>Shared Decisions</b>	Families are equal partners and active participants in goals and decisions about their child's well-being, development, and learning. They have choice and voice.	
<b>Welcoming Environments</b>	Spaces that are welcoming and safe for families are created as a result of family choice and voice in needs assessments and planning.	
<b>Communication</b>	Communication is a two-way street, easy to understand, and ongoing. How and when families wish to communicate is considered.	
<b>Advocacy</b>	Families develop skills to serve as leaders who advocate for other families, their children, themselves, and their communities. Families' voices are heard, and they are included as decision-makers at all systems levels.	
<b>Program Planning</b>	Families' voices, experiences, viewpoints, and expertise are an essential component in planning and improvement processes.	
<b>Accountability</b>	Programs are held accountable on how they partner with families in self-assessment, planning, and program evaluation.	

(Adapted from North Carolina Early Childhood Family Engagement and Leadership Framework, 2020; Grubbs & LeGrant, 2022)

### Building Relationships with Families

#### Strengths-Based Attitudes

- All families have strengths.
- Families are the first and foremost important teacher to their children.
- Families are our partners with a critical role in their child's development.
- Families have expertise about their child and their family.
- Families' contributions are important and valuable.

#### Relationship-Based Practices

- Focus on the family-child relationship.
- Observe and describe the child's behavior to open communication with the family.
- Reflect on the family's individual and cultural perspectives.
- Reflect on your personal and cultural perspectives.
- Support parental competence (the parents' skills & self-confidence).
- Value a family's passion (working with both their positive and negative feelings).

(Adapted from the National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, n.d.,  
North Carolina Early Learning Network, 2020)

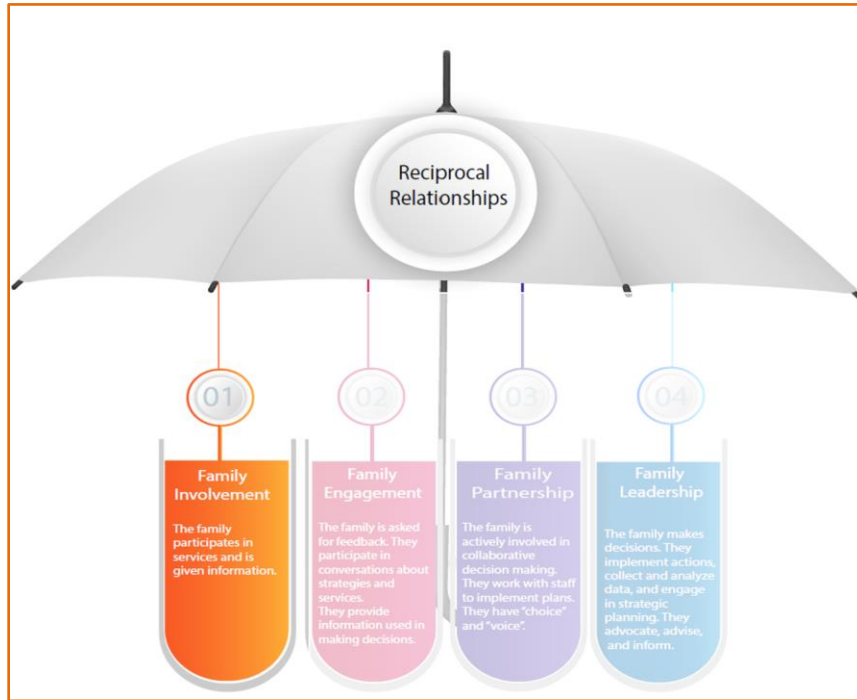
**LAFF Active Listening Strategy**

		<b>Strategies &amp; Examples</b>
<b>L</b>	Listen, empathize, and communicate respect.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use statements that demonstrate empathy.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “I can understand...”</li> <li>○ “That must be frustrating.”</li> <li>○ “So you feel...”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Communicate respect and appreciation.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Thanking parent for their time.</li> <li>○ “I appreciate you contacting me.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>A</b>	Ask questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use open-ended questions vs. yes/no questions.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “How can I help?”</li> <li>▪ “How might you work on _____ during your routines at home?”</li> <li>▪ “How might you do that?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ What:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “What times of the day might work better?”</li> <li>▪ “What is most important to you right now?”</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ Why:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “Why do you think...”</li> </ul> </li> <li>○ When:                   <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ “When do you...”</li> <li>▪ “When can you...”</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Use imagery/hypothetical situations.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “If I were there, what would I see when....”</li> <li>○ “What might that look like...”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Seek clarification.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “Tell me a little more about...”</li> <li>○ “Let’s pause to make sure we’re on the same page.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>F</b>	Focus on the family.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to concerns.</li> <li>• Ask about routines and resources.</li> <li>• Review information that has been shared &amp; check for accuracy               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “What I heard you say is...”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Comment on observations.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ “I’ve noticed that...”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>F</b>	Find a first step.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring the conversation full circle.</li> <li>• Consider information obtained and think about next/first step(s).</li> <li>• Identify at least one goal/next step, the specifics of who is responsible and when a follow-up meeting will take place.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from McNaughton & Vostal, 2010; North Carolina Early Learning Network, 2020)

# Family Involvement

We will focus on ways in which families can be fully involved in their child’s development and learning. Family involvement has been characterized as including “demonstrable actions...like attendance at events and reading to one’s child” as well as participating in prescribed activities that the program organizes.



## Key Takeaway

It’s essential that practitioners: know their own worldview, learn about the families in the communities that they are serving, acknowledge and respect differences between their experiences and perceptions and those of the families they serve, and strive to reach goals that have been co-created by families and practitioners and support the child’s functional skill development.





## Notes

[illegible]

## Before the Meeting: Tips for Families

### YOU'VE GOT THIS!

- ✚ You are your child's first teacher.
- ✚ You are here to be a voice for your child.
- ✚ You know your child best.
- ✚ You can suggest changes for improvement.
- ✚ What you see today will not always be your reality.
- ✚ The future of your family is bright.
- ✚ Today you will plan for your child's future!

