

Use a Strengths-based Approach



Relationships are the heart of family engagement. Your relationship with a family can strengthen relationships *within* the family. When you use a strengths-based approach with a family, you also positively influence the child's development. Using a strengths-based approach is especially helpful if you find yourself struggling to see the family's strengths. This approach helps you focus on the positives and the strengths that you see in a family. You can use the Reflect and Inquire tools to help you begin to take a strengths-based approach.



Reflect and Inquire

Reflect

When you take time to reflect, you learn and discover new things about yourself and the family. When you reflect, focus on yourself, the family, and the child's perspectives.

Reflect on your personal and cultural perspectives. Think about your own family, your upbringing, and your experiences and how they might influence your view of a family.

Reflect on the family's individual and cultural perspectives. Reflect on what you already know about a family and reflect on what families share about their values, beliefs, approaches to child rearing, challenges, and hopes for their child.



Reflect on the child's development and perspective. Consider what the child is working on developmentally and how his or her view of the world shapes what the child thinks about you and how you do things in comparison to the way the child's family does things.



Inquire

After you reflect, then you can inquire. Inquiring is asking yourself questions and thinking about how what you learned may influence your relationships.

What came up for you, both positive and negative?

As you consider each perspective, identify what feelings, reactions, ideas, expectations, and judgments you had.

How might these feelings or reactions influence your relationship with the family?

Consider how your feelings, reactions, ideas, expectations, and judgments may play a role in the way you build a relationship with a family.



Apply the Strengths-based Attitudes

Apply

You use the Strengths-based Attitudes to help you think about the strengths a family has, especially if you are experiencing challenges.

Strategies for Building Relationships with Families



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Take Informed Action



Listen Actively

Strengths-based Attitudes	Guidance
All families have strengths.	Look and listen for strengths as families interact with their children.
Families are the first and most important teachers of their children.	Listen to families' knowledge about their children. Remember that children come to you during a snapshot of their development, but they spend a lifetime with their family.
Families are our partners with a critical role in their child's development.	Pay attention to what families tell you about their children at each developmental stage. Build on what you learn from families to help you partner with them to support their children's learning and development.
Families have expertise about their child and their family.	Listen carefully to what families share about their children, family, and culture. Honor and value families' expertise by listening to and using their suggestions on how to best care for their children.
Families' contributions are important and valuable.	Be open to families' suggestions and requests. Adopting an open mind will help you learn from families about their children and what is happening.