

Family Partnership Guidelines



FOR HOME-VISITING PROGRAMS

INTRODUCTION

Federal and State Administration, policy makers and other stakeholders are raising expectations that young children be school ready, and see *home visiting* as one of several strategies embedded in a quality early childhood system that promotes maternal and child health, safety and development, as well as strong parent-child relationships. Meeting such expectations is a collective effort. At a local level, it involves leveraging resources and demonstrating thoughtful utilization of resources in which early childhood programs, schools and community organizations are committed to engaging families in meaningful ways, and where families are invested in positive parent child interactions and children's learning and development.

Early childhood development research shows us that the brain does not develop as it should if the child is not in a healthy environment. Enhancing a family's parenting skills by means of a high-quality mentor is shown to improve maternal and child health, prevent child abuse and neglect, encourage positive parenting, and promote child development and school readiness. *Home visiting* programs tap the resources and

hone the skills families need to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready to learn. These *Family Partnership Guidelines* share six key principles aligned with Family/School Partnership Standards utilized by the Hawaii Department of Education. They are currently supported across a broad continuum of *home visiting* services throughout Hawai'i and will, hopefully, result in shared expectations for families and providers across the state.

PRINCIPLE 1: Welcoming all families.

Families are active participants in the life of programs. Families are welcomed, valued, and connected to their children.

Rationale

When families feel welcomed and supported, they will be more engaged in the lives of their children and will have a vested interest in their children's developmental success in school, family, career and community. Additionally, when families are more engaged in their children's learning, the work of program staff and educators is supported and reinforced at home. Current research demonstrates conclusively that when early childhood programs and schools establish positive partnerships with families for school readiness and developmental progress, young children exhibit positive impacts related to academic and non-academic success in school including, but not limited to, attendance, behavior, and skills and knowledge in all developmental domains/areas.

Indicators

- 1.1 Families' strengths are identified, recognized, and respected through program policies and practices. "Talk Story" time is valued and develops rapport, trust, and connections between families and Home Visitor/Parent Educators (HVs/PEs). HVs/PEs accentuate the positives and recognize the importance and value of family support. With participant consent, HVs/PEs welcome the participation of family members during home visits. Families and HVs/PEs use the information gained from assessments and surveys to inform the development of a Family Service Plan, in supervision discussions, and planning for the next home visit.
- 1.2 Programs encourage families to participate in activities and events with children, HVs/PEs, and other families. HVs/PEs facilitate socializations and use various parent-child activities, which include child brain development and fostering parent-child interactions. Parents and children have the opportunity to socialize with other families and form concrete supports.
- 1.3 Programs recognize the different needs and circumstances of families and incorporate this understanding in their communication. HVs/PEs "meet families where they are at" during home visits. HVs/PEs listen to both the verbal and nonverbal messages parents express about their current needs and circumstances, and respond appropriately. HVs/PEs are respectful and supportive of family situations and provide, information, resources, or activities accordingly.



- 1.4 Programs implement a variety of strategies including family input, outreach, and engagement efforts to enroll and retain families in the program.
- 1.5 HVs/PEs recognize positive behaviors, identify the impact of the behavior on the child, and encourage positive parent behaviors to enhance the relationship between parent and child.

PRINCIPLE 2: Communicating effectively.

Families and HVs/PEs engage in effective reciprocal and ongoing communication to support the success of children.

Rationale

Robust communication between families and staff is essential for successful partnerships. Conversations characterized by respect, trust, and a genuine desire to work together reduce misunderstandings and conflict and contribute to alignment and the reinforcement of learning in the home and program/school. Good communication among families, educators, and program staff provides opportunities for feedback and continuous improvement. This, in turn, results in enhanced child development, an increase in successful learning experiences, reduced absenteeism and fewer behavioral management issues.



