

Family and Community Partnerships

Family and Community Partnerships describes how families, early childhood professionals, programs, services, and community partners work together to support children's learning, development, relationships, and well-being. Families are central to children's lives and are children's first and most important teachers. Strong partnerships are built through trust, respect, shared communication, and recognition of each family's strengths, goals, and experiences.

This area focuses on the relationships and practices that help families feel welcomed, informed, connected, and supported. Families and professionals share information about children's strengths, interests, needs, routines, and learning across home, early learning, service, and community settings. These partnerships help adults better understand each child and create more consistent, meaningful, and responsive support for children's development.

Families may experience partnership in different ways depending on their family structure, community, priorities, resources, past experiences, and current circumstances. Meaningful partnership includes clear and accessible communication, opportunities for family voice and choice, support during transitions, connections to other families, respect for family goals, and help accessing resources without stigma. Families should be able to participate in ways that are useful, realistic, and meaningful to them.

Early childhood professionals support partnerships by creating welcoming environments, listening to families, sharing information in accessible ways, inviting family input, coordinating with other professionals and systems, and following up with care. When families, professionals, and community partners work together, children benefit from stronger relationships, greater continuity across settings, and learning experiences that reflect who they are, where they come from, and what they need to thrive.

Inside This Learning and Development Area

Family and Community Partnerships is organized into seven family partnership outcomes. Unlike the child Learning and Development Areas, this area focuses on the relationships, communication, practices, and supports that help families and early childhood professionals work together to support children's learning, development, relationships, and well-being.

Family Partnership Outcome (FCP)	Focus
FCP1. Families experience affirming, reciprocal relationships.	Families and professionals build relationships grounded in trust, respect, shared communication, and recognition of family strengths, language, identities, and experiences.
FCP2. Families have support and information to encourage children's learning.	Families and professionals share information about child development, individual children's strengths and needs, and learning opportunities across home, program, service, and community settings.
FCP3. Families have support from other families.	Families have opportunities to connect with, learn from, and support other families in ways that build community and reduce isolation.
FCP4. Families have goals and benefit from supportive partners.	Families are supported in identifying and working toward goals related to children's development, learning, participation, and family well-being.

Family Partnership Outcome (FCP)	Focus
FCP5. Families grow in leadership.	Families have opportunities to share perspectives, influence decisions, advocate for their children, and participate in leadership in ways that are meaningful and accessible to them.
FCP6. Families are supported in times of transition.	Families receive clear communication, coordination, and support as children and families move across routines, settings, services, systems, and developmental stages.
FCP7. Families are connected to supports and resources.	Families are supported in accessing community resources and services in ways that are respectful, responsive, non-stigmatizing, and aligned with family strengths, needs, and preferences.

FCP1. Families experience affirming, reciprocal relationships.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families are central to children’s development and learning. - Relationships between families and early childhood professionals are built on trust, respect, and shared responsibility. - Professionals create welcoming environments where all families feel a sense of belonging.	- How do early childhood professionals create welcoming environments where all families and family members feel valued and included? - How do professionals build two-way relationships that reflect families’ strengths, values, and identities? - How do early childhood professionals recognize and communicate their own strengths, values, identities, and roles in ways that support respectful, two-way relationships with families? - How do professionals support strong communication and collaboration with families?
Outcome: Families experience affirming, two-way relationships with early childhood professionals that are built on trust, respect, shared communication, and recognition of family strengths and identities.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Create welcoming environments that reflect and affirm families’ identities and experiences. - Engage families through their preferred methods of communication and ensure communication is ongoing and two-way. - Engage families in conversations about their strengths, interests, and goals for their children. - Provide opportunities for families to share input and influence decisions. - Listen to family voices and use their knowledge and experiences to inform practices and interactions with children. - Engage in two-way ongoing learning and reflection to strengthen relationship-building skills. - Recognize challenges and promote opportunities for relationship-building. - Connect families to additional supports when needs extend beyond the professional’s role.	- Families and family members feel welcomed, respected, and included in the program, service, or learning community in ways that reflect their family’s experiences. - Families and family members experience ongoing relationships with professionals that are built on trust, mutual respect, and open two-way communication. - Families and family members have meaningful opportunities and choice to share perspectives about their child, family priorities, and the program or service context, and to contribute to decisions that affect their child’s learning, development, and participation. - Families and family members see themselves reflected in interactions, communication, materials, routines, and environments.

