

COMPONENT V: FAMILY SUPPORT AND INVOLVEMENT

DEFINITION:

The Judy Center Partnership's role in Family Support and Involvement is centered on the family's ability to participate in and support their child's early learning. It is based on the philosophy that the family provides the primary influence on a young child's well being. Family Support and Involvement in the Judy Center Partnership depends on the collaboration of all partners to encourage parents and care givers to become empowered to meet the needs of their family. The partnering agencies should strive to avoid the duplication of services, programs and activities, which might ultimately overwhelm the family.

BACKGROUND:

In his report, "Strong Families, Strong Schools¹", US Secretary of Education Richard Riley, pointed to 30 years of research indicating that family involvement is a critical link to higher grades and test scores, positive attitudes and behavior, more successful academic programs, and more effective schools. There are also strong indicators that children do well when their families thrive. Longitudinal studies of past efforts have taught us that we cannot address the needs of children without dealing with the context of their families.

In a speech at the Making Connections Consultants' Conference², Douglas W. Nelson, President of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, states that an empowered family is:

1. a family that is equipped with the knowledge, skills and education required both to protect their children from avoidable environmental and health risks and, at the same time, to provide their children with basic and essential developmental experiences.
2. a family that has the opportunity and skills to capture and control enough resources to meet their children's minimum need for food, clothing, and shelter, and that has reliable access to a network of other caring adults.
3. a family, all of whose children have access to effective schools.

¹ State of American Education Speech, February 1994

² Making Connections Consultants' Conference, February 2001

As State Superintendent of Schools, Nancy S. Grasmick has said of academic progress, *”we can only reach our goal with the critical involvement of parents. This is an important road we must walk together.”*

Children need the love, identity, and continuity provided by their families and communities. Achieving this goal requires the Judy Center Partnership to work together to help families achieve stability, and the knowledge of good parenting skills.

<i>Strategies/Solutions:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service Coordination through the Judy Center Partnership provides families with links to services at local food banks, clothing banks and area shelters and assists families in accessing community resource information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop methods to monitor and evaluate services provided.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize a calendar of events to identify the support services available to families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide monthly family nights to promote parent education and build relationships with families.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct surveys to determine the effectiveness of services and activities and to plan for providing needed services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with families through monthly meetings, e-mails, web pages and/or newsletters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All agencies and programs track families in attendance and participation in services provided.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase participation and attendance, hold activities and events in the community.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To increase participation and attendance, provide incentives. (i.e. food, door prizes)

BIBLIOGRAHPY/RESOURCES:

Family Support America, 20 North Wacker Drive, Suite 1100, Chicago, Illinois 60606
<http://www.familysupportamerica.org>

Bristol Early Years and Childcare Partnerships website:
<http://freespace.virgin.net/dave.sutton/98Plan/Ipagent.htm>

North Central Regional Educational Laboratory website:
<http://www.ncrel.org/sdrs/areas/pa0cont.htm>

Rutgers University Center for Family Involvement in Schools
<http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~cfis/>

Kidsource Online- Partners in Learning: How Schools Can Support Family Involvement in Learning. http://www.kidsource.com/kidsource/content/schools_involvement.html

M-PAC – Maryland’s Parent Advisory Council, a statewide group of parents and advocates appointed by State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick in the fall of 2003.
http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/programs/familylit/mpac/mpac_overview