

Working with Families Inventory

Complete the inventory with a partner by checking off the ways in which you already support families. Look for additional ideas and make a plan for ways you will support the relationship between the infants and toddlers you serve and their families.

In Programs

1. Families have opportunities to continually express preferences, beliefs, values, and concerns regarding the practices of the child-care and education center (for example, routines, feeding, holding, naps, play, holidays, and language). The child care staff is responsive to families' requests.
 - There is a process for communicating with parents who speak a different language from the caregivers. If necessary, there is an interpreter to assist in communication with children and/or families.
 - Teachers ask families to share information indicating their and their child's needs, interests, developmental history, and any other relevant information that will help teachers be more responsive to the child's individual needs.
 - Teachers listen to and respect parents' discussions regarding their beliefs, values, and concerns
 - Families' wishes for their child are respected to provide continuity from home to program for the child--unless harmful to child.
 - There is a process developed in the program with families concerning conflict resolution using dialogue that involves listening, negotiating, and problem-solving

2. The Relationship Between Each Child and His Family is Supported
 - Photographs of each child's family are displayed around the child-care and education space and are placed where children can easily see them. They may be laminated and secured with Velcro to the wall so that an infant or toddler can hold the picture of his family and carry it around. Or, the children's family photos could be displayed on a large poster board with a piece of fabric over each picture, so that mobile infants and toddlers can play "peek-a-boo" with their own and others' family pictures.
 - Books or photograph albums with pictures of the children and their families are available to the children.
 - Tape recordings of a family member telling a story or singing a song are available

3. Family members are made to feel welcome in the program through teachers' welcoming attitudes and through the classroom environment.
 - There is an open-door policy for families. They can be with their children at all times of the day and for as long as they'd like. Family members are frequently seen visiting and interacting with the children.
 - There is family-friendly bulletin board that describes opportunities for families to visit and volunteer and that includes notices and announcements.

- There is a private area for family members who want to give their child a bottle or breastfeed their babies or spend some moments alone with their children.
 - There is a “family information” space (filing box or cabinet, for example) with information on resources, discipline, reading to children, etc. where parents can add to it or help themselves to articles, pamphlets, brochures that build family/child relationships.
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4. Families feel welcome to be involved in the program. While certain strategies will fit one type of program more than another as well as one type of family more than another, the important factor is the feeling of partnership between the program and the child's family that is created. These are opportunities offered families but not required of families
- Survey families concerning the different ways that they would like to be involved.
 - Include families in policy decisions by inviting families to serve on a board of directors or policy council for the program.
 - Plan social events, with family input, that include the whole family.
 - Invite families into the program to take pictures of children or record language samples that can then, for example, be made into a display of children's interests and learning.
 - Develop a sense of community by including family members in the planning and writing of a monthly newsletter that includes interesting information about the program, monthly events, children, and families.
 - Involve families in fundraising activities.
 - Provide opportunities for family members to help at home by making home-made toys (sock puppets, “feely boxes,” beanbags, lotto games) for the program.
 - Provide opportunities and information about resources for family support—for example, learning a second language, divorce support groups, teenage parenting, and learning about Medicaid and Medicare
5. Develop a system for daily exchange of information between families and child care and education staff.
- Create a friendly place inside the child care and education center room or family child-care home where information concerning a child's needs for the day can be written and shared by the family member with the caregiver.
 - Create a friendly place inside the child-care-center room or family child-care home where information about each child's day is kept so that families can easily pick up the information and talk to caregiver(s) about how the day went.
 - Develop a friendly “Conversation Corner” somewhere in the center or family child care home so that caregivers and families can have a private place to talk.

(Adapted from Wittmer & Petersen, 2006)