

Parent and Family Engagement



Exploring **strategies** in Systems
and **Program** Services

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Introduction

1302.50 Family engagement.

(a) Purpose. A program must integrate parent and family engagement strategies into all systems and program services to support family well-being and promote children's learning and development. Programs are encouraged to develop innovative two-generation approaches that address prevalent needs of families across their program that may leverage community partnerships or other funding sources.

(b) Family engagement approach. A program must:

- (1) Recognize parents as their children's primary teachers and nurturers and implement intentional strategies to engage parents in their children's learning and development and support parent-child relationships, including specific strategies for father engagement;
- (2) Develop relationships with parents and structure services to encourage trust and respectful, ongoing two-way communication between staff and parents to create welcoming program environments that incorporate the unique cultural, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds of families in the program and community;
- (3) Collaborate with families in a family partnership process that identifies needs, interests, strengths, goals, and services and resources that support family well-being, including family safety, health, and economic stability;
- (4) Provide parents with opportunities to participate in the program as employees or volunteers;
- (5) Conduct family engagement services in the family's preferred language, or through an interpreter, to the extent possible, and ensure families have the opportunity to share personal information in an environment in which they feel safe; and,
- (6) Implement procedures for teachers, home visitors, and family support staff to share information with each other, as appropriate and consistent with the requirements in part 1303 subpart C, of this chapter; FERPA; or IDEA, to ensure coordinated family engagement strategies with children and families in the classroom, home, and community.

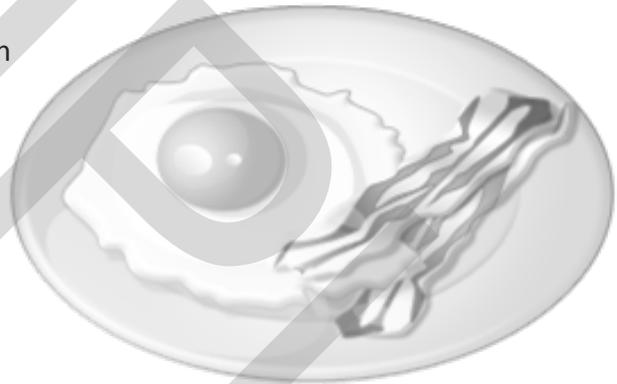
Overview

Parent engagement is a step above parent involvement because it includes ownership, leadership and continuous learning.

- Parent engagement is active, not passive.
- Parent engagement is creative, not the status quo.
- Parent engagement is individualized, not scripted.
- Parent engagement is a total commitment to participate in a child's education.
- Parent engagement means we have confidence, trust, and belief in parents' abilities and knowledge as opposed to us trying to "fix them."
- Remember, parents are not broken!

The idea of bacon and eggs is a great metaphor for parent engagement and parent involvement. The chicken is involved in the contribution of eggs (involvement), but the pig is totally committed to the contribution of bacon (engagement).

This workbook contains important information in areas that are critical to partnering so let's dig in!



The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework

Engaging Families – Prenatal to Age 8



Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2018). *Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework*.

Head Start Parent and Family Engagement Outcomes	
1. FAMILY WELL-BEING	Parents and families are safe, healthy, and have increased financial security.
2. POSITIVE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIPS	Beginning with transitions to parenthood, parents and families develop warm relationships that nurture their child's learning and development.
3. FAMILIES AS LIFELONG EDUCATORS	Parents and families observe, guide, promote, and participate in the everyday learning of their children at home, school, and in their communities.
4. FAMILIES AS LEARNERS	Parents and families advance their own learning interests through education, training and other experiences that support their parenting, careers, and life goals.
5. FAMILY ENGAGEMENT IN TRANSITIONS	Parents and families support and advocate for their child's learning and development as they transition to new learning environments, including EHS to HS, EHS/HS to other early learning environments, and HS to kindergarten through elementary school.
6. FAMILY CONNECTIONS TO PEERS AND COMMUNITY	Parents and families form connections with peers and mentors in formal or informal social networks that are supportive and/or educational and that enhance social well-being and community life.
7. FAMILIES AS ADVOCATES AND LEADERS	Parents and families participate in leadership development, decision-making, program policy development, or in community and state organizing activities to improve children's development and learning experiences.

Source: *The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Framework Promoting Family Engagement and School Readiness, From Prenatal To Age 8*, U.S. DHHS, ACF, Office of Head Start Office, The National Center on Parent, Family & Community Engagement

Parent Engagement in the Application/Enrollment Process

Applying for Head Start/Early Head Start can be a very frustrating, lengthy experience. The most effective customer friendly process is for a knowledgeable person to assist with filling out the application. The application process is a great way for parents and staff to make a positive connection. However, we don't get a second chance on a first impression. Staff should be prepared, friendly and not rushed. Let's review the checklist below and see how we rate.

- ✓ We always have forms in English and other languages, and have an interpreter on-hand to help with the application.
- ✓ We give ample time for the application process; we do not rush.
- ✓ We fill out the application with the parent in a private area, free of interruptions, doorbells, telephones. We treat families with dignity and respect.
- ✓ We only allow staff members who understand every item of the application to help parents with the application.
- ✓ We never send an application out in the mail.
- ✓ We do not require medicals and dentals with the application.
- ✓ We do not take social security numbers with the application.
- ✓ We are aware of the many rights parents have regarding viewing their child's records, and all the areas of Personally Identifiable Information (PII). For more details, see HSPPS Part 1303 — Financial and Administrative Requirements Subpart C — Protections for the Privacy of Child Records, Sections 1303.20, 1303.21, 1303.22, 1303.23, and 1303.24.
- ✓ We never use forms that are copied poorly or stapled incorrectly.

Once applications are fully processed, the family is selected (or not) and notified of acceptance (or waitlist). At that point the family is enrolled in the program. Now that the parent is enrolled, are we taking advantage of their excitement about their child's Head Start/Early Head Start experience? Have you ever considered this?

- Provide returning Parent Committee chair with newly enrolled parent contact information.
- Send sample newsletters home for parents to read.
- Find out what skills, resources and talents parents or other family members have; see if they would share with program.
- Others?