



YSP/KSA Curriculum – Relationship to Family & Community Handout 4B.1

Assessing Family Engagement

Youth development programs can improve participant outcomes by effectively engaging families and other caregivers in all aspects of the program. Many agencies may identify working with families as a program priority, but are they offering them a voice in how the program functions, or are they viewing families as “participants” who need to be programmed for and managed? This quick assessment tool can be used by youth programs to gauge if their current practices in involving family members really create an environment of mutual respect and investment.

Research supports the notion that effective family engagement can improve youth outcomes in education and employment. This is particularly true for families of youth with disabilities. Family expertise can be used to:

- Provide information vital to vocational assessments
- Identify strengths and needs of the youth
- Help spot early signs of trouble on the job
- Provide on the job support and transportation
- Identify potential employers and work experience opportunities

The assessment on the following pages is designed to help youth programs understand their current level of family engagement. The questions asked should be taken to mean that every strategy needs to be implemented by every youth program. Rather, they should be viewed as suggestions for making families feel more welcomed, more respected, or more involved in how the program their youth is participating in works.

Please read each question and indicate if your agency currently engages in that strategy by marking “yes” or “no”.

Environment

- Is your program's physical location generally easy for people to find? Y N
- Do posted signs welcome families and give clear directions on how to check in (in various languages)? Y N
- Is your building fully accessible for people with disabilities? Y N
- Are there staff available to make visitors feel welcome and to give them the information they seek? Y N
- Are families welcomed to visit your program at any time they wish? Y N

Communication and Materials

- Does your agency have a web site where families can easily find information about your program? Y N
- Are your program materials written at a grade-level so they are easily read by all? Y N
- Are program materials translated into the languages representative of the home language of your participants? Y N
- Do you have staff that are bilingual or have processes to secure translators when needed? Y N
- Does your agency have a "parent handbook" outlining all program policies, procedures, and emergency contact information? Y N
- Are program materials available in accessible formats (Braille, large print, or screen reader compatible)? Y N
- Does your agency provide information on other resources to parents (possibly via a parent resource room or parent information workshops)? Y N

Administration

- Are parents or caregivers included in your agency's board or various advisory groups? Y N
- Are families asked to review existing or proposed program policies? Y N
- Are families routinely surveyed to assess their satisfaction with and opinions surrounding the youth program? Y N
- Are families given avenues to air grievances or to seek information quickly? Y N
- Are families given the opportunity to participate in program evaluations? Y N

Meeting and Special Events

- Are meetings held at times that are convenient for families to attend (during non-work hours or on the weekends)? Y N
- Does your agency offer transportation assistance to help families get to meetings? Y N
- Does your agency provide childcare for younger siblings so parents " can attend meetings? Y N
- Are families welcome to attend all of your agency's staff and board meetings? Y N
- Are minutes to all agency meetings made available to families upon request? Y N
- Does your staff regularly provide meeting reminders to parents via telephone, e-mail, or mail? Y N
- Does your staff consider conducting meetings at the family's home? Y N

Staff Capacity

Is the ability to effectively engage families and caregivers a skill that is required within your staff's job description? Y N

Is staff given additional training on involving families in the construction and administration of a youth's individual program? Y N

Is staff given additional training opportunities to help them effectively connect families to other resources that they or their youth may need? Y N

Program Functioning

Are families and caregivers given an opportunity to inform the creation of the service plan for their youth? Y N

Are families or caregivers given specific responsibilities within the youth's service plan (ie: transportation, accessing personal networks to identify job leads, or helping with vocational assessments)? Y N

Are families given copies of the youth's service plan? Y N

Are program policies, procedures, and expectations stated in clear terms for parents (void of technical language or acronyms)? Y N

Is there regular communication between staff and families concerning the progress of youth within the program? Y N

Does your agency encourage parents to volunteer within the program? Y N