

Competency Area:	Family and Community Engagement
Introduction:	<p>This competency area addresses early childhood educator competencies related to the role of the family in the care and education of the child, and the role of the community in providing resources and services to children and their families and programs. It encompasses the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required to respond appropriately to all aspects of family diversity such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, culture, family composition, religion, age, ability, and home language. Additionally, this competency area includes the ability to garner community support on behalf of children and families, whether at the local program level or in the broader, public realm, as with other community resources and in school systems. Key concepts include acknowledgement that children develop in the context of families and communities and that building relationships with families is an integral part of competent and professional early childhood practice. As such this competency is interrelated with several other competencies such as Culture, Diversity, and Equity; Dual-Language Development; and Child Development and Learning. It is important to stress that all of the competencies are interrelated and reinforce one another.</p>
Key Concepts:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children develop in the context of families and communities. ▪ Families bring different values, beliefs, strengths, practices, skills, interests, and needs into their relationships with early educators and early education settings and are important contributors to sustain gains made by children in early education as they transition into the K-12 school system. ▪ An important component of supporting families is to make available information about community resources and ensure that support is available beyond the early education experience. ▪ Family engagement has short- and long-term benefits for children, families, and early childhood programs and promotes and sustains the gains children make in early education.
Dispositions:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Values families as the first and primary teachers of their child(ren) ▪ Values family engagement in early childhood settings ▪ Communicates openly and respectfully with families while ensuring confidentiality ▪ Believes that individuals cannot be understood in isolation from one another, but rather each plays a role in the interrelationships as part of their family and community systems ▪ Respects families' strengths, efforts, and potential ▪ Appreciates the opportunity to share with and learn from families to deepen understanding and develop a shared appreciation of a child.
Performance Areas:	<p>A. Communication with Families</p> <p>B. Relationships with Children and Families</p>

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	C. Community Resources
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A. Communication with Families

Topics	Level I	Level II <i>Level I, plus:</i>	Level III <i>Level II, plus:</i>	Level IV <i>Level III, plus:</i>
Communication strategies	Interacts with families in a timely and professional manner to establish relationships that encourage mutual exchange of information about children. Maintains confidentiality and ensures privacy in communications regarding children, families, and staff and colleagues.	Respects the family's preferences for communication styles and preferences of families and conducts interactions that are characterized by transparency and accountability.	Provides professional development for staff on the principles and strategies for effective communication with families. Ensures confidentiality and privacy in communications throughout the program.	Works with families, early childhood educators, and community leaders to identify and address potential systemic barriers to effective communication with families.
Home language	Learns a few words in children's home language such as the names of family members, greetings, words of comfort, and important objects or places.	Accesses resources to facilitate communication with family members in their home language to include all family members and parents	Creates strategies to engage family members from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and invites family members to share goals and strategies for supporting children's home language in the group or classroom.	Collaborates with other service providers, ECE professionals, and community leaders to increase the availability of information and services in the home language(s) of families in the community.
Family's preferences for communication	Employs various methods of communication in response to the family's preferences that include active listening, email, phone, or text message, depending on the situation. Maintains confidentiality and ensures privacy in communications regarding children, families, and staff as appropriate.	Models for families effective strategies to communicate with children and adapts communication strategies as needed to meet diverse language and literacy needs. Maintains confidentiality and ensures privacy in communications regarding children, families, and staff as appropriate.	Interprets and applies communication policies, as appropriate, to ensure their effectiveness for including diverse families or in addressing complex situations. Supports staff to understand and apply communication styles based on the family preferences and needs as expressed by them.	Develops partnerships between families, programs, agencies, and community resources to address the communication preferences and needs of families.