### YOUR VOICE MATTERS

*Becoming the advocate your child deserves will require that you fully participate in their meetings. Preparing ahead is fundamental to your child's successful educational and functional outcomes. Remember...you are the expert on your child, and your voice is valuable in sharing with people the strengths, needs, and interests of your child. You make the difference! You are your child's first teacher. This is your opportunity to contribute your perspective of lifelong and close connection as you have bonded with, taught, and played with your child.*

### PREPARE TO PARTICIPATE

*Before your child's meeting, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:*

1. How does my child learn best?
2. What are my child's strengths and needs?
3. How does my child self-soothe or calm?
4. What are my child's interests and hobbies?
5. What are my child's dislikes?
6. How does my child communicate?
7. How does my child interact with adults?
8. How does my child play with children?

*Consider the following statements and fill in the blanks:*

1. I would like to see \_\_\_\_\_ in the next 6/12 months.
2. I would like to increase \_\_\_\_\_ in the next 6/12 months
3. I would like to decrease \_\_\_\_\_ in the next 6/12 months.
4. I want my child to progress with \_\_\_\_\_ in the next 5 years.
5. I desire to see growth in the area(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ in the next 20 years.

(Derman-Sparks et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2014; NAEYC, 2022)

6. My child needs \_\_\_\_\_ to learn new concepts.
7. My child needs \_\_\_\_\_ to stay motivated.
8. My child needs \_\_\_\_\_ to remain engaged.
9. My greatest concern is \_\_\_\_\_.
10. My vision for my child's future employment is \_\_\_\_\_.
11. My vision for my child's future family is \_\_\_\_\_.
12. My dream for my child is \_\_\_\_\_.

(Derman-Sparks et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2014; NAEYC, 2022)

## Before the Meeting: Practitioner Tips

### YOU'VE GOT THIS!

- You invite families to participate in decision making and goal setting for their child.
- You have bidirectional communication with your families in their home language.
- You provide families with tools to achieve their goals.
- You encourage families to be intentionally and proactively engaged in their child's development and learning experience.
- You partner with families and value their strengths and contributions.

### OUR FAMILIES ARE ESSENTIAL

*The ultimate goal of family engagement is to support the learning and development of children. Recognizing that families are essential for children's cognitive, emotional-social, adaptive, language and literacy development and for their life success. It is the role of the early learning practitioner to equip families with information, skills, resources, and experiences to navigate the system of their child's early learning program and become the advocate their child needs to develop successful educational and functional outcomes. Remember...families are the expert on their child, and your support is valuable in shaping the way that families navigate and advocate on behalf of their children. This is your opportunity to listen to the voices of families as they share their values and goals for their children which will help you to bring strong, collaborative, trusting working partnerships into being.*

### PREPARE TO PARTICIPATE

*Before meeting with families, you may want to ask yourself the following questions:*

1. Have I equipped families with knowledge about education and early childhood?
2. Do I support every family's right to make decisions for and with their children?
3. Have I taken the time to learn about the families with whom I work and their community context?
4. Do I maintain consistently high expectations for family engagement and provide intentional and responsive supports?

(Derman-Sparks et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2014; NAEYC, 2022)

5. Do I focus on strengths-based language and positive, beliefs and practices when communicating with families?
6. Have I reflected on my own beliefs, values, and biases and how these affect my interactions with families and in my practice?
7. Do I use a strengths-based approach when working with families to plan program offerings that match their actual needs and preferences?
8. When speaking with families, do I practice active listening, use family-appropriate language, and monitor my body language?

(Derman-Sparks et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2020; Iruka et al., 2014; NAEYC, 2022)

### Strategies that Facilitate Family Involvement

#### Addressing Procedural Barriers

- Scheduling meetings at times and locations that work for families (in home visits, public locations close to the families' homes, at workplaces, during breaks in or after the workday, etc.)
- Using service delivery models that facilitate routines-embedded instruction in natural environments
- Ensuring that interpreters are available, including reaching out to volunteers in the community
- Providing activities or childcare for young children during the meeting

#### Addressing Relational Barriers

- Understanding who the family considers in their family
- Learning about families' cultures and communities
- Examining perceptions and personal experiences
- Spending time intentionally developing relationships
- Communicating using families' preferred means and frequency
- Ensuring that family goals and priorities are included
- Using a systems perspective in which the child is considered within the family
- Encouraging and welcoming the family's voice

**Family Involvement Knowledge, Tools, Perspectives, and Experiences**

<b>Family Involvement</b> <i>Family as a Recipient</i>		
<b>Knowledge</b>	<i>"I need to know how to..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create environments (both inside and outside brick and-mortar buildings) that are welcoming and inviting, and that embrace and uphold the diverse cultures of families.</li> <li>• Use books, resources, and digital materials which reflect the languages and cultures of families.</li> <li>• Actively reach out to families in the home and community to create authentic, effective, and supportive relationships.</li> <li>• Make invitations personalized, proactive, individualized, and tailored to families' circumstances.</li> <li>• Develop data systems that are accessible to families.</li> <li>• Create conversations around developmental and academic progress.</li> </ul>
<b>Tools</b>	<i>"Resources I can use..."</i>	<p>NCPMI Family Resources (Backpack Connection Series, Making Life Easier, etc.) <a href="https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/family.html">https://challengingbehavior.cbcs.usf.edu/Implementation/family.html</a></p> <p>Family Involvement in Early Childhood Education <a href="https://archive.globalfrp.org/content/download/1181/48685/file/earlychildhood.pdf">https://archive.globalfrp.org/content/download/1181/48685/file/earlychildhood.pdf</a></p>
<b>Perspectives</b>	<i>"The literature suggests..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Respecting, honoring, and valuing the cultural and linguistic diversity of families and communities is the foundation of trusting relationships.</li> <li>• Efforts to develop relationships with families are most successful when service providers and families have opportunities to address misperceptions and biases that they have about each other.</li> <li>• Exploring, understanding, and honoring with families about how children develop, grow, and change from birth through adulthood and how they can impact their child's outcomes are important.</li> <li>• There is a positive relationship between family support and family outcomes.</li> </ul>
<b>Experiences</b>	<i>"I will..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect on and develop cultural humility, cognitive flexibility, and perspective-taking skills to provide anti-bias and equitable family and community supports.</li> <li>• Reflect on how historical and social contexts influence family and community involvement in systems and practices.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement, 2022)

**Family Involvement Breakout Discussion**Vignette

Tamera is a busy single mom of 11-month-old Michael (who was born at 28 weeks.) and 6-year-old Jajuan. Michael was diagnosed with cerebral palsy and receives early intervention services, including physical therapy, in his childcare center. Tamera works in a skilled nursing facility, where she is scheduled from 7:30 am-3:30 pm each day. Due to staffing shortages, Tamera works several extra hours daily, sometimes arriving home just in time to put the children to bed. Working extra hours doesn't seem optional and she has received a great deal of pressure to do so from her supervisor. Tamera has often been late to work because her car is unreliable; she hopes that working overtime will protect her job. The extra money has allowed her to have the car repaired.

