



# Connecting to Early Care and Education: Family Engagement Tip Sheet

For Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS); Refugee Resettlement; Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS);  
Early Care and Education Providers

All providers can support families in identifying high quality early care and education options that can support a child's development and strengthen school readiness. Understanding the opportunities, activities, and options for family engagement can help families form meaningful home-school partnerships that benefit the entire family, program and community. This Family Engagement Tip Sheet corresponds to page 27 and 28 of the [Raising Young Children in a New Country: Supporting Early Learning and Healthy Development Handbook](#).

**Conversation Starters:** (or staff, families, and partners can design program-specific questions)

- Describe what school was like in your country of origin.
- Who cared for your child when you needed support in your country of origin?
- How do you currently communicate and partner with staff at your child's school?
- What are some ways staff can learn more about your perspectives and needs?



## Cultural Considerations:

- Many families are most comfortable keeping young children at home with a parent, relative, or friend, especially with families from the same cultural background. Some refugee families using in-home childcare providers may not be aware of licensing requirements and restrictions.
- Some cultures may expect that the mother's primary role is taking care of children and the home. However, both parents may need to find work due to financial need, or due to resettlement program requirements.
- Refugees with limited English skills are likely to have difficulty gathering information about the varied early care and education options and may rely on word of mouth or recommendations from others within their ethnic or religious community.
- Muslim families may seek reassurance that early care and education providers

understand and respect their family's religion and will not inadvertently violate the family's religious practices (e.g., abstaining from pork products).

- Refugee parents of a child with a disability may not be aware of the **legal** educational requirements, learning possibilities, and school options for children with disabilities.
- Hiring staff from the same culture and language as families and providing opportunities for families from the same cultural or linguistic backgrounds to connect may encourage family engagement and mutual support. However, it is important to identify any areas of discrimination or political conflict that program staff or families from the same region may have experienced.
- Some cultures show respect for teachers by not being intrusive and interfering with their job (e.g., not offering suggestions or sharing negative opinions). By American standards, this can look like lack of interest. Families may not know the expectations for family engagement in school.



# Connecting to Early Care and Education: Family Engagement Tip Sheet (cont'd)

## Cultural Considerations (cont'd):

- Home-based programs may be an effective service model for some families that are less comfortable with center-based programming, or those who do not drive. Home visits can help to build trust and relationships for future center-based enrollment.



## Remember to Mention:

- Early care and education plays a vital role in providing the environment and support to prepare children for success in school and in life. The quality of the relationships and experiences provided has long-term effects on their development, capacity to learn, and ability to regulate emotions.
- Family engagement has a positive impact on children's learning and skill development. Families and staff are encouraged to engage in open communication and develop meaningful relationships.
- To ensure responsive engagement, it is important for staff to build trusting relationships with families over time. Through these relationships, staff can learn about family's culture, values, and beliefs (e.g., health and nutrition practices, child rearing practices, home language, family composition, cultural celebrations, etc.).
- Families can offer their knowledge, skills, culture, and language by participating in decision-making classroom, and community events, at parent-teacher conferences, and as a volunteer in the program.
- Translation and interpretation services can support family engagement. This includes face-to-face experiences e.g., meetings and events, as well as written communication from the program and are essential to engage families who staff can not speak or communicate with directly.
- The frequency of family engagement opportunities will vary from program to program. Programs will often meet with families at the time of enrollment to share information, to discuss a family's interest and ability to participate, and to consider cultural and linguistic needs or preferences.
- In the U.S., all children, including children with disabilities, are required to start attending school when they reach their state's compulsory school attendance age (generally between 5 and 7 years of age but dependant upon each state's laws).

# Connecting to Early Care and Education: Family Engagement Tip Sheet *(cont'd)*

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## Applicable Head Start Program Performance Standards:

<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/standards/hspss/1304>

45 CFR 1304.40 (a)(1)(2)(3)(4)(5)

45 CFR 1304.40 (b)(1)(i)(ii)(iii)

45 CFR 1304.40 (d)(1)(2)(3)(4)

45 CFR 1304.40 (e)(1)(2)(3)(4)

## Resources on ECLKC:

### Early Head Start National Resource Center

- **Parent-Child Relationships: The Cornerstone to School Readiness in the Home-based Option.**  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/poi/home-based/ParentChildRela.htm>
- **Engaging Parents in the Home-based and Family Child Care Program Options. 17th Annual Virtual Birth to Three Institute: Plenary E. HHS/ACF/OHS/EHSNRC. 2013. English. Streaming Video. 01:33:37. and Viewer's guide.**  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/ehsnrc/comp/family-engagement/EngagingParents.htm>

### National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement Safe and Healthy Family

- **Inside Head Start & Early Head Start**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/for-families/inside/inside-hs.html>
- **Your Child's Readiness for School**  
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/family/for-families/readiness>