

Collaborative Relationships to Support Early Childhood Inclusion

What is collaboration in support of early childhood inclusion?

Collaboration, communication, and strong effective partnerships are crucial for making meaningful inclusion successful. When early childhood professionals and families build relationships, children and adults thrive.

Collaboration for effective inclusion in early childhood settings is an ongoing effort, rather than a scheduled meeting or series of meetings. True collaboration is all about relationships. It's a commitment to working together, with mutual respect for what each person brings to the process, and is an embedded part of the program's culture in working with all children and families.

Collaboration opportunities include:

- Determining a child's eligibility for services
- Setting outcomes and goals
- Planning appropriate interventions and accommodations
- Ensuring a shared vision and plan for supporting the child and family
- Working together to celebrate successes
- Brainstorming to resolve issues, challenges, and barriers to effective inclusion



Collaboration with families and other professionals who support children is an essential step in ensuring children have access, full participation, and the support needed to effectively participate in inclusive settings.

Why is collaboration important?

Collaboration between the family and professionals providing support is necessary for young children to feel secure and supported. They rely on the adults who are closest to them. Children thrive when the important adults in their lives agree to work together to share information, celebrate successes, and brainstorm strategies to best support the child's learning and development.

Family-professional partnerships rely on each other's expertise for the purpose of making and implementing decisions that will directly benefit the child.

This publication was made possible by Grant Number 90TP005 from the Office of Child Care, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Office of Child Care, the Administration for Children and Families, or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

As a trusted caregiver, you are part of a team that helps to nurture and support the child's growth and development. Finding opportunities and time for collaboration is particularly important in creating and sustaining inclusive settings.

Research has shown that when early childhood educators, other professionals, and families work together to support young children with disabilities, there is a proven positive impact on child outcomes and achievement, as well as a positive impact on staff.

Strategies for Collaboration

Sharing Perspectives and Information

Share what you observe each day with other professionals and families. These opportunities may arise as the team prepares for a child's Individual Family Services Plan (IFSP) or Individual Education Plan (IEP) meeting or through daily conversations.

Promoting Opportunities to Support Growth and Development

Because each child is unique it is important that early childhood educators, like you, form a partnership with the child's family and other members of the child's team. Through ongoing collaboration, a child's team gains a more complete understanding of the child's strengths and needs.

Strategies for Building Effective Family Partnerships

- **Engage in practices that promote a collaborative planning effort.** Families are your greatest resource in getting to know and in supporting their child.
- **Develop an understanding of each family's culture, background, and routines.** This will help you understand ways you can reflect these values and routines within your early childhood setting.
- **Demonstrate respect for all family members.** Learn about the families of the children in your care. Find out about their hopes and dreams for their child.

True collaboration occurs when each person shares their own expertise and knowledge. Through this collaboration, families are empowered to become lifelong advocates for their child. Collaboration and engagement with families requires intentionality and effort to build trust and to ensure that families feel valued.



For more information:

Visit Michigan.gov/specialeducation-familymatters
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