Tamera's primary support is her mother, Faith. When her the car is working Tamera takes the children to Faith's house each morning, and when it is not working, they walk the two miles to her house. Faith takes Jajuan to school and Michael to childcare. Michael had RSV in the fall and was out of childcare often; he continues to be absent when he has cold symptoms. As a result, Michael misses several therapy sessions each month. Faith also picks up the boys in the afternoon, and sometimes Michael is the last child to be picked up. His teachers have reminded Faith that he needs to be at childcare to receive therapy, and they have left messages for Tamera. Unfortunately, Tamera is unable to receive calls at work and after hours no one can speak with her. Tamera worries about the long days she works and her time away from the boys, but she is glad they are with her mom.

The staff are starting to be frustrated, as Michael is making very slow progress. They aren't sure how they can help Tamera understand that it is critically important that he is at childcare so that he can participate in services and meet his goals.

Breakout Group Directions

In your breakout room, please consider the following:

- What procedural and relational barriers are impacting the family?
- What family-centered solutions could you consider for each barrier?
- How could the staff build relationships with Tamera, Faith, Michael, and Jajuan?

To complete this task, you will want to use the handout on the next page, "Strategies Addressing Barriers to Family Engagement".



Strategies Addressing Barriers to Family Engagement

Identify barriers that are impacting the family. Determine the type of barrier (i.e., Procedural or Relational) and identify possible solutions to each barrier. Remember to think about barriers and solutions from the perspective of the family.

Barrier	Barrier Type <i>Ex: Procedural or Relational?</i>	Potential Solutions



Thoughts



Questions



Epiphanies



1. What is family involvement?
2. Why must practitioners consider their own perceptions and experiences when serving families?
3. How can you facilitate reciprocal relationships between families and practitioners?
4. What are your questions, thoughts, or epiphanies?



## Remember the Key Takeaways

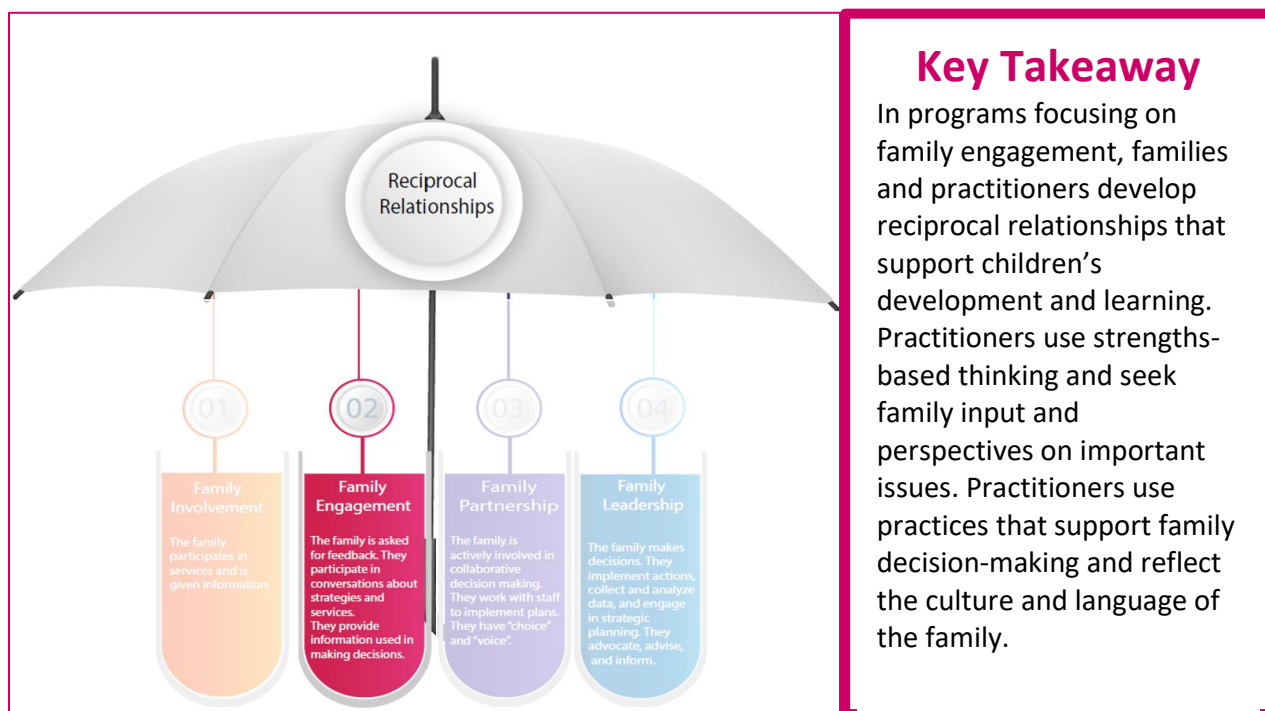
*Relationships are foundational to family involvement.*

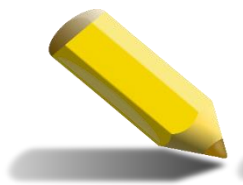
A program focusing on family involvement often identifies projects and goals and then asks families to contribute to making them happen.

## Family Engagement

We will focus on ways in which families are fully included 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.

There is more than 50 years of research that tells us that family engagement is one of the most powerful predictors of children's development, educational attainment, and success in school and life. When we engage with families, we listen to what families think, dream, and worry about.





