

Cultural Perspectives in Caregiving: Applying Relationship-Based Practices

eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/culture-language/article/cultural-perspectives-caregiving-applying-relationship-based-practices

[View the Latest Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) Updates from the Office of Head Start »](#)

Throughout childhood, families dedicate energy, time, and care to their children's well-being. Parents want their children to grow, learn, and thrive. Interactions between children and their families affect children's health, development, and learning. These interactions are shaped by the individual cultures and languages of each family.

Dual language learner (DLL) means a child who is acquiring two or more languages at the same time, or a child who is learning a second language while continuing to develop their first language. The term "dual language learner" may encompass or overlap substantially with other terms frequently used, such as bilingual, English language learner (ELL), Limited English Proficient (LEP), English learner, and children who speak a Language Other Than English (LOTE). [Terms, 45 CFR §1305.2](#)

Early childhood professionals who work with culturally and linguistically diverse families can engage families and foster strong parent-child relationships. Genuine partnerships between families and staff strengthen programming and improve care for children. Trusting partnerships help staff learn about the family's lifeways and preferences around raising their children. This helps to create with families a shared understanding of child development and effective and responsive child care practices.

Staff may experience diverse approaches to nurturing children among the families in their early care and education settings. Culture shapes these approaches, and creates the context for the moment-to-moment and lifelong decisions a family makes. This context contributes to the overall development of the child.

Providing culturally and linguistically responsive practices requires that leaders, caregivers, and staff reflect on their own cultural beliefs and assumptions. Understanding a family's perspective is an essential component in developing collaborative and responsive practices in the early care and education setting. Our efforts to understand families' cultural beliefs, values, and perspectives, as well as our own, can strengthen our relationships with them. This is central to effective family engagement and providing the best care and education for children and families.

How to Use the Scenarios

Review three short vignettes and related reflection questions for staff, managers, and program leaders. Each scenario describes situations similar to those that arise during day-to-day interactions in Head Start and Early Head Start settings. The scenarios demonstrate the use of relationship-based practices in interactions with families. They also provide opportunities to reflect and discuss individually or as a group. The vignettes can be used as part of large-group professional development, and as a resource for individual or small-group reflection and learning. They can be used as a series or separately, as applicable.

Review the six relationship-based practices that can help promote family engagement. These practices are intended to guide what staff say to and do with families to support open communication and promote better understanding. They are:

1. Observe and describe the child's behavior to open communication with the family
2. Reflect on the family's perspective
3. Support competence
4. Focus on the family-child relationship
5. Value a family's passion
6. Reflect on your own perspective

Program leaders and staff can use these scenarios to improve approaches to engaging families of children who are dual language learners (DLLs). Use this resource with the [Dual Language Learners Program Assessment \(DLLPA\)](#). The DLLPA helps programs ensure a holistic approach to how culture and language are integrated in and across its comprehensive services. Program leaders and staff work together to gather the information specified in the DLLPA and plan for improvements, including staff training, based on the results.

Scenario One: Little Mitts

Reflect on your own and the family's perspective as you read about how a parent volunteer acts on a family's wishes. Consider how to align classroom practices with a family's cultural practices.

Scenario Two: Dance Moves

Find out how a teacher shares her observations of a child's behavior to open communication with a family. Learn how this approach creates opportunities to talk with families and allows them to feel comfortable with staff.

Scenario Three: Grandmother's Song

Explore how focusing on the family-child relationship can help you partner with families. Discover how families' goals influence how they will pass on their cultural heritage and values.

Related Resources:

- [Building Partnerships with Families Series](#)
- [Multicultural Principles for Early Childhood Leaders](#)
- [Dual Language Learners Program Assessment \(DLLPA\): User's Guide](#)
- [Culturally Sensitive Care](#) [PDF, 168KB]

Read more:

[Culture and Language](#)

[Dual language learners](#)

Last Updated: April 11, 2021

