

Sharing Parent Expertise: Top 10 Ideas Parent Leaders Want Practitioners to Know About Parent Engagement

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Why are we here?

- Lauren

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Why are we here?

- Melissa

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Best Practices

- *Early On* provides early intervention services to families
- Strong practitioner-parent partnerships produce better child and family outcomes
- Video on home visiting and parent partnerships from Connecticut:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8fOJGmldj0c>

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What are partnerships?

- Partnerships involve parents, families and practitioners working together to benefit children.
- Each recognizes, respects and values what the other does and says.
- **Partnerships involve responsibility on both sides.**

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Definition of practitioner

- A staff member, employed by an agency, who is involved in providing services for parents, providing services for parents, children and families.
- A person we would normally consider a professional...
 - Principals, teacher
 - Social worker
 - Home visitor
 - Counselor, family support worker

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Definition of parent

- Biological parent
- Any other adult who is in the primary caregiver in a child's life.
 - Grandparent raising a grandchild
 - Other relative (aunt, uncle) who is the primary caregiver
 - Adoptive parent
 - Foster parent
 - Any non-relative caregiver

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Why are partnerships important?

- Partnerships are important in various situations:
 - Settling in to a new setting or changes at home
 - Getting to know a new practitioner
 - Getting used to a new baby at home
- Working together and sharing information will help make the children's lives easier.

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Benefits of Parent-Practitioner Partnerships

- Parents benefit by:
 - Feeling valued and respected
 - Being more aware of their children's learning and development
 - Being comfortable talking to and planning with practitioners
 - Understanding why early childhood education is important in the their children's development
 - Gaining confidence in their parenting skills **because** they are more involved

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Benefits of Parent-Practitioner Partnerships

- Practitioners benefit by:
 - Gaining knowledge of the family's settings and incorporating those details into early intervention services
 - Gaining a sense of identity and belonging in the setting by actively engaging with the families and knowing where to build on their beliefs and traditions where appropriate
 - Learning from parents' skills and expertise
 - Providing a more emotionally secure environment for children

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Benefits of Parent-Practitioner Partnerships

- Children benefit by:
 - Having greater confidence when moving from one setting to the next
 - Developing easier connections when there are a variety of services that support them
 - Experiencing a better educational opportunity by feeling more secure

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Benefits Summary

Increased information sharing



Empowered parents



BETTER CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES

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Qualities necessary for effective partnerships

- Mutual respect
- Honesty
- Trust
- Openness
- Listening skills
- Sensitivity
- Empathy
- Communication skills

This all helps establish a rapport!

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Quote

“Simply put, the meaningful inclusion of parents in family support and program development is good business. How else can practitioners, who rarely walk in the same shoes as the families they seek to support, fully grasp the true nature of family needs and devise the most culturally appropriate strategies to address them?...”

Cynthia Savage, CEO Circle of Parents

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The Parents’ Top 10

1. Show respect
2. Ask how I’m doing
3. Find encouraging words
4. Use common language
5. Use our toys
6. Tailor your service to my family
7. Ask if my child’s “performance” is unusual this visit
8. Ask me what I have tried
9. Develop an action plan
10. Recap and write it down

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1. Show Respect

- Keep *and show* an attitude of openness, respect and trust
 - Always assume a parent is doing the best they can
 - Try not to judge parenting styles or lifestyle choices
 - Describe your approach and the process
- Recognize different communication abilities
 - Engage a shy parent by asking questions
 - Explain why you do what you do

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2. Ask how I'm doing

- What am I worried about?
- Why have I agreed to services?
- How much can I handle right now?
- Share resources and ideas.
- Encourage!

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3. Find encouraging words

- Recognize the expertise of both the parent and yourself
 - Tell parents the skills they contribute, e.g.
 - Connection with child's mood
 - Knowledge of likes and dislikes
 - Child naturally wants to copy them
 - Be as specific as possible
 - This raises parent confidence
- This makes your job easier!