## Notes

### Strategies that Facilitate Family Engagement

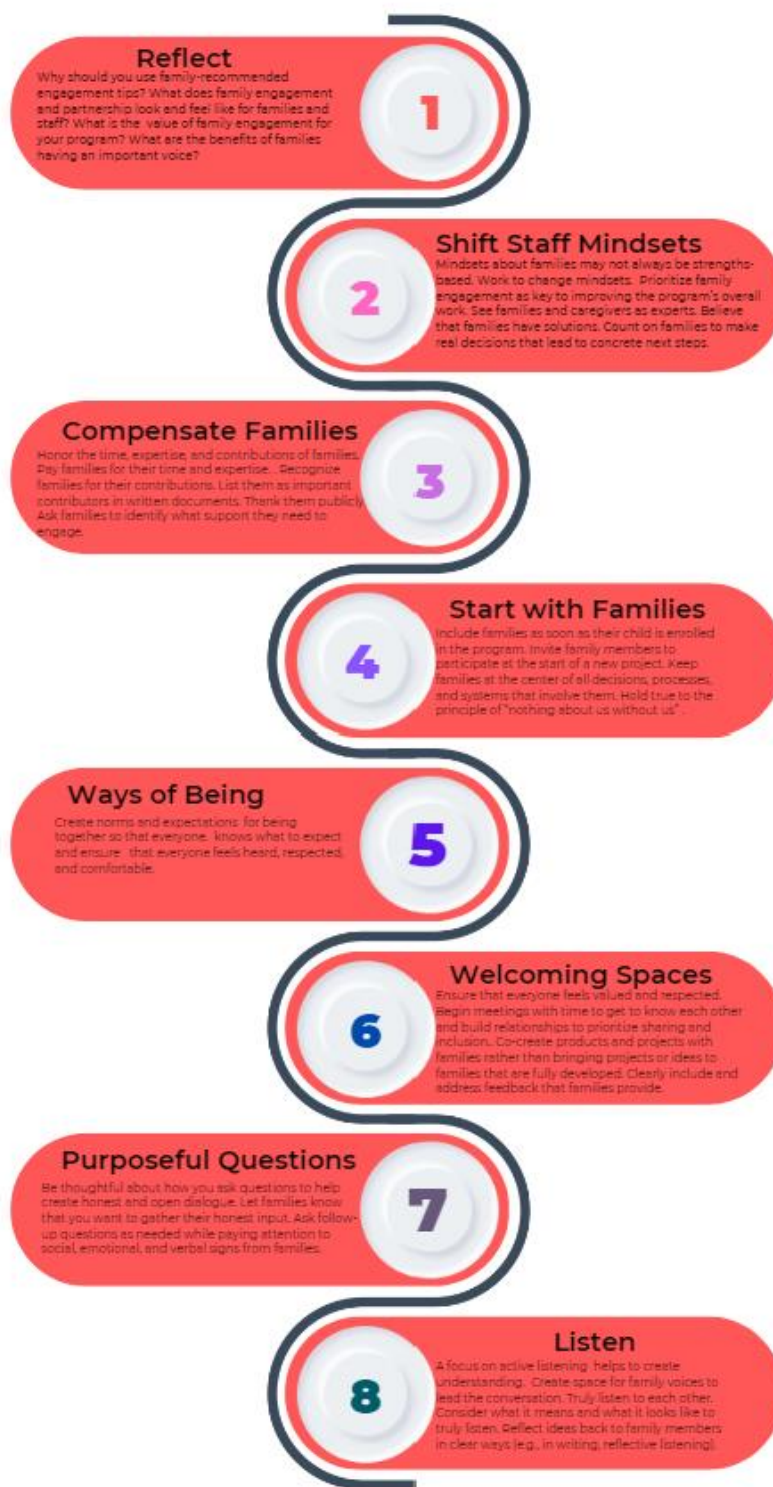
#### Addressing Procedural Barriers

- Identifying staff beliefs regarding the importance and role of family engagement
- Using strengths-based thinking
- Compensating and recognizing families for contributions
- Soliciting and using family input and perspectives on issues
- Using a data lens

#### Addressing Relational Barriers

- Co-creating family and staff norms and expectations
- Co-creating a welcoming space
- Using active listening
- Providing family-staff training
- Welcoming and including critical perspectives
- Ensuring that professionals use practices that support the culture and languages of families

## Recommendations from Families to Implement Family Engagement and Partnership Practices



(Adapted from National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement, 2021)

## Family Engagement Knowledge, Tools, Perspectives, and Experiences

Family Engagement <i>Family as Consultant/</i>		
<b>Knowledge</b>	<i>"I need to know how to..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use effective, family- selected modes of communication.</li> <li>• Engage with families in trusting relationships.</li> <li>• Build upon family knowledge as resources for learning.</li> <li>• Expand on family learning in the home and community.</li> <li>• Use data to assess, evaluate, and improve family and community engagement.</li> </ul>
<b>Tools</b>	<i>"Resources I can use..."</i>	<p>US Department of Health and Human Services and Department of Education Policy Statement on Family Engagement  <a href="https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/policy-statement-on-family-engagement-executive-summary.pdf">https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/earlylearning/files/policy-statement-on-family-engagement-executive-summary.pdf</a></p> <p>ECTA Family Engagement Broadcast Series  <a href="https://ectacenter.org/~calls/2017/familyengagement.asp">https://ectacenter.org/~calls/2017/familyengagement.asp</a></p> <p>Center for Parent Information and Resources  <a href="https://www.parentcenterhub.org/">https://www.parentcenterhub.org/</a></p> <p>Parent Training and Information Centers and Community Parent Resource Centers  <a href="https://www.parentcenterhub.org/the-parent-center-network/">https://www.parentcenterhub.org/the-parent-center-network/</a></p> <p>Family Engagement Core Competencies: A Body of Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions for Family-Facing Professionals  <a href="https://nafsce.org/page/CoreCompetencies#:~:text=The%20Family%20Engagement%20Core%20Competencies%20offer%20a%20new%20way%20of,%2C%20and%20family%20well%2Dbeing.&amp;text=The%20Family%20Engagement%20Core%20Competencies%20was%20developed%20across%20six%20main%20phases">https://nafsce.org/page/CoreCompetencies#:~:text=The%20Family%20Engagement%20Core%20Competencies%20offer%20a%20new%20way%20of,%2C%20and%20family%20well%2Dbeing.&amp;text=The%20Family%20Engagement%20Core%20Competencies%20was%20developed%20across%20six%20main%20phases</a></p>
<b>Perspectives</b>	<i>"The literature suggests..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family engagement increases when practitioners reach out to families from marginalized or historically underserved communities and engage <i>with</i> them.</li> <li>• Effective family, school, and community engagement is associated with school readiness, improvements in language, literacy, mathematics, and social-emotional skills, and increased likelihood of high school graduations.</li> <li>• Family engagement is associated with a more positive school culture, which has benefits for children, families, and communities in respect to leadership, health, well-being, and safety.</li> </ul>
<b>Experiences</b>	<i>"I will..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and participate as a member of the family engagement profession.</li> <li>• Engage in professional learning to grow family engagement knowledge, dispositions, and skills.</li> <li>• Engage with families who may be from underserved or historically marginalized communities.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement, 2022)



