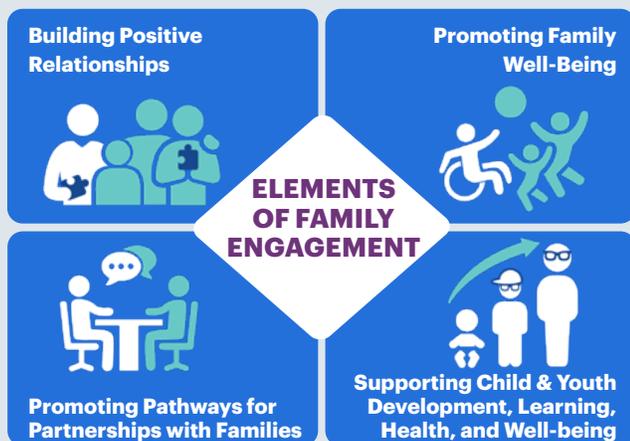


FAMILIES ARE THE KEY TO FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

WHAT IS FAMILY ENGAGEMENT?

Family engagement is an intentional, authentic, respectful, and equal partnership between practitioners and families with the ultimate goal of positive results for children and youth.



FAMILY ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

- Each family is unique, and all families represent diverse structures.
- Acknowledging and accepting the need to engage all families is essential for successful engagement of diverse families and includes recognizing the strengths that come from their diverse backgrounds.
- Building a respectful, trusting, and reciprocal relationship is a shared responsibility of families, practitioners, organizations, and systems.
- Families are their child/youth's first and best advocate.
- Family engagement must be equitable.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO ENGAGE FAMILIES?

Family engagement is crucial for healthy development of children and youth.

Families, who are active and respected participants in child/youth development and learning in all settings (i.e., home, health, human services, and education), can help practitioners see new ways to build safe, welcoming, and trusting environments. Access to information about their child/youth's development and learning affects family members' self-efficacy, confidence, and skills.

STRENGTHENING CAPACITY FOR FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

An organization can use the following four strategies to inform its systemic plan for family engagement, which includes increasing the capacity of its practitioners to implement engagement activities while also increasing the skills and capacity of families.



TRANSITIONS AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Transitions are important opportunities for practitioners to engage families by offering leadership and advocacy experiences.

Practitioners can assist families by helping them to anticipate the transitions and by jointly establishing transition plans.



Building Positive Relationships



- Provide environments that are welcoming, inclusive, and safe.
- Have conversations with families to hear their perspectives/insights on their child/youth's development, learning, health, and well-being.
- Engage professionals in helping to share information with families on child/youth development learning, health, and well-being along with anticipated and unanticipated life transitions.
- Provide staff training opportunities, and the time to engage in training, on the topic on how to build trusting relationships with families.

Promoting Family Well-Being



- Ask families to define their community. Map out resources related to family well-being within their defined community.
- Build relationships with community partners to make appropriate referrals for family well-being services.
- Plan for and ensure warm hand-offs between educational, health, and human service settings.
- Provide staff with tools to be responsive to family needs such as databases of community resources, child development knowledge, and information about families themselves.

Promoting Pathways for Partnerships with Families



- With families, identify supports for families to attend family and community engagement opportunities (e.g., transportation, disability access, food, space, child care, translation).
- Create incentives for families to participate in peer-to-peer/mentorship opportunities.
- Create family support programs/youth support groups focusing on coaching and skills development.
- Provide safe/supportive opportunities for families to grapple with anticipated and unanticipated transitions.
- Support family members as they develop skills as advocates and leaders.

Supporting Child & Youth Development, Learning, Health, and Well-being



- Engage with families in their preferred languages and provide written information using translated materials.
- Use peer-to-peer mentoring as opportunities for families to exchange information and knowledge related to supporting their child's development, learning, health, and well-being.
- Offer families resources such as workshops, support groups, and screenings, related to development, learning, health, well-being, and mutually agreed-upon goals.
- Make intentional efforts to understand barriers or challenges families face while accessing engagement or leadership opportunities and to collaboratively identify solutions.



For more information on the Massachusetts Statewide Family Engagement Framework, please visit www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework.pdf. The Framework defines *family* in the broadest and most diverse way. The constellation of family structures include, but is not limited to: 2-parent families, which includes 2 mothers or 2 fathers; single parent families; blended families; multi-generational families; grandparents raising grandchildren; gay, lesbian bisexual, and transgender families; extended families; siblings, adoptive families; foster families; emancipated youth; family by choice/felt families; kinship/neighbors. For a complementary summary for families, please visit www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/family-engagement-framework-family-tool.pdf.