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4. Use common language

- Before you worked in child development, what did you know?
- Avoid **terms** like:
 - Generalize
 - Development areas
 - Primary domains
 - Gross/fine motor
 - Acronyms
- Provide a glossary

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5. Use our toys

- We love new ideas
- Get creative
- Show me how to do it – parent coaching
- Ask if there's anything we're surprised the child isn't playing with
- Give gift ideas

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6. Tailor service to my family

- You just raised parent confidence, now capitalize on the parent's resources
- Family goals are key – they will work hardest on achieving goals that are important to them
- We can't do it all – prioritize

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7. Ask if my child's "performance" was unusual this visit

- How typical was the child's behavior was during the assessment?
- Another opportunity to raise parent confidence
- Maintain the parent's confidence

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8. Use my expertise

- Something isn't working – what do we do?
- Ask the parent what motivates their child/ what strategies work
- If the parent seems stuck, ask thought-provoking questions
- Don't hide clinical information
- Improved information sharing → Better advice

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9. Develop an action plan

- Discuss the results and encourage questions.
 - Parents don't know what they don't know.
 - Do not assume that the parent understands the next steps just because they don't offer questions.
 - Try to anticipate parts of the visit or next steps that they may not understand.
 - Ask questions like,
 - "What do you think will be the easiest skill to work on until we meet again?"
 - "What parts of the day do you think will be best for practicing _____?"

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10. Recap and *write it down*

- Review to ensure that the parents concerns and needs are addressed by your actions/suggestions at the visit.
 - Review original concerns expressed by the parent.
 - Parent might be caught up in all the new games they are trying to remember.
 - Parent might simply forget, and will kick themselves that they didn't remember to follow up
 - Analyze honestly
- **WRITE IT DOWN**

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Developing a collaborative partnership between professionals and families...

- is essential for good early intervention services.
- may not always be easy.

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Barriers to Collaboration

- Professionals traditionally trained in the "expert" model:
 - Evaluate, make recommendations and provide treatment to individual children based on expertise in your discipline.
- Why doesn't it work anymore?
 - Best practices call for collaboration
 - Moves to primary-service-provider model

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Barriers to Collaboration

- Parents playing a passive role
 - They don't know what to ask
 - They don't know what they're missing
 - They don't understand the language
- Parents fearing:
 - Unfamiliar language
 - Not parenting well/CPS
 - Stepping on the shoes of the "expert"

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Barriers to Collaboration

- *Early On* serves families of every culture and communication style
- *Early On* providers are from every culture and have a wide range of communication styles
- Personal behavior change is slow and difficult

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Learning Experience

Engaged parents absorb more information and can carry it through everyday life:

- Development—e.g., reading and playing with their child, preparing healthy meals, modeling positive health behaviors
- Health Care—e.g., choosing and accessing services for their child, expressing needs and perspectives during care visits
- Connection with Child—e.g., understanding how to motivate their child

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Learning Experience, cont.

- Parents play an active role as an informant about their children’s skills and behaviors.
- Unengaged or shy parents may not offer information.
- Practitioner tools for gathering information:
 - Conversations or interviews
 - Questionnaires
 - Problem solving
 - Environmental scan

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Conversations

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>When to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial contacts • Updates throughout intervention | <p>What to share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefits of learning in everyday opportunities, • Child development knowledge, • Impact of disability, • Importance of parent-child interaction |
|---|--|

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Questionnaires

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>When to use:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial contacts • Periodic updates | <p>What to share:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of family on team, • Typical development, • Information supports progress |
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Problem Solving

- When to use: What to share:
- Throughout • Options for intervention strategies,
 - Adaptations,
 - Identification of learning opportunities,
 - Affirmation of parents' strengths

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Environmental Scan

- When to use: When to share:
- Initial • Potential routines,
 - Regularly • Activities,
 - Environmental arrangement strategies,
 - Examples of outcome integration into family interests

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Learning Experience, cont.

- Understanding the link between children's health and their physical, social and emotional development, and the importance of intervening with problems as early as possible, can help parents understand the need to follow up on provider referrals.
- It is often a parent's connection to their child that motivates them to try to improve the services and systems their child needs.

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Successful outcomes happen because the parent has information and is...



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Conclusion

- Children's experiences, progress and development from positive partnerships between parents and practitioners—more information exchanged is better.
- Successful collaborative partnerships between parents and professionals require an open, trusting, and respectful relationship.

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Resources

- A Relationship-Based Approach to Early Intervention by Larry Edelman, MS
- National Center to Improve Practice in Special Education through Technology, Media and Materials, Chapter 2-Parent-Professional Partnerships in Early Intervention
- Building Partnerships Between Parents and Practitioners by Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework
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