### Family Engagement Breakout Discussion

#### Vignette

Fazli, Saima, and their daughter Nasima have recently been displaced from their home and have come to a new community as refugees. Fazli and Saima have been trying to adapt to life in their new home, but it has not been easy. They have had challenges as a couple: Saima became pregnant with their first child a few years after their marriage, and subsequently stopped working outside their home. Fazli's position as an accountant for the government put he and Saima at risk as the new regime rose to power. The risks became more apparent when Fazli was stopped and questioned leaving work several times, and security forces came to their home. Carefully, Fazli began investigating ways in which they could leave the country. Within a week, Fazli heard that a flight was leaving the airport in less than five hours. Taking what they could carry, Fazli and Saima immediately left, not even calling family members to alert them. Heavily pregnant, Saima was anxious but nevertheless relieved when after several days they made it to the United States. A week later they settled in their new community.

Organizations helped Fazli and Saima to obtain the supplies they needed and ensured they got to doctors' appointments. Luckily, they quickly found a community of others from their home country. Saima, who had always been a planner and a preparer, was unable to plan and prepare for Nasima's arrival. Nasima was born almost immediately upon moving into their new apartment; she arrived weighing 5 lbs 4 oz at 39 weeks via cesarean section. She spent one night in the NICU as her breathing was monitored. Saima was unsure where the baby was being taken as there was no Dari interpreter available, so she was worried staff would take her baby. Her recovery was physically easy but emotionally difficult. She was alone with Nasima most of the day, as Fazli was borrowing a car and delivering for uber eats.

Now 18 months old, Nasima's pediatrician referred her for a developmental evaluation after noting that she was using no words or consistent gestures and wasn't demonstrating object permanence. She was not yet pulling to stand but did bounce on her mother's lap when held when held upright. The referral was submitted 2 months ago and the early intervention program has left several messages to schedule an appointment. One day, Fazli answered the call and was available to talk for a moment between deliveries. Although Fazli speaks some English, he's rather the provider text him the information. When Fazli, Saima, and Nasima arrive for the appointment, Fazli has many questions about why they were referred. He's concerned about protecting his family.

#### Breakout Group Directions

In your breakout room, please consider the following:

- What are procedural and relational barriers impacting the family?

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- What family-centered solutions could you consider for each barrier?
- How could the staff ensure that the family has the opportunity for voice and choice?
- In what ways could cultural perceptions of disability and community support impact the family's willingness for services and for family engagement?

To complete this task, you will want to use the handout, "Strategies Addressing Barriers to Family Involvement".

### Strategies Addressing Barriers to Family Engagement

Identify barriers that are impacting the family. Determine the type of barrier (i.e., Procedural or Relational) and identify possible solutions to each barrier. Remember to think about barriers and solutions from the perspective of the family.

Barrier	Barrier Type <i>Ex: Procedural or Relational?</i>	Potential Solutions



**Thoughts**



**Questions**



**Epiphanies**



## Reflection and Application

1. What does it mean for families and practitioners to co-create?
2. What data might programs need to understand the experiences of families and their engagement?
3. What is meant by critical perspectives?
4. In what way might practitioners welcome the perspectives of others? Why is it important?



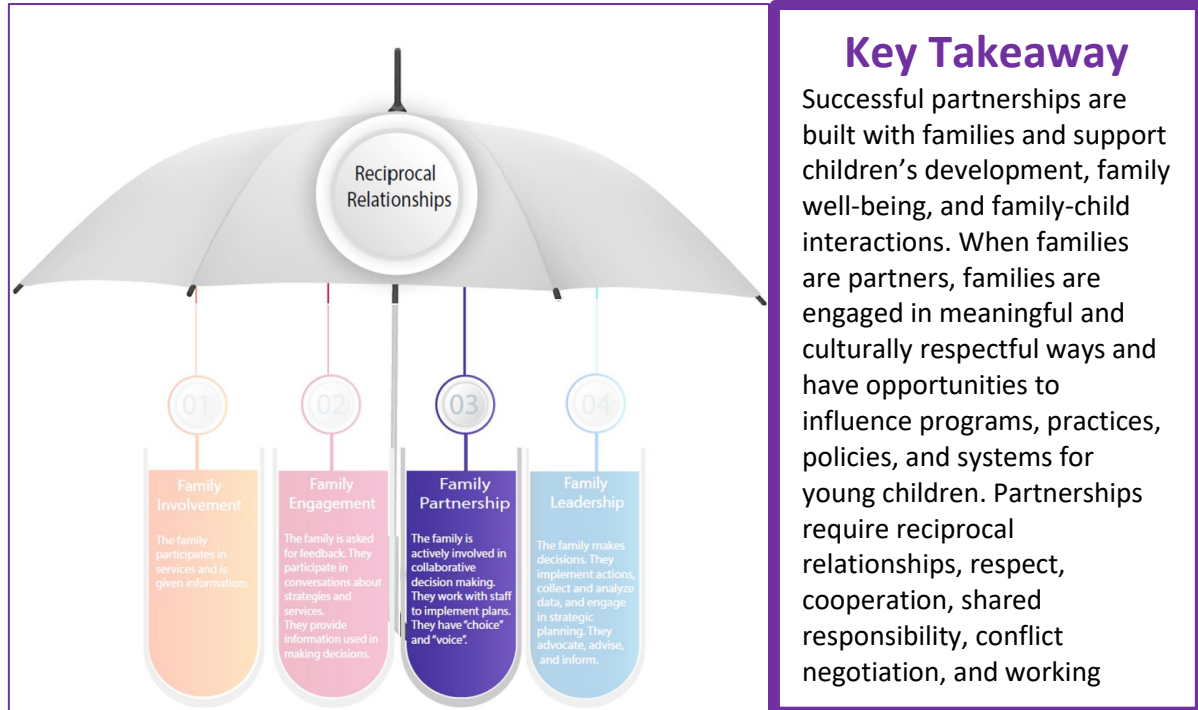
## Remember the Key Takeaways

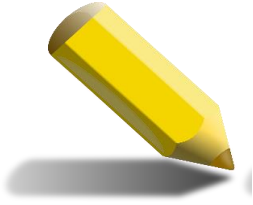
*All families need voice and choice.*

Family engagement practices support families as they contribute to their children's learning and development, as well as the program itself, in ways that matter to them.

