



Family Partnerships

Educators are experts on child development and families are experts on their own children. Building partnerships with families is essential to creating a high quality infant and toddler caregiving program. When you and a family commit to working together for their child's sake, you can share ideas, strategize options, and overcome challenges. And, you can help the child feel more comfortable in your care because he can sense your positive relationship with his family.

- **Connect with each family right from the start.** Use the enrollment process to learn what matters to individual families. Invite family members to share information that will help you better serve their child.
- **Offer a home visit.** When you visit a family in their home, you can see how a child interacts with trusted people in a familiar surrounding. As you build a relationship with family members, the baby or toddler can begin to build a relationship with you.
- **Address language issues.** Discuss strategies for bringing a family's preferred language into your setting. What language(s) do they use with their child? How do adults prefer to be addressed and introduced? What words do they teach their child to use when naming family members? What names or nicknames do they use for their child?
- **Plan the transition together.** Talk about what you can do to welcome families and their child to your program. Plan how to make the first days and weeks easier for each child.
- **Set up routines for communicating with family members.** Plan how you will share daily communications, such as notes or home-school journals. Will it be with texts or emails, by phone, or on family bulletin boards? Discuss whether families will be open to casual or planned meetings. You may find that you need more frequent communication when a child or family is going through a change or challenge.
- **Make families welcome and comfortable.** Invite family members to join in when they visit. Display captioned photos of children at play where they will prompt conversations.
- **Share at least one good thing each day.** Let families know how special their child is every day. Describe at least one concrete example of something the child did that day.
- **Learn what you can do for each other.** Think about how family members might contribute to the program by sharing their expertise, heritage, hobbies, or perspectives on the curriculum. Encourage families to communicate what they would like from you.
- **Build community among families.** The friendships that families form when their children are little are often long lasting relationships. As their children grow, families share questions, information, and support as well as fun.