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LESSON 4

COLLABORATING WITH FAMILIES

As a family child care provider, you build strong relationships with the families of children in your program. They entrust you with their child for as many as 60 hours a week. In return, they want to hear about their child's everyday experiences, growth, and development. After all, the family is the child's first teacher. And families come in all shapes and sizes. The families you meet might include grandparents, uncles and aunts, and family friends. Understanding how to communicate and collaborate with them is critical to your success.

In the first assignment for this lesson, you'll explore the meaning of family and family-centered care. What do families in today's world look like? And how do you provide services that focus on families first? You'll learn the difference between involving families in your work and truly engaging them in your program. You'll also learn why building this relationship with families is so important.

Once you understand why your relationship with family matters so much, you may need some strategies to build those relationships. And because families are complex, you may need some ideas on how to resolve challenges that can arise when working with families. In Assignment 2, you'll learn some basic strategies, but also find some problem-solving tools to help you think through partnering with parents.

ASSIGNMENT 1

THE ROLE OF FAMILIES IN FAMILY CHILD CARE

Read this section in your study guide. There is no other reading in this assignment.

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

When you complete Assignment 1, you'll be able to

1. Describe how families can be involved in the family child care

THE FAMILY

In the early childhood world, we often think of families first. Families are the child's first teacher, engaging and constructing the world for young children. In fact, many families choose a family child care program because it "feels like family" when they come in the door. So understanding that your role as caregiver and teacher is to build your program around the families you serve is critical.

Because our world is so diverse, it's important to think about *family* rather than *parent*. A child can be "parented" by his or her mother, father, grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and even family friends. Families are as diverse as the cultures in your community and the languages they speak. In some communities, the families you see may follow the traditional "mother-father-multiple children" structure. In other communities, you may find an extended family living together and raising their children together. Some families may include two dads or two moms. Some may have parents who are divorced and live separately. Being *family-centered* means accepting the structure of each family and working with everyone within the family to support the child.



Please be aware that parents and legal guardians have legal rights that other family members don't. Unless the legal parent or guardian has given permission for you to share confidential information with another family member, you *may not* share it. In addition, you can release a child only to an adult who is authorized by the legal parent or guardian.

As you get to know families, it may help you to “map” who the family members are and what resources they access (Figure 2). Another family map that represents a separated or divorced family can be found at [Separated Families Matter.org](http://SeparatedFamiliesMatter.org)