# Family Partnership

We will focus on ways to develop a more balanced partnership in which families, practitioners and community partners collaborate and make decisions based on the assets, desires, and values of the families. ALL members have something to contribute, especially families.





## Notes

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### Strategies that Facilitate Family Partnerships

#### Addressing Procedural Barriers

- Include strategies that ensure family choice and voice in all aspects of the program
- Create data systems that collect and analyze information about experiences and outcomes for families from historically underserved and marginalized communities
- Include family perspectives and experiences in continuous improvement practices, including families from historically underserved and marginalized communities
- Intentionally use staff recruitment and retention practices to diversify the workforce
- Grow partnerships into career pipelines for families

#### Addressing Relational Barriers

- Recognize and respect families' abilities and strengths
- Support family decision-making
- Consider how practitioner beliefs and attitudes impact culturally responsive relationships and practices
- Foster collaborative problem solving and product development from the start
- Provide joint professional development opportunities with families
- Make relationships a priority

## Family Partnerships Knowledge, Tools, Perspectives, and Experiences

<b>Family Partnerships</b> <i>Family as Partner/ Collaborator</i>		
<b>Knowledge</b>	<i>"I need to know how to..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With families, identify and examine new and existing policies and practices to further family and community partnerships.</li> <li>• Champion equity as an essential element of family and community partnership and stand with families for equitable educational systems and outcomes.</li> <li>• With families, plan, implement, and evaluate learning opportunities and services.</li> <li>• Establish systems to expand how families identify and access community resources.</li> <li>• Cultivate social support networks and connections among families.</li> </ul>
<b>Tools</b>	<i>"Resources I can use..."</i>	Family Engagement and Leadership Action Guide and Toolkit <a href="https://www.smartstart.org/family-engagement-and-leadership/">https://www.smartstart.org/family-engagement-and-leadership/</a>
<b>Perspectives</b>	<i>"The literature suggests..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creating partnerships with families, amplifying their voices, and expanding opportunities for engagement and leadership has positive impacts on student outcomes.</li> <li>• There are positive outcomes when practitioners and families co-create teaching and learning strategies that address mutually agreed upon goals.</li> <li>• Engaging and partnering with families has the greatest impact for students from historically marginalized communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Experiences</b>	<i>"I will..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that policies and practices promote families' opportunities for choice and voice in all aspects of service delivery.</li> <li>• Welcome and appreciate family participation and perspectives in evaluations of services and programs.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement, 2022)



**Family Partnerships Breakout Discussion**Vignette

Markus's son, DeMarkus, has been involved in the program for over a year. The first few months were confusing, but Markus learned all he could about his son's condition and services. Without the help of the staff working with DeMarkus, he says that he would have been lost! From the beginning, Markus told them, "I'm here to get my son help and learn to help him myself, so I want to learn all I can. I'm going to be here every time and asking questions!" Staff welcomed his engagement, and soon everyone knew Markus and DeMarkus, even people who didn't serve him. Staff members made a point of getting to know the family, often talking about weekend activities. Markus and a few practitioners even had friendly ongoing rivalries about their favorite teams.

As a result of learning how Markus wanted to partner, staff were intentional about providing Markus with information about strategies they were using and how to embed intervention in routines at home. They had discussions that began in his first year in the program about the future and upcoming transitions and were thought partners with Markus about the outcomes he wanted DeMarkus to meet and provided him with information about strategies and methods to address desired outcomes. Through their continuous improvement processes in which they sought the input of all families, they also specifically provided him with the opportunity to provide feedback about his experiences. When issues arose, program leadership and staff were transparent about how they used Markus' perceptions and experiences to inform practices and policies. Markus volunteered a few mornings each month and enjoyed it so much he asked staff about ways he could enter the field as a practitioner.

Breakout Group Directions

In your breakout room, please consider the following:

- What strategies did the program and staff implement to partner effectively with Markus?
- Since ways in which families choose to be involved as diverse as the families themselves, how can staff support different ways in which families can partner?
- How might practitioners and programs support partnerships with families who face challenges such as inflexible work schedules, experience unreliable transportation, speak languages other than English, or other challenges?

Strategies Addressing Barriers to Family Engagement

Identify barriers that are impacting the family. Determine the type of barrier (i.e., Procedural or Relational) and identify possible solutions to each barrier. Remember to think about barriers and solutions from the perspective of the family.

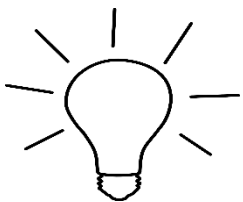
Barrier	Barrier Type <i>Ex: Procedural or Relational?</i>	Potential Solutions



**Thoughts**



**Questions**



**Epiphanies**



## Reflection and Application

1. What do you plan to do to ensure families' choice and voice?
2. Why is it important to intentionally seek the input from families whose voices we may not often hear?
3. How could you offer joint professional development for families with practitioners?  
Which topics would you select?