Indicators

- 2.1 Information is shared both in writing and verbally in a style that reflects the diversity, culture, and preferred language of families. Every effort is made to accommodate special communication needs.
- 2.2 Programs engage with families in active, 2-way communication on an ongoing basis, using a variety of methods to accommodate individual families' preferred means of communication.
- 2.3 HVs/PEs celebrate child developmental milestones, communicate concerns, and provide appropriate referrals, activities, and information to support the child's physical and social health and development.
- 2.4 HVs/PEs utilize various ways to communicate with parents, including phone calls, letters, and text messaging. HVs/PEs ask families what method of communication is best for them, and make every attempt to accommodate their needs including the use of interpreters and/or translators without expense to the family.

PRINCIPLE 3: Supporting Success.

Families and HVs/PEs continuously partner to support learning and healthy development. Families and HVs/PEs create or find opportunities to effectively strengthen their knowledge and skills.

Rationale

Child success is optimized by partnerships among families, educators, and staff, as learning is promoted and reinforced consistently by everyone in all environments: home, program, school, and community. High quality and high performing programs and schools have strong partnerships with children, families, and communities.

Indicators

- 3.1 Families and HVs/PEs acknowledge the families' role as the child's first and primary teacher and work collaboratively to develop desired learning outcomes for children.
- 3.2 Programs provide learning opportunities for families to enhance their parenting skills and knowledge of child development and encourages families to share their experiences with their peers. HVs/PEs encourages families to participate in the ongoing assessment of their children's growth, development, and learning by sharing their observations.
- 3.3 HVs/PEs discuss strengths and opportunities identified during the initial assessment; collaborate with families to identify, develop, and achieve goals; share parenting and child development information; and ensure children are developmentally on target. Family achievements are celebrated. Family-centered goals are kept current, routinely discussed and assessed for progress, and retired upon completion.

- 3.4 Delivery of services to families is guided by the Family Service Plan, and the process of developing the plan uses family-centered practices. Services are designed to be flexible, accessible, developmentally appropriate, strength-based, and responsive to family-identified needs.
- 3.5 HVs/PEs invite families to share activities with children and other families, based on their special interests, talents, and/or cultural backgrounds.
- 3.6 Families complete evidence-based assessments and surveys. The results help parents better understand their parenting styles, and child development which is then incorporated into the Family Service Plan. Appropriate curriculum and activities are selected based on family needs.
- 3.7 HVs/PEs receive clinical, reflective, and administrative supervision each week to assist in the identification of family strengths and developmental concerns, and together, the HV/PE and Supervisor develop responsive solutions. Supervision addresses the emotional labor associated with providing intensive direct services to families in their homes.
- 3.8 Programs create learning opportunities for HV/PE's to continue their professional development in increasing their knowledge and skills in working effectively with families.



PRINCIPLE 4: Speaking up for every child.

HVs/PEs support families in being advocates for children, helping ensure that all children are treated fairly and have access to lifelong learning opportunities that support success.

Rationale

Families are the best advocates for children because they know their history, culture, and unique strengths and needs. While individual families' support of their own children is essential, when families advocate collectively, they help improve the system for all children. Program leadership plays a vital role in establishing an environment conducive to this collective advocacy.



Indicators

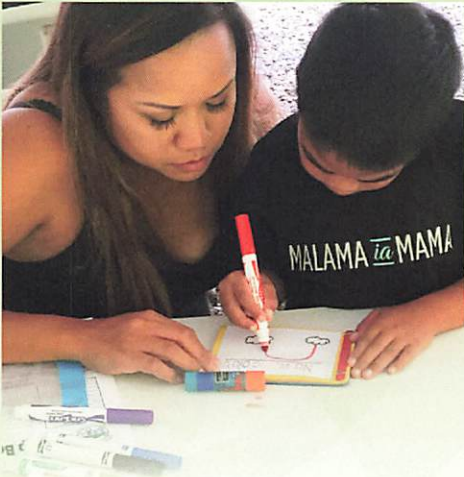
- 4.1 Programs provide opportunities, encouragement, and support for families to voice their concerns about issues relevant to their child or family and support curiosity which promotes lifelong learning.
- 4.2 Families and HVs/PEs work together to support successful child/family transitions by advocating for children's needs. HVs/PEs encourage families to assist other families through transitions.
- 4.3 Programs survey families, at a minimum once a year, to determine their satisfaction level regarding how well family voices are being heard. Programs use survey feedback to make improvements to policies and practices.
- 4.4 Families and HVs/PEs work together to share their experiences in home visiting settings with policy-makers to promote the importance of prioritizing needed funding and resources.