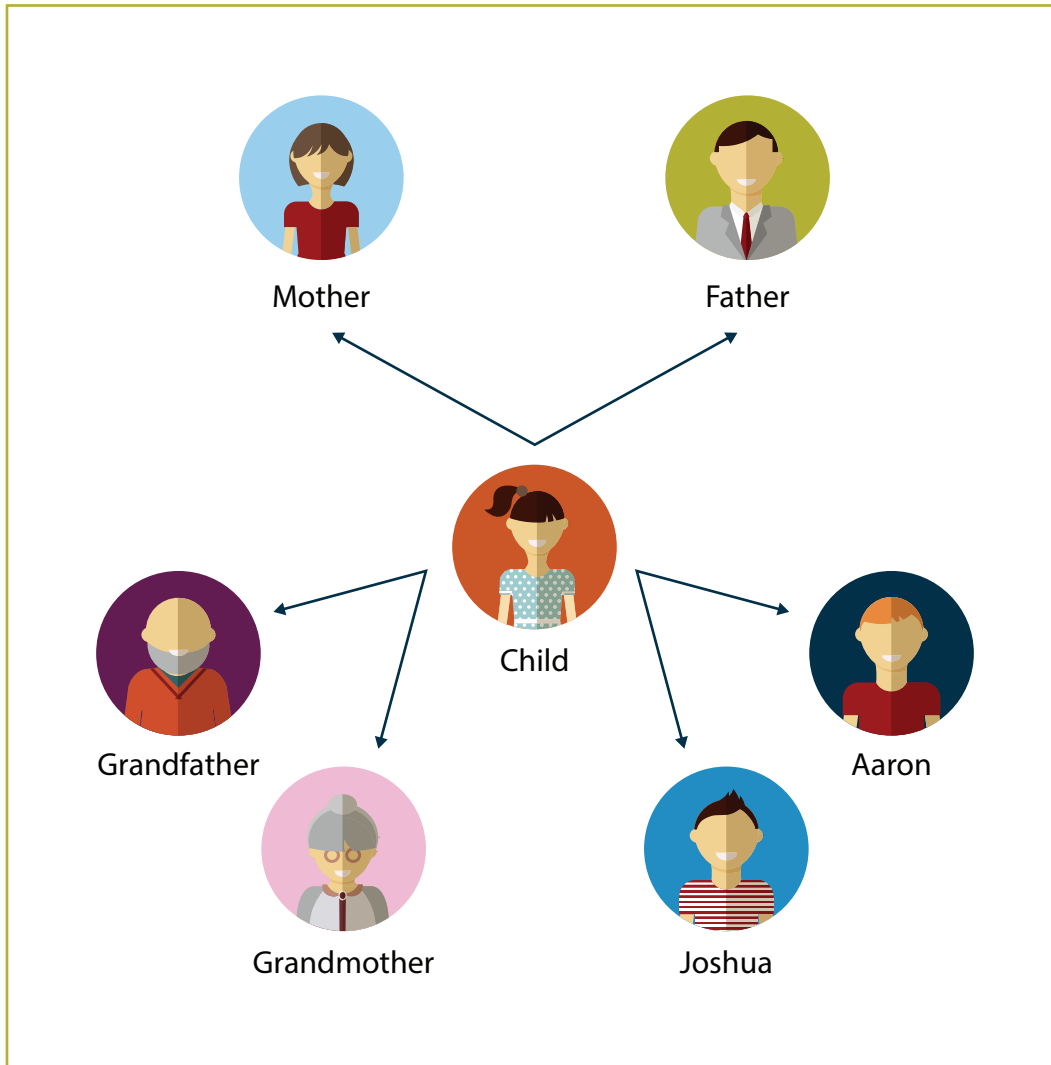


FIGURE 2—An Example of a Family Map



To better understand how to support families, read [“Family-Centered Practice”](#) by Susan McBride (*Young Children, 1999*).

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

As research on family-centered practice has shown positive impacts on child outcomes, the concept of family involvement has evolved to emphasize *engagement*. *Involvement* and *engagement* have critically different meanings. When you *involve* a family, you have your drop-off and pick-up conversations with families. But when you *engage* a family, you empower them. You don't merely provide them with ongoing communication in how their child is progressing, you engage them in planning and making decisions about their child's development. When you identify a success or challenge, you partner with the family to determine what to do next. For example: How do you and the family both celebrate the child's progress and increase challenges? How do you both address the concern to minimize impact on the child's development?



ASSIGNMENT 1

REFLECT AND RESPOND

Think about the people in your family and how others have related to you. Have you felt engaged or involved? When you were engaged as a decision-maker, how did that feel? What did you learn from that experience that helped you in your life? And how did it differ from a time when you were just involved, or simply informed of the activities going on?

You're in a unique position as a family child care provider. You offer a level of intimacy and nurturing that families are less likely to find in a center-based program. You're also likely to be a member of the family's community and may have relationships with them beyond caregiving. How you manage the relationships with families will help you support their children to reach outcomes. Your support will also impact how families navigate the challenges that come with each developmental stage.



ASSIGNMENT 1

DISCOVER MORE

ENGAGING FAMILIES

Using the table, note ways in which you might involve and engage families. For example, sending daily records home involves families. Instead of sending daily records, using a journal that parents can write in as well can develop more engagement and two-way communication. Using examples like this, strategize ways to move from involvement to engagement.

Involvement	Engagement



ASSIGNMENT 1

SELF-CHECK

1. How is engagement different from involvement?

2. What should you do when you disagree with a family?

3. Drawing a family map is one way to _____.

4. _____ means that you respect and empower families as decision makers for their children.

5. When you use family-centered practices, you

- a. consider the needs of the family first.
- b. build your curriculum based on each family's culture and traditions.
- c. ask family members to come and teach activities.
- d. hold family education programs.

Click [here](#) to check your answers.

ASSIGNMENT 2

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING FAMILIES

Read this section in your study guide. Then reread pages 71–82 in your textbook.

ASSIGNMENT OBJECTIVES

When you complete Assignment 2, you'll be able to

2. Compare strategies to partner with and engage families

There are many ways to build relationships and partnerships with families. You set the stage with marketing materials and your first conversation and keep it going through your ongoing communication. Always keep in mind that how you speak is as important as what you say. Being aware of the families' needs, resources, and preferences will help you get it right.

GATHERING INFORMATION

When you enroll a family, you may want to include some questions about them in your enrollment forms. If you feel comfortable, consider asking the following questions to help you gain a sense of the family:

- With whom does the child live?
- What language does the family speak at home?
- What traditions (religious or otherwise) are most significant to the family?
- What country were the child's parents born and raised in?
- What are the family's hopes and dreams for their child?
- What resources would the family like to have that they lack?

The answers to these questions provide you the broader context of culture, language, and aspirations. This allows you to really get to know the child's family.