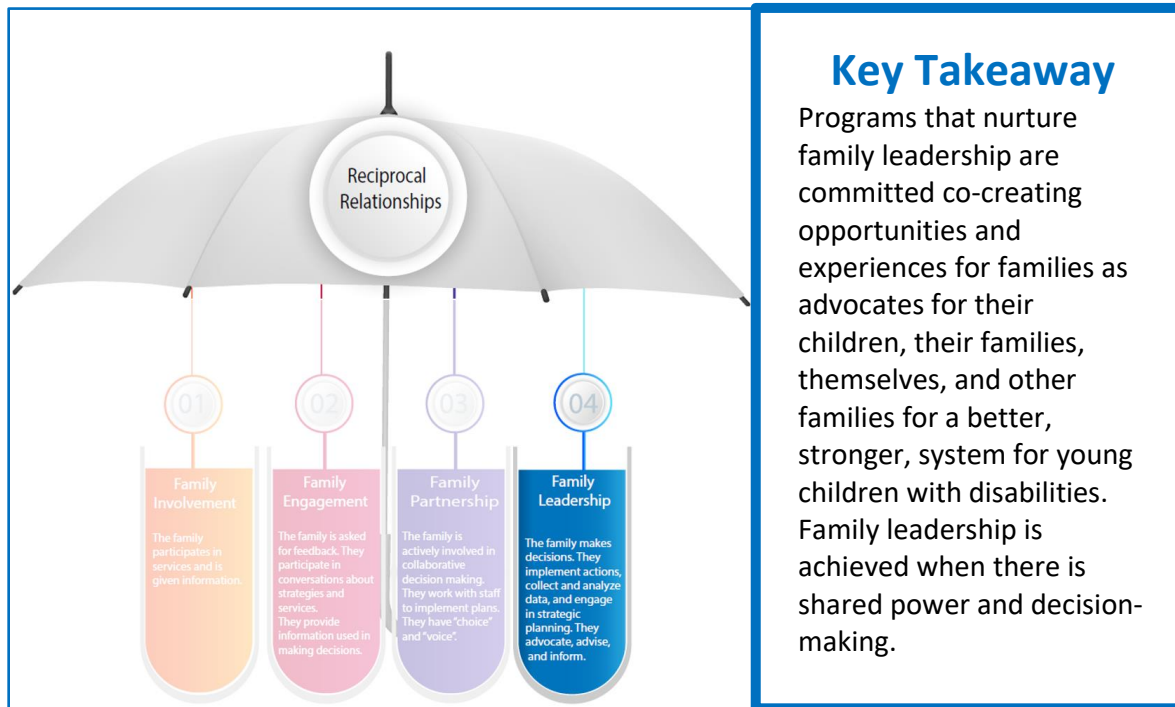
### Remember the Key Takeaways

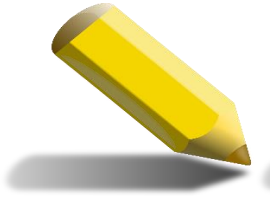
*Partnerships require reciprocal relationships.*

Key elements of reciprocal relationships include mutual respect, cooperation, shared responsibility, conflict negotiation, and working toward the achievement of mutually agreed upon goals.

# Family Leadership

We will focus on supporting families as they develop leadership skills. Families are equipped with resources that aid in them gaining knowledge of how systems operate, that will help them to build connections with community partners, and that support them in opportunities and experiences that grow their leadership and advocacy.





## Notes

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### Strategies that Facilitate Family Leadership

#### Addressing Procedural Barriers

- Plan and run meetings to maximize family leadership (provide background information, accessible reading levels and non-text options, pre-meeting planning)
- Provide supports so families can participate (stipends, transportation, childcare, food, use of computers, etc.)
- Create meeting norms and ground rules
- Provide opportunities for family skill building
- Facilitate opportunities for families who want to be advocates and leaders
- Ensure that decision-making groups and committees reflect the cultural and linguistic makeup of programs and communities
- Use data and continuous improvement processes to improve services, systems, structures, and support
- Prioritize family advocacy and leadership

#### Addressing Relational Barriers

- Prioritize family-staff relationships
- Provide opportunities for family-staff collaboration in events and presentations
- Offer communication and leadership training for families and professionals together
- Continue to focus on transition
- Use PD and reflective supervision to help staff learn to share power with families
- Start meetings with a family story that focuses on families' strengths, needs, concerns, and successes
- Ask families to start discussions from their perspectives and experiences
- Encourage all voices and family-to-family relationships
- Invite families to partner in a range of activities such as creating and reviewing drafted materials, attending/evaluating PD, or co-presenting at meetings
- Ensure that families have voice and choice in all aspects of the program or system.

## Family Leadership Knowledge, Tools, Perspectives, and Experiences

<b>Family Leadership</b> <i>Family as Change Agent</i>		
<b>Knowledge</b>	<i>"I need to know how to..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand public understanding about family leadership.</li> <li>• Equip and support families in opportunities, experiences, and activities that develop leadership skills.</li> <li>• Co-create opportunities for family leadership.</li> </ul>
<b>Tools</b>	<i>"Resources I can use..."</i>	<p>Engaging Parents as Advocates and Leaders Webinar Series  <a href="https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/engaging-parents-advocates-leaders-webinar-series">https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-engagement/article/engaging-parents-advocates-leaders-webinar-series</a></p> <p>Parent Engagement and Leadership Assessment Guide and Toolkit  <a href="https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Parent-Engagement-and-Leadership-Assessment-Guide-and-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf">https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Parent-Engagement-and-Leadership-Assessment-Guide-and-Toolkit-FINAL.pdf</a></p> <p>Family Engagement and Leadership Action Guide and Toolkit  <a href="https://www.smartstart.org/family-engagement-and-leadership/">https://www.smartstart.org/family-engagement-and-leadership/</a></p> <p>Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Serving on Groups that Make Decisions: A Guide for Families  <a href="https://servingongroups.org/guidebook">https://servingongroups.org/guidebook</a></p>
<b>Perspectives</b>	<i>"The literature suggests..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes for children with disabilities are better when families are involved in the decisions that shape policy and drive changes in how services and resources are provided.</li> <li>• When families are engaged as leaders, they:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May spotlight program and policy concerns not previously identified or acknowledged.</li> <li>• Suggest new ways to solve problems that impact families.</li> <li>• Influence change.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Family leadership efforts are most effective when they are supported by program staff.</li> <li>• For family members to effectively engage in leadership and advocacy activities, professionals and other leaders must meet them with attitudes of trust and respect.</li> </ul>
<b>Experiences</b>	<i>"I will..."</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for systems change with families.</li> </ul>

(Adapted from the National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement, 2022)



### Family Leadership Breakout Discussion

#### Vignette

You are Micha, the mom of 4 year old Breanna. You are interested in serving on the policy council for the area program serving Breanna. You have never served in this role but have learned a lot since Breanna began receiving services at 3 years old. You are so excited to attend the first meeting, but when you arrive you feel completely out of place and unsure what you are supposed to do. Everyone except you and a father of a child receiving services is an administrator in a program. They greet you warmly, but you spend the meeting lost. You want to return, but you aren't sure why you are even there. When your child's service provider asks if you enjoyed the meeting, you explain how you feel. The two of you agree to meet the next day to discuss how you can advocate and lead in the group.

