



Childhood Obesity Prevention

e-Bulletin
Summer 2018

Dear Colleagues:

Obesity prevention begins early in life when children are still forming healthy behaviors. Implementing policies that support a healthy child care environment is a crucial step in ensuring the health of Connecticut’s youngest residents. The Department of Public Health, in collaboration with a variety of stakeholders, has developed this e-Bulletin to provide information and resources to assist early care and education programs in creating healthier environments that support child development and learning.



Engaging Families in Early Care and Education



Nutrition and physical activity efforts in early care and education (ECE) are most effective when supported by staff and engaged families. Family engagement is the fostering of positive, respectful and reciprocal ongoing relationships between the family and ECE provider that results in shared responsibility for child care and learning. This relationship-building process, best achieved through cultural competence and effective collaboration, increases family involvement in school activities, but also allows families to provide meaningful input into to their child’s learning and development plan and into the development of child care programming such as school activities, events, policies and practices. Engaging families in all aspects of child care sets the stage for continued engagement and school involvement throughout a child’s life. Most importantly, [family engagement](#) assists in building a long-term team approach that strengthens the family-child relationship that is key to child development, school readiness and overall well-being.

Some families may hesitate to participate in their child’s education. They may feel they are overstepping boundaries when addressing concerns, or believe a busy schedule prevents them from providing their child with adequate resources for success. Family engagement can help address these barriers and build better lines of communication resulting in positive outcomes. The resources in this e-Bulletin will help providers learn effective strategies to increase family engagement in ECE settings.

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What's New?

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention - New Infant and Toddler Nutrition Site!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently added a new section on its website: [Infant and Toddler Nutrition](#). The site is a great tool for any topic relevant to infant and toddler nutrition, such as breastfeeding, mealtime cues, vitamins & minerals and more. The site is an easy one-stop destination for all things related to infant and toddler nutrition!

Resources for Teachers and Providers

The Office of Head Start, Family Engagement Resources

The [Office of Head Start, Family Engagement Resources](#) website provides a great guide to learning how family engagement promotes positive, enduring change for children, families, and communities. Topics include goal-setting with families, boosting school readiness, engaging fathers and more!

NAEYC Principles of Effective Family Engagement

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), Engaging Diverse Families project worked to determine how early care and education programs can meet the challenge to engage families in their child's learning and development. The project came up with six principles of effective practice that can be found on the program's [website](#).

Tracking Progress in Early Care and Education

Provided by the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement this [Program, Staff and Family Measurement Tool](#) handbook provides educators with guidance on how to identify ways to measure family engagement outcomes and relationships with families to determine progress in improving family engagement in the child care setting.



Consider Hosting a Learning Center Observation Night

Many parents may not understand how the activities their child is participating in during the day correlate with their educational goals. Education centers can host a [learning center observation night](#) where parents are invited to come and observe their child participate in each activity with resources that discuss what developmental learning goals are accomplished by these activities. This is a great way to get parents involved in care and on the same page as education providers to foster better relationships!

The Early Childhood Family Engagement Framework Toolkit

Developed by the Maryland Family Engagement Coalition, this [toolkit](#) is a great resource for the early childhood community as they implement strategies to promote family engagement in early care and education settings. This tool provides information about the differences between family involvement and family engagement and provides realistic goal-setting and ideas to increase participation in a child's education.

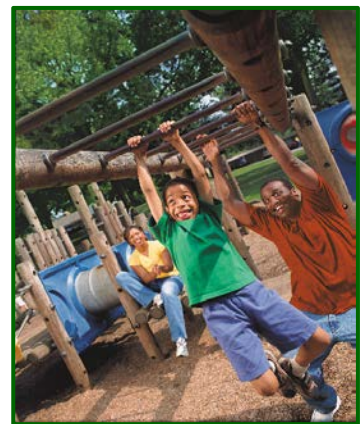
Resources for Families

Tips for Parents to Open Communication with Child Care Providers

Many parents have concerns or questions for their child care providers, but feel uncomfortable addressing them or are unaware on how to appropriately address the issue. [This article](#) provides parents with some helpful tips to open the lines of communication and foster better relationships with their child's care provider.

NAEYC For Families

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) [Families' website](#) provides resources, tips and ideas for families—from child development to reading, writing, music, math, and more! This site also provides tips to assist parents in selecting a safe, nurturing, and stimulating learning environment for their children.



Policy Guidance & Research

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Department of Education 2016 Policy Statement on Family Engagement From the Early Years to the Early Grades

Provides recommendations to early childhood systems and programs on how to improve family engagement. Highlights include related research, best practices, summary of current policies/laws, challenges, opportunities, principles of effective engagement, recommendations for implementation, and selected resources. Learn more [here](#).

Global Family Research Project (GFRP): Families Promote Early Literacy

The GFRP helps promote the idea that learning for a child can be performed anywhere, at any time to improve the opportunities for family engagement and child learning throughout the day. One of their more recent publications includes the [Seven Research-Based Ways That Families Promote Early Literacy](#) and emphasizes the important role parents and families can play in a young child's developmental and academic success.

Meta-Analysis of the Relationship between Learning Outcomes and Parental Involvement during Early Childhood Education and Early Elementary Education

A recent [meta-analysis](#) from the journal Educational Psychological Review looked at 46 studies to examine the relationship between learning outcomes of children and educational involvement of parents during early childhood and elementary education. The study looked into types of parental involvement, including: behavioral (visiting school, participating in educational events), personal (showing care and concern about children's experiences within and outside of school), and intellectual (reading books, solving math and science problems, discussing current events).



The meta-analysis determined that there is a strong positive correlation between learning outcomes and parental involvement, suggesting that efforts to promote parental involvement in children's education should continue to be supported and developed. Furthermore, the meta-analysis found that parent involvement was more beneficial to improving learning outcomes than partnership development (indirect involvement of families through schools and communities), suggesting that encouraging direct involvement in a child's education by the family should be the primary focus if resources are limited.

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