Why Family Engagement?

We all want young children to develop healthy habits, and we know that these habits begin at home and in the early childhood setting. When children see their caregivers as healthy role models and take an active role in caring for their bodies, make appropriate food choices, and participate in physical activity they feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in their independence and develop a sound foundation for healthy growth in all other areas of development.

What?

Keep parents informed about positive health-related changes being made in your program and encourage them to support the changes by becoming involved with activities and decision-making. Also encourage parents to make similar changes at home so children receive positive health messages from more than one source.

How?

- Family Communications
- Letters to Families
- Family Handbook Policies
- Tailoring

Framing the Message

- The Why, What, and How of Family and Parent Engagement
- Framing the Health Message
- Empower Promotion with Families
- Guidebook Resources
  - Sample Policies
  - Family Handouts
Family Communications

Reach out to families and parents -
• Add nutrition and physical activity information to newsletters or feature on bulletin boards to help families incorporate health and wellness into their daily lives (for ideas refer to Nibbles for Health: www.fns.usda.gov/tn/resources/nibbles.html)
• Use an email list or website to provide information about the program’s policies
• Send home a list of healthy snacks
• Serve healthy foods at parent nights/open house nights
• Invite families/parents to eat lunch with their child

Family Communications, Cont.

Involve parents in party/activity planning. Have parents talk to children about specific interests or their profession. Examples include dancing, sports or nutrition.

Family Communications, Cont.

• Discuss healthy menu options with parents to help support a healthier environment and to help them to incorporate healthier choices at home.
• Maintain open communication when parents have suggestions about improving menus.

Family Communications, Cont.

• Encourage parents to take part in activities with their children at home. Examples include gardening, cooking a family meal, menu planning, grocery shopping, walking the dog together, or a family fitness night.

Family Communications, Cont.

Talk to parents about modeling healthy eating habits:
• Be enthusiastic about eating a variety of foods
• Introduce new foods several times and in different ways
• Have a variety of nutritious foods readily available for snacks instead of high-calorie, low-nutrient foods
• Allow the child to refuse a food item
• Model healthy eating behaviors: “Talk the Talk” and “Walk the Walk”
• Practice family-style dining at mealtimes
• Drink more water
• Avoid using dessert as a reward or punishment
• Eat when hungry, and stop eating when full

Teacher Talk

• “Today we planted a garden, ask Jane to tell you what we did”
• “John had so much fun dancing to our Jill and Jam health music today. Ask him to show you his moves.”
• “Jane did an excellent job pouring her own milk during our family meal time today. Maybe she can show you tonight.”
Resistance

- Presenting Options
- Encouragement
- Baby Steps
- Family Centered Teachable Moments
- Healthcare Provider Support

Promoting Empower with Families

- Proudly display the Empower Window Cling Logo
- Empower is good for business – “Market” your Empower facility
- Shape the environment
- AzAAP Childcare Checklist

Empower Center Window Cling Logo

Empower Guidebook Tools

Discussion

- What will you do to promote Empower to your families?
- What are you worried about?
- What additional tools and resources do you need to engage your families in Empower?
Your Impact with Families

• 10 parents/day
• If those 10 parents interact with just five other people...you affect 50 people each day and if they share something they learned from you with five others the ripple of your outreach expands to 250

“With great power comes great responsibility...”

Questions

MY SECRET?

YOGA, OF COURSE