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Family Involvement

Families are a key element in all child care programs, and it is important for you to build a positive relationship with the family of each child in your care. The majority of states require that you allow parents to have access to your program when their child is present. In addition to allowing and encouraging parents to drop into the program to see their child(ren) unannounced, you can help to build trust by providing opportunities for family involvement. This can include regular communication and getting involved in the community as well as allowing families to volunteer, serve as advocates for young children's issues or serve on your program's parent board or advisory group.

Communication

The following ideas will help you communicate well with your families:

- Encourage parents to read your parent handbook so they know about your policies.
- Offer regular conferences with the parents so you can discuss children's progress.
- Keep information on your bulletin board, in your newsletter and on your website current so parents know what to expect.
- Prepare a brief "My Day" each day for parents that describes what their child experienced.
- Encourage parents to share information about important events in their families.
- Ask parents about how they celebrate birthdays and holidays.
- If English is not the language that the parents speak at home, find out if parents need interpreters or translations of documents.

Volunteer Opportunities

Many parents are eager to help in activities that involve their children. There are many ways that families can volunteer to help support your program. The following are examples of activities you can suggest to parents:

- Assist in a classroom activity on a regular basis - reading to children, cooking, gardening.
- Be a driver or chaperone for field trips.
- Edit newsletters.
- Help with improvement projects like gardening.
- Plan special occasions (festivals, teacher recognition events, clean up days and cultural events).
- Design and maintain your website.
- Visit the classroom to share specific information about special skills or family traditions.

Provide your volunteers with training and supervision. They need clear expectations about their duties, time commitment, budget and resources.

If your volunteers work directly with children, they need a complete background check. You also need to give them information about appropriate and inappropriate discipline and techniques for interacting with children.

Committees and Advisory Boards

Parents bring a unique voice to committees and advisory boards.

- They can participate in parent committees in your program.

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Nutrition

Family Involvement

- They can share their professional and personal knowledge in areas appropriate to your program (business, marketing, legal matters, fundraising).
- They can participate in community initiatives or organizations as a representative of your program.
- They can advocate for your program to funders and politicians.

Additional Resource

- [BoardSource](#)

Resources for Families

You can share information with families about their children, your program and resources that are available to them. The following are some examples of what you might offer to families:

- Day-to-day information on children's activities and development
- Regular conferences on children's progress
- Events to showcase children's work
- Newsletters and websites about activities, goals and fun ideas to try at home
- Family education packets (information about SIDS, communicable diseases, age-appropriate activities, why children bite and how to discourage it, etc.)
- Information about parenting classes in the community
- Information about community events and resources
- Information about joining the [Child Care Aware® Family Network](#), a free membership organization for parents and grandparents with interactive resources about parenting, child development, quality child care and more
- Child Care Aware's [State by State Resource Map](#) with resources for families such as Medicaid, SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps), WIC, TANF, child care assistance programs, organizations that offer support for children with special needs and more

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Child Care Aware®, a program of Child Care Aware® of America, is partly funded by the Office of Child Care(OCC), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

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