#### Breakout Group Directions

In your breakout room, please consider the following:

- What are opportunities and experiences in which Micha could engage to develop leadership skills?
- In what ways can the service provider support Micha in developing specific leadership skills?
- In what ways can service providers develop necessary skills to support families as they develop as leaders?

To complete this task, you will want to use the handout on the next two pages, "Skills that Contribute to Family Leadership".

### Skills That Contribute to Family Leadership

As a practitioner, consider ways in which you can develop necessary skills to support family leadership.

I can develop skills in conflict resolution by:

With families, I can co-construct a collaborative program environment by:

I can ensure access to knowledge and information that families want and need by:

I can engage in professional development about family advocacy and leadership by:

I can engage in ongoing learning about supporting diverse families by:

## ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

Reflect on skills that can contribute to effective leadership. In what ways can practitioners support families through experiences and opportunities that develop these skills?

<b>Skills</b>	<b>Family Opportunities and Experiences that Develop Skills</b>	<b>Ways Practitioners Can Support Family Skill Development</b>
<b>Plan</b> <i>Creating a vision, developing goals, and planning how to reach them.</i>		
<b>Lead</b> <i>Leading by example and acting as a role model.</i>		
<b>Communicate</b> <i>Using active listening strategies in two-way communication in which you can make your points clearly.</i>		
<b>Negotiate</b> <i>Including everyone in decision-making.</i>		
<b>Value</b> <i>Recognizing the importance of emotions and feelings and valuing them in yourself and others.</i>		
<b>Motivate</b> <i>Inspiring and engaging others in ways that boost their enthusiasm and confidence.</i>		
<b>Be Positive</b> <i>Maintaining a positive attitude by staying upbeat and flexible, adjusting and adapting when needed.</i>		
<b>Accept</b> <i>See your own and other's mistakes as opportunities for growth and learning.</i>		

(Adapted from the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center, 2022)



## Thoughts



## Questions

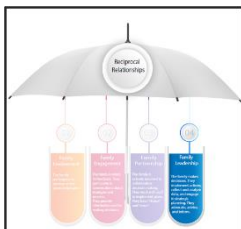


## Epiphanies



## Reflection and Application

1. What skills do you need to develop to effectively support families' engagement in experiences and opportunities to develop leadership skills?
2. Is this a different way that you have heard family leadership described before? If so, how?
3. How can you work to engage families who have not shared their voices in the past?
4. If asked to explain the phrases "choice and voice" and "not about me, without me", how would you explain it from the perspective of families as leaders?



### Remember the Key Takeaways

*Family leadership is achieved when there is shared power and decision making. This happens when programs are committed to providing support and guidance as needed for families to grow their leadership skills to advocate for their children, their families, themselves, and other families for a better, stronger, early childhood system.*

## Family-Facing Professional's Reflection Tool

This self-assessment asks you to think about how you **reflect, connect, collaborate, and lead**. The first column presents questions around how family-facing professionals reflect, connect collaborate, and lead. The second column asks you to consider your level of proficiency in these areas. You can rate your practice from 1-5: ("I do not do this at all" to "I do this all the time").

	Proficiency
<b>REFLECT</b>	
<b>How do I respect, value, and honor families?</b> Ask yourself: In what ways do I respect and value the cultural and linguistic diversity of families and communities? How do I understand and honor families regarding how children develop, grow, and change from birth through adulthood across settings, and how might these changes affect families?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>How well do I champion equity through family and community engagement?</b> Ask yourself: How do I demonstrate cultural humility? How do I utilize cognitive flexibility, and perspective taking skills to practice anti-bias and equitable family and community engagement? In what ways do I see history and social context influencing family engagement systems and practices?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>CONNECT</b>	
<b>How well do I build trusting reciprocal relationships with families?</b> Ask yourself: In what ways do I cultivate mutual trust with families? How do I communicate with families? How do I create welcoming environments? In what ways do I reach out to families, especially those who might be most underserved?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>How well do I foster community partnerships for learning and family well-being?</b> Ask yourself: What are the community partnerships that support children and families? How do I expand ways for families to access these resources? How am I cultivating social support networks and connections among families?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>COLLABORATE</b>	
<b>How well do I co-construct learning opportunities with families?</b> Ask yourself: How do I build from family knowledge as resources for learning? How do I join with families for planning, implementing, and evaluating learning opportunities and services?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>How well do I link family and community engagement to learning and development?</b> Ask yourself: How do I ensure that data are accessible to every family? How do I create conversations around developmental progressions and progress in clear and understandable ways? How do I expand on family learning in the home and community?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>LEAD</b>	
<b>How well do I take part in lifelong learning?</b> Ask yourself: How do I identify and participate as a member of the family engagement profession? How do I engage in professional learning to grow my family engagement knowledge and skills? In what ways do I use data to assess, evaluate, and improve family engagement practice?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>
<b>How well do I advocate with families for system change?</b> Ask yourself: How do I identify and examine new and existing policies and practices to advance family and community engagement for all families? In what ways do I champion equity in my family and community engagement practice? How do I help reframe the conversation around family and community engagement to expand public understanding?	<b>1 2 3 4 5</b>

(Grubbs & LeGrant, 2022)

## ENGAGEMENT GUIDE

### The Continuum of Reciprocal Relationships

# Action Plan

Now that you have engaged in some self-assessment, reflect on your strengths, and identify some goals. Make a simple plan, with specific action steps, for one item on the continuum in which you feel is important to improve. Regularly check in on your progress and then revisit your Family-Facing Professional's Reflection Tool and the Continuum of Reciprocal Relationships.



<b>Strengths</b> Highlight some of your higher proficiency level responses here. Celebrate the ways that you are already engaging and collaborating with families.	
<b>Goals</b> Decide on the one or two goals you would like to set.	
<b>Strategies</b> Decide on strategies that can help you meet your goals.	

Adapted from The Devereux Foundation, 2013

(Grubbs & LeGrant, 2022)

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