FCP2. Families have support and information to encourage children's learning.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families are children's first and most important teachers. - Learning is strengthened through shared understanding and collaboration between families and early childhood professionals. - Families benefit from access to clear, relevant information about children's development and learning. - Families and professionals bring together information about child development, the individual child's strengths and needs, family experiences, and the program or service approach to support learning.	- How do early childhood professionals share information about children's development and learning in ways that are meaningful and accessible? - How do professionals connect general information about child development, what families share about their child, and the learning opportunities available in the program, service, home, and community? - How do professionals and families engage in two-way communication to support children's learning?
Outcome: Families and early childhood professionals share information and work together to support children's learning and development by connecting general child-development knowledge, family knowledge of the individual child, and learning opportunities across programs, services, homes, and communities.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Share information about child development in ways that are accessible, relevant, and useful for families as they understand and support their child's learning and development. - Communicate how everyday routines and interactions support learning. - Explain how learning experiences support children's development. - Connect information about child development to the individual child's interests, strengths, needs, experiences, language, routines, and learning opportunities across settings. - Engage in ongoing, two-way communication about children's growth and progress. - Invite families to share information about children's strengths, interests, needs, routines, experiences, and learning at home and in the community. - Collaborate with families to identify meaningful, practical strategies and experiences that support children's development in the settings and environments they use every day. - Provide information about additional supports and services when needed. - Coordinate with other professionals and systems, as appropriate.	- Families feel included as partners in their children's learning. - Families have opportunities to understand and support their children's development. - Families understand how their child's experiences at home, in the community, and in programs or services connect to learning and development. - Families feel comfortable sharing information about their children's strengths, interests, needs, routines, learning, and family experiences. - Families have access to information and resources that support their understanding of child development and their child's learning, development, and participation.

FCP3. Families have support from other families.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families benefit from connections with other families. - Relationships with other families support a sense of belonging and reduce isolation. - Both informal and formal networks contribute to family well-being.	- How do early childhood professionals support opportunities for families to connect with one another? - How do professionals recognize and support both informal and formal family networks?
Outcome: Families have opportunities to connect with and learn from other families, building relationships that foster belonging, mutual support, and shared knowledge.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Create or support opportunities for families to connect and build relationships, as appropriate to the setting. - Share information about formal and informal family support networks. - Help families with shared interests or experiences connect with each other, while respecting privacy and preferences. - Encourage families and community members to share knowledge, experiences, and resources with one another. - Recognize that professionals support family connections in different ways depending on their role and setting.	- Families have opportunities to connect with other families. - Families feel a sense of belonging within their community. - Families share and receive support from other families. - Families receive support from extended family members and their community.

FCP4. Families have goals and benefit from supportive partners.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families have goals related to their children’s development and family well-being. - Early childhood professionals support families in identifying and working toward their goals. - Strong partnerships help families access resources and supports.	- How do early childhood professionals support families in identifying and working toward goals related to their children and family well-being? - How do professionals partner with other systems to support family goals?
Outcome: Families are supported in identifying and working toward goals related to their children’s development and family well-being through partnerships that provide encouragement, connection, and access to resources.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Create opportunities for families to share goals related to their children and family well-being. - Support families in identifying next steps and finding resources that fit their needs, providing warm handoffs whenever possible. - Recognize that families may be at different stages in setting and pursuing goals. - Coordinate with other professionals and systems that support family goals. - Provide practical support and information to help families take action. - Acknowledge the role of family strengths, traditions, and experiences in shaping goals.	- Families feel comfortable sharing goals for their children’s development, learning, participation, and family well-being. - Families have opportunities to identify next steps and access information, resources, and supports that align with their goals. - Families experience encouragement, respect, and practical support as they pursue goals at their own pace and in ways that fit their family strengths, experiences, and circumstances. - Families experience coordinated support when professionals and community partners work together, as appropriate, to support family goals. - Families build confidence, knowledge, and connection as they make progress toward goals that matter to them.