Visit the [Teaching Tolerance](#) page to get a better sense of the different strategies you use when dealing with families. Even though this resource was created for teachers in school-aged settings, the skills taught are relevant to the family child care setting.



ASSIGNMENT 2

DISCOVER MORE

Once you have a sense of some of the basic skills you can use to make all families feel welcome, consider these articles and tools to learn more.

- ZERO TO THREE
 - ✓ [Effective Communication with Parents](#)
 - ✓ [Caregiver-Parent Communication Tool](#)
- [Boosting School Readiness Through Effective Family Engagement](#) (Note: This video begins with an introduction and includes several sections, which should start automatically. If not, you can navigate using the bulleted list button on the lower left corner of the video window.)
- [Using Motivational Interviewing Techniques to Effectively Partner with Parents](#)

Each of these resources shares strategies that can help you better partner with the families in your program. And when you partner well with families, children gain in all developmental domains.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

Once you have some strategies with which you feel comfortable, write a communication plan for your program. Your communication plan should outline how and when you'll engage families. As with all of your planning, you should begin with one of your program goals or objectives. All the activities you include in this plan will help you make a connection between your program and the child's home.

PROGRAM GOAL/OBJECTIVE			
What strategy will I use and how will I use it?	How will I keep families apprised of the timeline?	What resources will I need?	How will I measure success?
Ongoing communication with comments from me and room for families to respond and write their own comments	Every night I will send it home and every morning families will return it.	I'll need a notebook with prompts for families. I'll also need an introductory letter explaining what the journal is and why I use it.	Every month I'll read through it to see whether families use it. I'll also survey all of the families about it.

Having a formal plan for engaging families gives you something concrete to use and allows you to evaluate how well you're doing. It's also something you can share with families when they're deciding whether to enroll in your program. It offers you a starting point to demonstrate that you understand their role and its importance in their children's lives.



ASSIGNMENT 2

REFLECT AND RESPOND

When people try to engage you in activities, what strategies work best? Do you prefer a warm handshake and eye contact, or does that make you uncomfortable? If you have children in child care or school, what strategies did the facility use to make you feel engaged in your child's experience there?

Interview some friends and family members. What strategies worked for them? How can you integrate some of those strategies into your family engagement plans?



ASSIGNMENT 2

SELF-CHECK

1. When you _____ with families, you build a program that responds to their needs.
2. Understanding the context of a child's life includes understanding _____.
3. Regular _____ helps you gauge where families are in supporting their children.
4. _____ is one strategy that has evidence to show its effectiveness in supporting families.

Click [here](#) to check your answers.



WORKING WITH MULTI-AGE GROUPS

GRADED PROJECT

Develop a plan for your family child care setting. Your plan should account for children of varying ages, including at least the following:

- An infant (under 1)
- A toddler (2–3)
- A preschooler (4–5)
- A school-age child (6–12)

Feel free to use and adapt materials from the learning activities throughout your assignments in this course.

Your project must include

- A drawing of your teaching environment, including where materials will be stored and how you'll use each space for teaching
- An outline of the themes you'll teach for the year. Include overall goals for each theme that address each developmental domain. Indicate the amount of time you intend to spend on each theme.
- A list of health and safety policies you'll develop to support child health and development in your program. Take into consideration the various ages you'll be working with.
- A daily schedule for each child you might serve, at a minimum including an infant (under 1), a toddler (2–3), a preschooler (4–5) and school age, both before and afterschool and full day. These schedules may vary for the children based on their age.
- A week's worth of lessons, including how each activity will be individualized for at least the three different age ranges listed above. Make sure each lesson begins with objectives for the children in your program and includes assessment strategies. If you plan on teaching one-on-one or in small groups, describe the activities other children will be engaged in at the same time.
- A communication plan for engaging families

GRADING CRITERIA

Skill	Exemplary	Proficient	Fair	Poor	Not Evident
Drawing	10 The drawing is complete, readable, and includes appropriate spaces for teaching children and storing materials.	8 The drawing is complete, but difficult to read, and includes appropriate spaces for teaching children and storing materials.	6 The drawing does not include an appropriate space for teaching children, or does not include an area to store materials.	4 The project contains many errors that could make the space unacceptable for children.	0 The drawing is not included.
Outline of themes	20 Themes are included for each age group. Overall goals for each theme that address each developmental domain are included. The amount of time intended for each theme is included.	15–19 Themes are included for most age groups. Overall goals for each theme that address each developmental domain are included. The amount of time intended for each theme is included.	10–14 Themes are missing for many age groups. Overall goals for each theme that address each developmental domain are not included or do not relate.	5–9 Theme for one age group is included. May be missing goals or time elements of the project.	0 Themes were not included in submission.
Health policies	20 All needed materials are included and thoroughly explored. Materials are appropriate, interesting, and informative. Overall project contributes to health and wellness knowledge.	15–19 All needed materials are included and proficiently explored. Materials are appropriate, interesting, and informative. Overall project contributes to health and wellness knowledge.	10–14 Some of the needed materials are missing or not properly discussed. Materials are appropriate, and slightly informative. Overall project contributes some health and wellness knowledge.	5–9 Most of the needed materials are missing or not properly discussed. Some materials are inappropriate or uninformative. Overall project slightly contributes to health and wellness knowledge.	0 Needed materials are not included. The project does not contribute any health or wellness knowledge.