Conflict resolution	Demonstrates understanding of cultural considerations in conflict resolution. Refers complex conflict situations involving families to other staff as appropriate. Intentionally models conflict-resolution strategies for children, as developmentally appropriate and culturally relevant. Maintains confidentiality and ensures privacy in communications regarding children, families, and staff and colleagues.	Facilitates conflict resolution between staff working with a group of children and the children's families or among families; initiates discussions with families and staff to inform a deeper understanding of cultural and individual considerations in conflict resolution.	Establishes protocols to address conflict between families and staff or among families. Provides professional development and support to staff on conflict resolution, including cultural considerations	Supports early childhood educators in adapting current research about conflict resolution to a variety of early education settings serving diverse children, families, staff, and communities. Engages in effective conflict resolution strategies with families and family advocates, ECE professionals, specialists and others such as service providers, labor unions, community leaders, regulatory agencies, and policymakers.
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B. Relationships with Children and Families

Topics	Level I	Level II <i>Level I, plus:</i>	Level III <i>Level II, plus:</i>	Level IV <i>Level III, plus:</i>
Knowledge of families	Refers to and uses pertinent family information when responding to needs of children and families. Learns about family values, beliefs, and practices by observing and engaging in conversation with families or by asking other staff as appropriate.	Gathers information from family members and engages in direct, effective communication to learn about family composition, values, and traditions, in order to support the primary role of families in children's care and education and their engagement in the early education setting.	Develops or adapts program policies to support family engagement in the program based on knowledge about the families served through gathering input and feedback from the families.	Collaborates with families, early childhood educators, and community leaders to examine strategies for using knowledge about families to inform effective, relationship-based practice across support systems.

Family collaboration	Articulates the value of family engagement in the early education setting. Recognizes that working with families promotes children's development.	Builds relationships with families to ensure meaningful two-way collaboration, in supporting children's learning and development and to help families understand child development.	Develops and implements program policies that provide opportunities for families and staff to observe and discuss children's behavior. Supports families by providing tools and resources that helps them contribute to their children's learning.	Fosters an atmosphere of respect and acceptance of families throughout the community and the profession. Articulates the value of family engagement to early childhood educators, other service providers, community leaders and others based on current literature and research. Promotes family members' collaborative engagement with early childhood services to support their child's development and learning in the program and at home.
Strategies for family collaboration	Attentively greets family members at arrival and departure and uses these opportunities to exchange information about the child. Contributes ideas and resources to promote child learning and development in the home and community.	Collaborates formally and informally with families and staff to share observations, describe accomplishments, plan for children individually and as a group, and address concerns about children. Supports families as decision makers and educators of their children.	Invites families to participate formally and informally in the development, governance, and evaluation of program services and policies, as appropriate.	Encourages policymakers and regulatory agencies to include family representatives in decision-making processes, as appropriate.
Strategies of engagement	Engages in positive interactions with families. Responds to their questions or concerns and to those who express an interest in engaging in the group, or refers them to other staff as appropriate.	Offers opportunities for and encourages family members to observe their children and participate in the early education setting based on their skills, interests, and availability. Provides support to families in interpreting their observations and responding to children's behavior.	Provides staff with professional development activities on building relationships with families, facilitating families' observation in the early education setting, and responding to children's behavior. Develops program policies to provide opportunities that encourage family engagement and that accommodate diverse family skills, interests, and availability.	Collaborates with early childhood educators, families, and community leaders to design early education programs and systems that support the primary role of families in children's education and care as a means of supporting families' long-term engagement with educational institutions.

Integrating school and family experiences	Responds to children and families in a way that encourages the sharing of family experiences and shares information with families about children's experiences in the early education setting, including support for children's home language and culture at home and at school. Maintains confidentiality regarding family information as appropriate.	Plans opportunities that encourage children and families in the group to share their experiences. Designs early education environments that reflect the diverse experiences of children and families. Maintains confidentiality regarding family information as appropriate.	Collaborates with families and staff to reflect their diverse experiences in program planning and continuous program improvement. Provides professional development and support to staff in building relationships with, and learning about, individual families. Incorporates the role of parents in facilitating transition from preschool to kindergarten.	Collaborates with families, early childhood educators, and community leaders to ensure that early education settings and services reflect their diverse family experiences.
Families as community members	Collaborates with other staff in the group to maintain a sense of community among children and families in the group.	Builds a sense of community within the group of children and their families using a variety of methods.	Creates opportunities for families to engage in the program, with one another, and with staff and the community. Conducts outreach to prospective and alumni families as extended members of the program.	Facilitates collaboration between early education settings and civic or cultural leaders to encourage family engagement in community events.