PRINCIPLE 5: Sharing decision-making.

Families and HVs/PEs are partners in decisions that affect children and families. Together, they inform, influence, and create policies, practices, and programs that benefit children and result in improved child health and learning outcomes.

Rationale

Partnerships must be designed to share decision-making appropriately, reflecting all stakeholder groups, so that all partners are accountable. Partnerships must be open to all who are willing to contribute their talents. Leadership must include representatives from all groups, with clear roles and functions, and all participants must share in the workload. Studies show that distributed leadership of this kind fosters greater involvement of all stakeholders, thereby lessening the burden on educators.



Indicators

- 5.1 Families and HVs/PEs discuss the program's philosophy regarding child development and education, as well as long-term goals and objectives, during orientation.
- 5.2 Programs make leadership development opportunities available and encourage families to become involved.
- 5.3 Families and HVs/PEs work together to identify and implement curriculum and family engagement strategies that are responsive to the values and cultures of enrolled children and families.
- 5.4 HVs/PEs encourage families to participate in the evaluation of activities and events sponsored by the program. Programs use this feedback to guide continuous improvement.
- 5.5 HVs/PEs develop partnerships that empower families to take ownership and responsibility for their personal home visits. Families steer the focus of services on parent-child interaction, child development, parenting behaviors, and family well-being.
- 5.6 Administrators, HVs/PEs, and program participants are members of Continuous Quality Improvement teams. The team uses data to inform discussion on issues of concern and program improvement, and share in problem-solving.

PRINCIPLE 6: Partnering with community.

Families and HVs/PEs partner with community members and organizations to increase understanding of, and access to, resources, services, and programs.

Rationale

As evidence of the power of partnership mounts, interests among Hawaii's programs, schools, and community linkages has expanded substantially. Interest in working together is bolstered by concern about widespread fragmentation of school, program, and community interventions, as well as issues of access. By integrating available resources, a significant impact can be made on "risk" factors. In particular, appropriate and effective partnering between families and early childhood programs/schools is seen as a key facet of understanding and addressing barriers to development, learning, and family self-sufficiency.

While informal program/school/family/community linkages are relatively simple, establishing long-term connections remains complicated. It requires vision, cohesive policy, and basic systemic reform. It involves more than school-linked, integrated services and activities. It requires the weaving of school and community resources together in ways that can only be achieved through connections that are formalized and institutionalized, with the sharing of major responsibilities. In the end, schools and programs are more effective and nurturing when they are an integral and positive part of the community. This integration means enhanced child outcomes, fewer discipline problems, higher staff morale, and improved use of resources. Enhanced parenting and social networking, and the strengthening of the fabric of family and community life also result from working in partnership.

Indicators

- 6.1 HVs/PEs provide information, both verbally and through written materials, regarding community programs and services that may benefit their families.
- 6.2 Programs and community agencies collaborate through cross-referral of families for increased access to services and programs.
- 6.3 Programs participate in the community to discuss how to improve access to family-responsive services and programs.
- 6.4 HVs/PEs create meaningful relationships with community partners and establish clear points of contacts with individual people in organizations and programs that provide helpful services or resources in the family's community to establish consistent access to resources.
- 6.5 Programs develop Memorandums of Understanding or other agreements to formalize their working relationship; helping to ensure participants in programs from both agencies have consistent access to local resources, services, and programs.

