

2010 CCPRC Annual Meeting  
Plenary Session 4  
October 21, 2010, 4:15 p.m.

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

### **Description**

This plenary session provided an overview and synthesis of ongoing work in the area of provider-family relationships, including the June 2010 Working Meeting on Family-Sensitive Care and Family Engagement and related efforts. The presentation included discussion about the historical context for federal interest in this issue, definitions of various conceptual models for family-provider relationships, available research on related outcomes for children, providers and parents, and core components from the models that were identified at the June meeting. The discussion was framed in terms of implications for CCDF along with professional development, QRIS, cross-system collaboration, subsidy policy, and Head Start policies.

### **Facilitator/Presenter**

Nancy Geyelin Margie, OPRE

### **Presenter/Discussant**

Dawn Ramsburg, OCC

### **Presenters**

Juliet Bromer, Erikson Institute  
Nicole Forry, Child Trends  
Toni Porter, Bank Street College of Education

### **Scribe**

Julie Shuell, NCCIC

### **1. Documents in Session Folder**

- “Successful Family-Provider Relationships: Key Constructs, Related Outcomes, and Policy Implications,” Nancy Geyelin Margie, Juliet Bromer, Nikki Forry, Toni Porter, and Dawn Ramsburg.

### **2. Summary of Presentations**

- **Introduction: Nancy Geyelin Margie**
  - Nancy Margie introduced the plenary by saying that the presenters would provide an overview of varying perspectives on family-provider relationships and leave as much time as possible for group discussion. She explained that there is significant interest in family engagement within OPRE, the Office of Head Start, and the Office of Child Care and QRIS, and that this session represents a “work in progress” within the CCPRC.

- **Summary of Presentation #1: Juliet Bromer**
  - Juliet Bromer provided an overview of three perspectives on family-provider relationships using a Venn diagram (slide 4 in the PPT) that shows the overlap between models within and across these perspectives and provides context for working on integrated models of strong provider-family relationships. All of the models include an ecological perspective that is strengths-based and recognizes the important role of families.
  - *Family support and family-centered care* perspectives focus on families and aim to support and strengthen families' capacities to enhance child development. Strong family-provider relationships are viewed as a goal of programs.
  - *Parent involvement and family engagement* models draw on family support with families viewed as equal and reciprocal partners in supporting children's learning.
  - The model of *family-sensitive care* addresses the importance of *provider sensitivity* to the needs of working families as a key component of quality and articulates positive attitudes toward families, knowledge about families, and practices that are responsive to families. *Family-sensitive care* is viewed as a prerequisite to building strong relationships with families.
  
- **Summary of Presentation #2: Nikki Forry**
  - Nikki Forry discussed a review of multi-disciplinary literature that is in progress. The purposes of the review are to identify common practices; explore associations between practices and outcomes for children, families and providers; and provide the basis for future measures development. The review considered literature from a variety of fields, and that uses different types of methodologies and samples.
  - The literature suggests practices that make for successful family-provider relationships. These relate to provider attitudes (respectful, open, and committed); theoretical, substantive and specific knowledge; and behaviors that include relational and goal-oriented skills.
  - Most of the literature relates to interventions. It is difficult to disentangle the aspects of interventions that are associated with specific outcomes.
  
- **Summary of Presentation #3: Toni Porter**
  - Toni Porter discussed the constructs of attitudes, knowledge and practices hypothesized in the family-sensitive care model and the elements of these constructs that emerge from the review of the literature, raising questions about the relationships among the constructs (i.e., whether they are all equally important or whether some (such as attitudes) are necessary precursors to others). Measurement is complicated by relationships between the elements, how they apply across different cultures and settings, and how they are associated with outcomes for families, providers, and children.
  - Common elements of family-provider relationships were identified during the June 2010 meeting. These include mutually respectful and reciprocal communication, gathering and using knowledge about families, and responsiveness to individual family needs, although these elements are still evolving. The matrix on slide 12 of the PPT crosswalks these elements with characteristics from the literature.

- Operationalizing these common elements for measurement purposes is challenging for several reasons. One is that these elements are not necessarily mutually exclusive—knowledge about families and children may be considered an element of knowledge or it could be considered an element of practice. In addition, we need clearer definitions of each element. We also need a better understanding of how parents view the elements of family-provider relationships, and what is important to them.
- **Summary of Presentation #4: Dawn Ramsburg**
  - Dawn Ramsburg linked the discussion about family-provider relationships to the Office of Child Care’s work plan looking at pathways to excellence in programs, in the workforce and in partnership with others, all of which includes partnerships with families.
  - In terms of programs, she talked about various aspects of systems including licensing standards and their connection to Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) and variations among States in how family engagement is reflected QRIS.
  - In terms of pathways to excellence for the workforce, an important component is responsiveness to both children and families.
  - In terms of partnerships, we know we don’t have to start from scratch and can learn from others. Among our goals, we need to influence what is being measured and remember that child care quality is about a set of relationships.

**3. Summary of Discussion with Presenters and Participants (The audience broke into small groups to consider a set of discussion questions (slide 13). The following reflects what was reported-out.)**

- The conceptual model needs to be sensitive to cultural issues and align with varying beliefs. “One size fits all” doesn’t work. One of the challenges providers hear from parents is that parents may prefer practices that violate licensing or developmentally appropriate practices. How do measures look at alignment of what parents want and what providers know is best?
- Other components add to family-provider relationships: communication across providers would be good to include.
- Support to families in one setting may be intrusive in another setting and parents may want different things across settings.
- One administrator indicated that the model presented will be helpful to her State in implementing an integrated service model. This area is very important in the scope of a child’s life—what is happening in a child’s life outside the classroom is critical.
- Looked at programs that have been successful over time and noted that those program models all include family support. However, with limited resources in community-based child care, how much can we realistically ask them to do?
- We have only started to look at family support elements and the challenges of measuring these elements.