C. Community Resources

Topics	Level I	Level II <i>Level I, plus:</i>	Level III <i>Level II, plus:</i>	Level IV <i>Level III, plus:</i>
Family functioning	Articulates an understanding that there are a variety of ways that families function and that children or families may require support from outside the program. Maintains confidentiality regarding family	Demonstrates an understanding of risk factors related to family functioning and how to support all families appropriately. Maintains confidentiality regarding family information as appropriate.	Collaborates with staff, families, and social-service providers to develop program policies and procedures related to family support.	Provides leadership to early educators in acquiring knowledge and skills related to family functioning and community resources related to the needs of families. Facilitates discussions among early educators, families, mental health consultants, and social-service providers to increase support for family functioning

	information as appropriate.			in a variety of settings.
Risk, stress, and resiliency	Demonstrates familiarity with risk, stress, and resiliency factors and reasons for closer observation or further inquiry. Communicates with families daily about children's well-being. Refers questions or concerns to appropriate staff. Maintains confidentiality regarding children and families as appropriate.	Demonstrates an understanding of risk factors related to child and family health, mental health, and development. Responds to questions or concerns from staff working with children. Works with staff to respond to signs of risk or stress in children, as developmentally appropriate and individually meaningful. Maintains confidentiality regarding children and families as appropriate.	Responds to questions or concerns from staff or other adults and acts as a professional resource. Provides staff development activities to staff on family functioning, protective and risk factors, and community resources.	Advocates in the community for awareness of risk, resiliency, and protective factors.
Community partnerships	Understands and describes the importance of community partners in meeting children's needs. Participates in the process for developing effective partnerships and collaborations.	Supports the needs of children, their success, and well being by maintaining professional connections to community and state partners. Forms effective partnerships and collaborations with families, professionals, and community representatives.	Establishes effective relationships with partners to ensure continuity of children's learning and development.	Engages local leaders, businesses representatives, and legislators in promoting children's success.
Connecting families with resources	Demonstrates familiarity with community resources to support children and families. Responds to requests from families for community resources and is able to refer questions to appropriate staff. Protects the confidentiality and privacy of families.	Engages in conversations with families about referrals to community resources and assists in identifying or accessing services as needed, with consideration for the diverse linguistic and cultural experiences of families. Identifies signs that children or families may require support from outside the program, maintains documentation, and initiates closer observation or further inquiry, involving and collaborating with families as	Identifies the strengths and needs of families in early education settings and identifies and addresses gaps in services or resources. Supports staff and families in the referral process as appropriate. Works with community resources to conduct outreach or provide services to program families, as appropriate. Anticipates the need for family support based on knowledge of families or current events by monitoring economic climate, natural	Participates in efforts to establish and strengthen a comprehensive early childhood service system that encompasses early care and education and community resources, with consideration for affordability, availability, and accessibility as well as the diverse cultural and linguistic experiences of families.

		appropriate.	disasters, and family circumstances.	
Use of community resources	Gains knowledge about the importance of community resources that can enhance children's learning experiences and one's professional knowledge.	Routinely uses community resources to enhance learning activities and one's knowledge about families and services.	Identifies key community resources that support program practices and family needs. Shares information with colleagues and develops connections to the program.	Leads efforts to increase collaborative relationships to access community resources and enhances the early childhood services.
Implementation of school readiness practices	Describes the program's philosophy on school readiness and transitions. Responds to questions from families or refers to appropriate staff. Articulates that school entry is one milestone in the context of a developmental and educational continuum.	Engages in discussions about children's experiences in the group or classroom as they relate to school readiness and transitions. Explains the program's philosophy on school readiness to classroom staff and families, with consideration for children's current level of development.	Collaborates with local programs or schools and supports staff in preparing children and families for upcoming transitions. Provides professional development activities for staff on school readiness issues including developmentally appropriate practice, communication with families, and social-emotional competence.	Stays informed of current research and literature about school readiness and academic success; shares pertinent information with ECE professionals and families. Facilitates relationships between early education settings and other educational institutions to support smooth transitions for children and families.
School readiness and transition strategies	Knows the previous early care and education experiences of children in the group and is aware of upcoming transitions to new programs or schools.	Identifies indicators of school readiness and their developmental precursors, as appropriate for the age of children served.	Coordinates developmentally appropriate experiences to support children's school readiness in all developmental domains, anticipating upcoming transitions to new programs or schools.	Sets policies and communicates with new programs or schools regarding children's readiness for school. Provides current research on effective school readiness and transition to school practices, and supports staff in determining the best strategies to use with individual children and groups.