



Take a Shared Approach to Family Engagement



What Is a Shared Approach?

Building strengths-based relationships is the common thread in all of our work, as professionals, to engage families and support them in their children's development. Relationships connect providers with parents, children, families, organizations, and communities (Sparrow, 2016). To ensure the best possible outcomes for the children and families you collaborate with, it is important to have a shared approach to family engagement.

Having a **shared approach** means you use the same strategies to build relationships with families that you use with your colleagues or other providers.* How you build relationships with other providers impacts the ways in which you and other providers build relationships with families. How you build relationships with other providers also affects your program environment and the climate that welcomes and supports these relationships.

When you have a shared approach, you engage and are in tune with those you encounter in your work environment. Having a shared approach means you can collaborate and partner with families to establish goals (Sparrow, 2016). You can work together to share what you observed, explore what your observations mean to you and others, and come to common understandings. Building these types of interactions with other providers influences not only how you engage with the families entering your setting but also how those families engage with their children. This **parallel process** means that the way you are with people will reflect and influence the ways they need to be with others in their lives (Moore, 2006).

*The term "providers" used here refers to all early learning and care professionals. This includes, but is not limited to, supervisors, coaches, co-workers, higher education faculty, teachers, home visitors, and family child care providers.

Why Does a Shared Approach Matter?

When professionals have a shared approach, everyone benefits. Professionals, children, and their families have greater opportunities to enjoy positive relationships with one another and encounter positive, safe, and comfortable environments.

Benefits of taking a shared approach include:

Providers ...	Children and Families ...
Experience trusting relationships with other providers	Enjoy being in programs that value sharing ideas and different perspectives
Are more responsive and engaged with children and families in their care	Have a greater sense of belonging
Experience strengths-based relationships with other providers	Enjoy a positive program climate
Partner with families when their own needs (including positive feedback) are met	Have a more responsive and engaged provider

Taking a shared approach means that you:

- Approach relationships from a strengths-based place, which helps you see other providers' and families' strengths
- Look for the positive in your work with colleagues
- Ask for support when trying new skills
- Let other providers know their perspectives matter and that you value their expertise
- Reflect and learn together with other providers
- Build trusting relationships with other providers
- Create a program climate that is positive, safe, and comfortable for children, families, and providers

Taking a shared approach to family engagement means that you value the relationships you develop with children, families, and providers alike. You pay attention to how you engage with families and providers because you understand that the interaction will influence how they, in turn, will engage with other providers, families, and children in their world.



To learn more about family engagement, check out the Family Engagement Online Toolkit: www.qualitycountsca.net/FEtoolkit

References for this resource can be found in the [Module 5 Reference List](#).

Adapted from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Head Start, National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement. (2018). *Strategies for Family Engagement: Attitudes and Practices*.