



## Family and Community Engagement

**Family and community engagement in early care and education (ECE) is defined by strong relationships and partnerships between ECE programs and families in order to enhance children’s learning and development. A family and community engagement approach recognizes that children develop within the context of families and communities and that families, communities, and early childhood programs all play a role in children’s development (Bromer et al., 2011; Epstein, 1995; Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009; Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006; Weiss, Lopez, & Rosenberg, 2010).**

The National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement articulates strong family and community engagement as:

“Building relationships with families that support family well-being, strong parent-child relationships, and ongoing learning and development of parents and children alike... Family engagement happens in the home, early childhood program, school and community and is a shared responsibility with all those who support children’s learning.” (Office of Head Start, The National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement, n.d., p. 1)

Research indicates that families have the greatest impact on their children’s development. ECE programs that are responsive to families and engage families in their children’s learning will have the best chance of shaping positive outcomes for children in their programs. ECE programs that build responsive and strength-based relationships with families may increase the likelihood of families becoming engaged in their children’s learning experiences as well as involved in the ECE program itself.

Family engagement activities are grounded in positive, ongoing interactions and relationships with families and communities. ECE program practices that promote family and community engagement include: respectful attitudes toward families, knowledge about families, goal-oriented and relationship-based partnerships with families, cultural and linguistic responsiveness toward families, welcoming environments, and family-friendly policies (Forry et al., 2012). Many of these elements are addressed in the Head Start Performance Standards as well as in the National Association for the Education of Young Children quality standards that emphasize the importance of strong family-provider partnerships (2005).

The standards articulated in this Award of Excellence point to ECE program staff practices, attitudes, and knowledge related to working with families that research indicates are likely to positively impact family engagement and child development. When family and community partnerships are comprehensive, systemic and integrated across ECE program foundations and practices, family and community engagement impacts are achieved resulting in children who are healthy and ready for school.

***Has your program already achieved the Gold Circle of Quality? If so additional technical assistance can be received to work toward this Award of Excellence. Contact Leatha Asbury at [AsburyL@actforchildren.org](mailto:AsburyL@actforchildren.org).***

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# Standards

<b>Standard 1</b>	The ECE program leadership promotes and implements system-wide family engagement policies and a family-friendly environment.
<b>Standard 2</b>	The ECE program uses a relationship-based approach to engaging families and all staff members demonstrate respect for families' culture, language, family composition, and circumstances.
<b>Standard 3</b>	The ECE program uses a goal-oriented approach to working with families through creating opportunities for collaborative decision-making about goals for their children, their families, and the program.
<b>Standard 4</b>	The ECE program initiates and promotes broad and active community partnerships on behalf of families, children, staff and community.
<b>Standard 5</b>	The ECE program has systems for collecting and using data related to family and community engagement for the purpose of improving program practices. The ECE program collects and shares relevant data with families.
<b>Standard 6</b>	ECE program staff has knowledge and training in how to build strong family-program relationships. ECE program staff also has knowledge about the strengths, needs, and experiences of individual families as they relate to child and family well-being.
<b>Standard 7</b>	The ECE program facilitates healthy transitions and adjustments for children and families. Smooth transitions for children and families are facilitated for children changing caregivers within an ECE setting, moving from one ECE setting to another, or from one ECE setting to elementary school (e.g. Early Head Start to Head Start, Child Care/HS/pre-K to public school) whether these are on a regular basis or a one-time transition. The ECE program helps children and families develop skills around managing these transitions.