Daily schedule	10 A daily schedule for the week is present and includes appropriate activities for all age groups. The activities are developmentally appropriate and relate to the program themes.	8 A daily schedule for the week is present and includes appropriate activities for three age groups. The activities are developmentally appropriate and relate to the program themes.	6 A daily schedule for the week is present and includes appropriate activities for one or two age groups. Some activities are developmentally appropriate and relate to the program themes.	4 A daily schedule for the week is present but does not include appropriate activities for all age groups. Some activities are developmentally appropriate.	0 A daily schedule was not submitted.
Week of lessons	20 All lessons for the week are present and include appropriate objectives and activities for all age groups. The activities are developmentally appropriate and relate to the program themes.	15–19 All lessons for the week are present and include appropriate objectives and activities for all age groups.	10–14 Some lessons are missing; however, the lessons that are present have appropriate objectives and activities for all age groups.	5–9 Most of the lessons are missing or do not include appropriate objectives and activities for children.	0 Lessons are not included with submission.
Communication plan	20 All needed materials are included and thoroughly explored. Communication materials are appropriate, interesting, and informative.	15–19 All needed materials are included and proficiently explored. Materials are appropriate, interesting, and informative.	10–14 Some of the needed materials are missing or not properly discussed. Materials are appropriate and slightly informative.	5–9 Most of the needed materials are missing or not properly discussed. Some materials are inappropriate or uninformative.	0 Needed materials are not included.

SUBMITTING YOUR PROJECT

Each project is individually graded and therefore could take a few weeks to grade.

Follow this procedure to submit your assignment online:

1. Save a final version of your assignment on your computer. Be sure that each of your documents contains
 - Your name
 - Your email address
 - Your student number
 - Course name and number (**CCP09A, Working with Multi-Age Groups**)
 - Project number (**580811**)
2. Go to **<http://www.pennfoster.edu>** and log in to your student portal.
3. On your student portal, click on **Take an Exam**.
4. In the box provided, enter the examination number. The number for this exam is **580811**.
5. Click on **Submit**.
6. On the next screen, enter your email address. (*Note: This information is required for online submission.*)
7. If you wish to tell your instructor anything specific regarding this assignment, enter it in the **Comments** box.
8. Attach your file or files as follows:
 - a. Click on the first **Browse** box.
 - b. Locate the file you wish to attach.
 - c. Double-click on the file.
 - d. If you have more than one file to upload, click on the next **Browse** box and repeat steps b and c.

Note: If you have more than 10 attachments, you'll need to zip all of your files along with all documentation using a file compression program such as WinZip.
9. Click on **Submit**.

Be sure to keep a backup copy of any files you submit to the school!



KEY POINTS AND RESOURCES

ASSIGNMENT 1

- Being family-centered means accepting the structure of each family and working with everyone within the family to support the child.
- Parents and legal guardians have legal rights that other family members don't, including keeping information confidential and authorizing or prohibiting certain people from picking up a child.
- Family-centered practice shows positive impacts on child outcomes.
- How you manage the relationships with families will help you support their children to reach outcomes.

ASSIGNMENT 2

- When you enroll a family, you may want to include some questions about them in your enrollment forms, such as what language is spoken at home and what traditions are important to them.
- Your communication plan should outline how and when you'll engage families.
- Having a formal plan for engaging families gives you something concrete to use and allows you to evaluate how well you're doing.

RESOURCES

"Family-Centered Practice"

<http://center.serve.org/tt/ResearchInReview.pdf>

Teaching Tolerance—Family Engagement

<http://www.tolerance.org/supplement/family-engagement>

Effective Communication with Parents

<http://www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/family-friend-neighbor-care/effective-communication-with-parents.html>

Caregiver-Parent Communication Tool

<http://www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/family-friend-neighbor-care/caregiver-parent-communication-tools.html>

Boosting School Readiness Through Effective Family Engagement

http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/pfcea_simulation/index.html

Using Motivational Interviewing Techniques to Effectively Partner with Parents

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/health/mental-health/ec-mental-health-consultation/mit.html>