FCP5. Families grow in leadership.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families have valuable knowledge and experiences that support children and communities. - Leadership can take many forms and reflect different family roles and perspectives. - Early childhood professionals create opportunities for families to share what they think and help make decisions.	- How do early childhood professionals create opportunities for families to share their perspectives and influence decisions? - How do professionals support families to lead in ways that are meaningful to them? - How do early childhood professionals support families in growing participation, leadership, responsibility, and follow-through with individual support as needed?
Outcome: Families have opportunities to share their perspectives, influence decisions, and engage in leadership in ways that reflect their strengths, experiences, and backgrounds.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Provide multiple ways for families to share input and feedback. - Invite families to participate in planning and decision-making. - Recognize and support different forms of family leadership. - Encourage families to advocate for their children and share their perspectives. - Offer opportunities for families to engage in leadership within programs, services, and communities. - Offer leadership opportunities that are realistic, flexible, and accessible for families across different roles, settings, schedules, and comfort levels.	- Families have opportunities to share their perspectives and are informed about the results of their input. - Families feel their voices are valued. - Families participate in ways that are meaningful to them. - Families build confidence in supporting their children and engaging with professionals.

FCP6. Families are supported in times of transition.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
• Transitions are a normal part of children’s and families’ experiences. • Strong partnerships support families during transitions across settings, services, and systems. • Early childhood professionals invite families to prepare for and manage changes.	• How do early childhood professionals support families through different types of transitions? • How do professionals coordinate with partners to support transitions across settings and systems?
Outcome: Families are supported in preparing for and handling transitions across settings, services, and developmental stages through clear communication, collaboration, and connection to supports.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
• Share information with families about upcoming transitions and what to expect. • Invite families to share information about transitions happening in the child’s and family’s life, such as changes in routines, caregiving arrangements, services, family circumstances, or community supports, while respecting family privacy and preferences. • Support children and families in preparing for changes in routines, settings, and services. • Use communication and cross-sector collaboration between sending and receiving professionals or settings. • Recognize and support the emotional aspects of transitions for children and families. • Provide information about available services and supports during transitions. • Coordinate with community partners to support transitions across systems.	• Families feel informed and prepared for transitions. • Families have opportunities to ask questions, seek support, and share information about transitions that may affect their child or family. • Families feel supported during changes in services or settings. • Families experience continuity and connection across transitions.

FCP7. Families are connected to supports and resources.

Big Ideas	Essential Questions
- Families have strengths and changing needs over time. - Early childhood professionals build trusting relationships that support families in identifying needs and accessing resources. - Professionals partner with families to connect them to supports in respectful and responsive ways that protect privacy and avoid stigma.	- How do early childhood professionals create environments where families feel comfortable sharing needs and seeking support? - How do professionals connect families to community resources in ways that are clear, respectful, and accessible?
Outcome: Families are supported in accessing community resources and services in ways that are responsive to their strengths, needs, and preferences, and that promote dignity, trust, and ongoing connection.	
Supportive Practices of Programs/Professionals	Family Experience
- Build ongoing, trusting relationships so families feel comfortable sharing needs. - Maintain knowledge of community resources and services relevant to families. - Share information about resources regularly in accessible formats. - Support families in identifying needs and exploring options based on their preferences. - Provide clear, specific information to help families connect with services (such as who to contact and what to expect) or help provide a warm handoff whenever possible. - Collaborate with other professionals and systems, as appropriate, to support children and families. - Follow up with families after referrals and help address barriers when needed. - Respect family decisions and timelines when accessing services. - Use language and approaches that show families it is okay to ask for help. - Respect family privacy by explaining how information will be used and sharing information only with family permission, unless the law requires sharing it.	- Families feel safe, respected, and supported when sharing needs. - Families receive clear and helpful information about available supports. - Families have opportunities to connect with trusted individuals and community resources. - Families feel supported in making decisions about accessing services. - Families experience support without stigma. - Families understand how their information will be used and feel confident that their privacy is respected.