



Successful Family-Provider Relationships: Key Constructs, Related Outcomes, and Policy Implications

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Overview

- Introductions
- How did we get here?
 - Head Start, Family Support, Family-Centered Care
 - Recent Federal activities
- Why examine this topic?



Perspectives on Family-Provider Relationships

- **Family support**
- **Family-centered care**
- **Parent involvement**
- **Family engagement**
- **Family-sensitive care**

Conceptual Models of Family-Provider Relationships in Early Care and Education

Provider sensitivity to needs of working families is component of quality. Sensitivity to families' lives may enhance family-provider relationships, parent & child engagement, & well-being.

- Positive attitudes toward families
- Knowledge- about families
- Responsive practices (Communication; Flexibility & logistical support; Resource & Referral)

(Bromer, Paulsell, Porter, Weber, Henly, & Ramsburg, in press)

Family support Family-centered care

(early intervention, 0-3, social work, ece, home visiting, health)

Family-sensitive care

(child care, home-based care, ece)

Parent involvement Family engagement

(ece, K-12)

Providers aim to “support and strengthen family capacity to enhance child development” (Dunst, 2002) and strong family-provider relationships are viewed as a goal of programs.

- Multilateral relationships
- Social support
- Strengths-based practices
- Empowerment
- Respect
- Community-based

(Kagan, Powell, Weissbourd, & Zigler, 1987)

Providers view families as equal & reciprocal partners in supporting children's learning; these relationships are seen as a vehicle for improving child outcomes.

- Defined roles
- Decision making
- Volunteering
- Two-way communication
- Shared responsibility

(Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009; HFRP, 2010)



Review of Multi-Disciplinary Literature on Family-Provider Relationships

Purpose & Methodology of Literature Review

Purposes:

- Identify common practices in successful family-provider relationships
- Explore associations between these relational practices and child, family, and provider outcomes
- Provide a framework and evidence to support future measures development

What Was Included?

- Types of Literature
- Fields
- Methodologies
- Samples

Successful Practices in Family-Provider Relationships

■ Provider Attitudes:

- Respect, commitment, empowerment, openness, systems orientation

■ Provider Knowledge:

- Theoretical knowledge: how families function
- Substantive knowledge: child development, effective parenting practices
- Specific knowledge about the child and family

■ Provider Behaviors:



- Relational skills: responsiveness, flexibility, supportiveness, building on family strengths, conscientious, persistent, communicative
- Goal-oriented skills: joint goal setting and decision-making, collaborating, advocating, building social networks, connecting families to community supports, conveying information, creating a family-friendly atmosphere

Child, Family, and Provider Outcomes Associated with Positive Relational Practices

Child Outcomes	Family Outcomes	Provider Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Health & emotional well-being• Cognitive/academic skills• Social skills• Reduction in behavior problems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greater satisfaction with services• Parental engagement in services/school-based settings• Improved self-efficacy• Improved mental health• Enhanced parent-child relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Altered perceptions about/interactions with children• More positive feelings towards role as a provider• Improved relationships with families

Relational Practices Associated with Child and Family Outcomes

- Empower families
 - emphasizing family strengths; inclusion of families in decisions
- Flexibility/individualizing of services
- Stable, trustworthy, collaborative relationships
- Positive communication
- Encouragement (validation, empathy, warmth)
- Family education (parenting skills & child development)
- Service coordination, integration, referrals, & advocacy
- Respect culture & language
- Involvement of fathers & extended family members
- Family-friendly facilities
- Build social support/social networks



Potential Frameworks for Identifying Domains and Common Elements of Family-Provider Relationships

Domains and Characteristics of Family-Provider Relationships

Attitudes	Knowledge	Behaviors (Practices)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Respect e.g. <i>non-judgmental, acknowledging “range and validity of diverse perspectives” and opinions, avoiding intrusion</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theoretical knowledge e.g. <i>how families function, importance of the culture of the family and sensitivity to their culture</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relational skills e.g. <i>building on family strengths; responsiveness to child’s/family’s needs, preferences, culture; engage in regular two-way communication</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commitment to the child/family e.g. <i>flexible, accessible, sensitive</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substantive knowledge e.g. <i>child development, parenting skills</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practical skills e.g. <i>the ability to provide information, to families, to advocate for them, and to connect them to community resources, collaborate with families through joint goal-setting; create family-friendly events</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empowerment e.g. <i>focusing on family strengths, believing in families’ competence and ability to solve problems, acknowledging parents as equal partners</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Specific knowledge about the child/family e.g. <i>understanding of child’s interests and abilities, family strengths, work schedules & child care needs; cultural practices; home life</i> 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Openness to change e.g. <i>responsive practices, appreciation of broader context of families’ situations</i> 		

Characteristics from the Literature	Initial Common Elements of Family-Provider Relationships Identified, June 2010		
	Mutually Respectful and Reciprocal Communication	Gathering and Using Knowledge about Families	Responsiveness to Individual Family Needs
Respect	X		X
Commitment			X
Empowerment	X	X	X
Openness to Change		X	X
Theoretical Knowledge	X		
Substantive Knowledge	X		
Specific Knowledge	X	X	X
Relational Skills	X	X	X
Practical Skills	X	X	X

Discussion Questions

- How do the core components of family-provider relationships relate to other conceptual models and/or areas in which you are conducting research?
- Are there any other components of family-provider relationships that you would add to the list presented here?
- What are the possibilities and/or challenges around measurement of family-provider relationships?
- What are the possibilities and/or challenges around professional development in the area of family-provider relationships?
- What are some possible directions for future research in the area of family-provider relationships?