NYC | **Department of Youth & Community Development**

Circles of Support:
A family engagement framework

to articulate DYCD's perspective and promote an approach to engaging, supporting, and developing mutually beneficial relationships between families and providers.

PARTICIPATION

PARTNERSHIPS

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
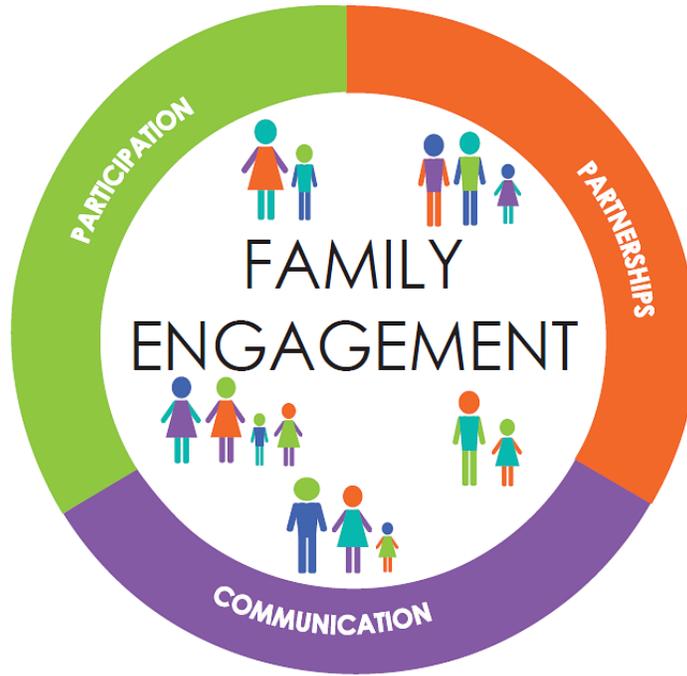
COMMUNICATION

Participation:
Families engage in program activities and access needed services.

Partnerships:
Families share responsibility for participant outcomes.

Communication:
Program-family interactions are strong and positive.

Vision: Families feel supported and flourish, with all family members enjoying physical, social, and emotional well being. Families are resilient and family relationships are robust.

Core values

1. Philosophy of partnership and trusting relationships
2. Appreciation for families' strengths, perspectives, and diversity
3. Recognition of families of origin or of choice
4. Respect for family culture, language, ethnicity, gender, and gender identity
5. Consideration for individuals' and families' needs, which vary across participants' developmental stages

Approach

- Cultivate partnerships among community-based organizations, schools, and families.
- Create a welcoming climate for families that promotes a sense of belonging; encourage families to collaborate, and incorporate their input.
- Support family development by providing tools and training to boost family confidence, build leadership skills, and increase family capacity to contribute to participants' positive development.

Why do we need a framework?

Provide community-based organizations (CBOs) that deliver services

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and DYCD staff who invest in, monitor, and evaluate them

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increased ability to identify strengths, share best practices, and work together to improve program quality.

Understanding DYCD's expectations regarding critical aspects of program implementation and continuous improvement benefits all stakeholders.
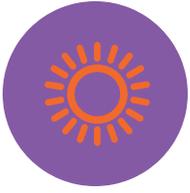
Promising practices

- Agree upon a shared vision of family engagement, and coordinate with schools if serving school-age children
- Intentionally link program activities to family engagement goals
- Carve out space (physical or virtual) for families to gather
- Promote cultural, linguistic, and social competence to create safe places
- Build family and caring networks' capacity to support children socially, emotionally, physically, and academically, at home, in school, and in community
- Offer ongoing activities such as work groups rather than holding one-time-only events

Potential challenges

- Lack of shared vision among stakeholders about family engagement and alignment with program (and school) activities and goals
- Lack of program staffing and structures to support families' interest and efforts to engage
- Family members' unavailability during program hours
- Families' discomfort at schools (in school-based programs) and with institutions, because of special needs, language, culture, or immigration status
- Populations of participants and families are diverse and vary by program